WRITINGS OF WILLIAM KELLY - VOLUME 1

by William Kelly

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by William Kelly (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.

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01.03. GENESIS 12, 13.

Genesis 12:1-20; Genesis 13:1-18.

What we see in the word of God before this remarkable account of the call of Abram, though profitable surely for us, is also humbling; and none the less the more we think of it, and see what God has told us of man's sin and ruin, not merely as bringing on the flood, but as following it. What was to be done now? For God had hung out a sign in the very heavens that He would no longer visit the iniquity of the race as He had done in the deluge. There had been a secret principle of grace with God that He always acted on; but now this principle was to be brought out manifestly. What had made the difference in the case of Abel, of Enoch, or even Noah? It was grace that had flowed to them and wrought in them whatever was good and holy and true. But there is a new thing that comes out in the history now before us. It was to be no longer the favour of God in its hidden dealings.

Promise was to be thenceforth a public ground of action on the part of God. Is not this a most weighty and instructive change? God was no longer content that He should act after a secret sort. If He had Himself called souls without any one knowing it outside, now He would make the call distinct and plain, drawing to it the attention of friends and enemies: and this so definitely that it has been the invariable starting-point with God from that day to this. It was the call of God, no more secret but evident to all. So we are told in this place: "Now Jehovah had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee." We are apt to pass over such a statement of the ways of God because of the tendency to confound what is a secret of grace with what is manifest. But Abram was called by God to a place of separation, so as to be manifest. This is the express point with which the chapter opens, and the great principle that God would have us now to weigh with all seriousness, as we read His word. By Israel at Sinai the ground of law was taken. Yet God had called His people by grace out of Egypt; but they were, as most know, put (or put themselves) under the law. The consequence was that, however divine the principle was, it fell through in the case of the chosen nation. So again, God has now applied the self-same principle to the call of the church. There it is not (one need not say) a body put under law, but the very contrary, dealt with in sovereign grace. It is not merely mercy towards the soul, for this has always been true; but God has a body publicly called in this world, composed of such as are meant to be witnesses of His grace in Christ on high, just as much as Israel ought to have represented the law graven on stones and manifested it before the whole earth. This will show, then, how early and wide the principle is. But the Lord begins, as you can easily understand, first of all with an individual; and there was great wisdom and much force in this. Long centuries after, it was the resource of the prophet Isaiah, impressed upon his heart by God when Israel was passing into a desperately low condition, and with the prophecy of still greater ruin at hand. How does he seek to comfort the people? With the fact that God called Abraham alone. He falls back upon what was the salient principle of God's dealing at this very time. It was as good as saying, "Be things as they may, count on the Lord. Impossible to be lower than that with which Israel began; for when God called and blessed at first, it was

Abraham alone." To what end was this? Not only that he himself should be blessed, but to be a blessing: and this not only to his own seed, but to others far and wide. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In the earth and with men, as they are, such is the sole possible way of blessing. In the line of His call God brings out His promises, and there it is that His blessing is found and maintained. Man may, no doubt (not to say that he must, when put on the ground of law), end in more manifest ruin than ever; but the principle of His call is not only sound but invariably true. If there is to be blessing at all in a world that is ruined, it must be on the ground of one who comes out obedient to the call of God, not staying where he is, nor attempting to reform the evil in the midst of which he may be. God made it particularly manifest at this time; for it was now that the world for the first time had seen nations and families and tongues, all arranged in the elements of that which is in our day approaching its finally developed form. The world was no more as it had been before the flood; it was separated into its distinct nationalities. Government also had now been instituted. This was of course an outward mercy for the world. Wickedness was not to go on unpunished, iniquity must be restrained by the judge. God had accordingly given responsible charge on the earth to man who was thenceforth to curb evil in the world. He had authority for it from God. (Genesis 9:1-29) But now that idolatry had entered (Joshua 24:2), separation to God, the true God, comes in as the recognised place. Instead of having souls to walk individually with Him, although seeking to please Him by faith, God, from that day to this, takes up what was then a wholly new thing for man, that, if He is to be pleased or magnified, if His will is really to govern, it must be as separate to Himself, and not merely by our looking to Him individually where we are, and in the midst of all our national associations. God looks for more now; He calls out. Hence the force of the word here, "Get thee out," etc.

It is not simply "believe;" this was not at all the question put. The great object of faith was not brought out, though we find a type of the way of faith in Genesis 15:1-21 where Abram's faith is seen exercised on the word of promise that God gave him; but still it is not a question here of the gospel being sent out, nor of Christ being presented personally. It is God who separates to Himself, at His own word, a man who was in the midst of all that is evil — his own family worshipping false gods like the rest. For although God had already marked off a certain part of the sons of Noah as preserved for blessing, and Shem particularly so — that it might be proved it was in no way an after-thought, but God's purpose in all stedfastness and not depending on a certain part of mankind as in themselves better than others (though in fact piety was there); yet here too was the solemn fact that the family of Shem had gone into idolatry no less than others. In spite of the predicted purpose of God, Shem's sons had proved faithless. What next could be done? Was there no way of securing God's honour? This was the way: the call of God goes out in sovereign grace, separating to Himself a man no better than his fellows but avowedly involved in the idolatries of his fathers. "Get thee out of thy country . . . . unto a land that I will show thee."

Now the first thing I would press is that faith is shown, not so much by following what others have received before, but in believing what God brings home now to one's own soul and for one's own path. For God has a will about each successive stage in all the varying phases of life, as evil itself grows and works in the world. Satan does not limit himself to the same snares of falsehood and sin, but becomes more and more subtle and determined in his plans. God looks for faith in His word accordingly. So in this case (I refer now to Shem's line) the very family that had whatever there was to hope for were fatally involved in his meshes just like other men. But God has a way, a

blessed and worthy way, of vindicating Himself; and this is a way which, giving all the glory to Himself, faith at once feels is just what it ought to be. The call comes without the slightest ground for it in Abram himself. This we see to be perfectly consistent with the dealings of God. He meant the blessing to be in that line; He meant to take up this man and make him the father of the faithful; but he was evidently a child of the unfaithful, and no doubt an unfaithful child himself. The calling was, accordingly, of grace: God Himself called; and God, at the same time, was fitting this man for the place of blessing; and God had, before Abram was fitted for it, pronounced what it was in His heart to give him, so that it might be, not of Abram who deserved it, but of God that called him. It was grace. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." The whole principle of the blessing as flowing out of the call of God had been manifested in a man distinctly separated to Him, and (I would add) called out without disturbing the arrangements of the world. There was no setting him up with a mightier sword in his hand to put down the workers of iniquity. The world was left, after having been arranged under the providence of God in separate families, nations, and tongues, but not till government by man was sanctioned by God. But there God's honour being completely set aside, and false gods worshipped, He separates under His promise of blessing the man who comes out at his call to the land He would show him. This then is God's own blessed way — one most effectual, as it is also peculiar to Himself; and on it in fact God has acted in our own call, whether to Himself or into the church. It is on my heart to dwell a little on the general truth of the call of Abram, so as to illustrate the way in which God connects the principle of the call with the promises and with the whole place of faith here below. It was much for God to say, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." But there was another word, and this was especially dear to the heart of one so blessed himself. "Thou shalt be a blessing." This was to make him not only the object of grace, but the instrument of it. It was to give him communion with God Himself in the activity of His own goodness. "Thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (of course, on the earthly side); "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Abram then acts on the word of the Lord. "He departed, as Jehovah had spoken unto him." But there was more than one drawback. Lot his nephew went with him and we shall see the consequence of that. Further, Abram not only took Lot, "his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran," but in the chapter before we have a remarkable intimation not brought before us here. It was not that Abram took Terah, but that "Terah took Abram." This was not merely a hindrance, it was a false position as long as it lasted. It acted as an interference with the call of God; for although the call might seem to nature harsh, and that which no doubt man would have been quick to condemn, the word of God was plain — "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Abram does get out of his country, though hardly from his kindred; but instead of getting "out of his father's house," his father takes him. There was clearly an influence at work that was inconsistent with the call of God. It was not merely that Terah was with him; the Spirit of God has not put it so, and of course it was incompatible with due relationship that a man should or could be said to take his father. It was "Terah took Abram."

Here then was that which positively hindered the accomplishment of the will of God as long as Terah lived. The call of God should be paramount; but the honour due to a father who was not in it

must oppose. "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees." The simple fact is stated in Genesis 11:1-32; and one can see that the reason why it is stated there is this. It was purely a question of Abram acting from his own judgment, from himself, and not from the call of God, who therefore does not make it a part of Genesis 12:1-20. No doubt, the move was after the call of God spoken of in Genesis 12:1-20, but inasmuch as it was not the accomplishment of His will, God puts it in the chapter of nature and providence (that is, Genesis 11:1-32) and not in that of grace and promise, Genesis 12:1-20. We have in Genesis 11:1-32 simply a list of fathers and sons from the flood, and among the rest Abram and Nahor. Sarai is seen there with no child. This was nature; and had it simply been a question of nature, so it would always have been — Sarai always barren. When grace begins to act, we find the dawning of hope in the heart of Abram (at any rate what we can now well understand to point in that direction); finally God gives the distinct word that Sarah shall have a child. But this was after grace begins to be developed. At first there is nothing of the sort, and it is here therefore we have the account of Terah taking his son Abram and coming as far as Haran, and dwelling there. Accordingly there also we have the days of Terah shown us, and Terah's death. But now there is another side so distinct that, although the same facts are alluded to, God begins an entirely new unfolding of His mind. In Genesis 12:1-20. He is not speaking of the family as viewed in nature but of His call. Although Abram believed in God, yet nature was at work and had its way. Accordingly God takes no notice of it here. Thus we see that what looks a great difficulty in the two chapters — a thing which people have often put one against another — is perfectly solved the moment we come to see that the one chapter is the story of the family in nature, the other is the secret of grace now made manifest.

"Now Jehovah had said to Abram, Get thee out." Note that so He "said to Abram," not to Terah. As long as Terah was there, he was the acting person, as indeed he had the claim of father; and if (not God but) you bring a father on to the ground of faith, what is the effect? If he is not in the call of God and you are, what must result from allowing your father's authority to have its way there? It swamps you. It is not that you raise him into the higher regions of faith, but that he drags you down into the quagmire of nature. This is what we may see in these two chapters; so that, spite of the blessed call of God, we have the fact brought before us that Abram remains at Haran and fails to reach Canaan. At length however "Terah died in Haran;" and what follows? We are told next (Genesis 12:5) that "Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." Now what a different tale! Not that everything was according to God, for there is no perfection save in One; but still Abram could now act and not before. Lot was his nephew only, and did not bar the way as his father had done. While he was alive along with him, Abram must needs be subject, but henceforth he was free. Lot might act selfishly and be an encumbrance; but his father, if there at all, must have a father's authority; and so it was. He found himself in a sort of half-way ground, and this was what compromise leads to. It is certainly no longer Ur of the Chaldees, but yet only Haran, and not Canaan. The fact brought before us in the previous chapter explains how it is he can get no farther. Terah, who was not in the call of God, was nevertheless the one who "took Abram" thus far, and Terah acted so positively as a hindrance, that, as long as he lived, Abram could never get on; but the moment that Terah is taken away, as we read, Abram took Sarai, etc., "and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came."

There is no failure, so far, in the accomplishment of the purpose of God. When they reach Canaan, what is it that God sets before us? "The Canaanite was then in the land" (Genesis 12:6). Things were not yet according to God. It was not only that Abram's faith shows the weakness of man, but further, the state of Canaan was altogether opposed to that which befits the nature and proper purpose of God. It was not only that the world already left behind by the man of faith was still pursuing its idolatries; but if there were men on earth peculiarly under the curse of God, it was the very race that Satan planted in Canaan. "Cursed is Canaan." What a solemn thing, the meeting of the blessed one, about to be a blessing, with the cursed ones, that God would surely deal with in the day that was coming (and so accordingly we find)! Satan's object by it was no doubt to thwart the purpose of God: but it only gave Him the opportunity of carrying it more thoroughly and gloriously to the enemy's shame and everlasting contempt.

We never understand the importance of our walk here below, unless these two things are distinctly and stedfastly before us, not merely that we are objects of God's tender mercy and personal interest, but that we are called out to Himself, as well as to "the better country" that He has shown us. But He has told us too who has meanwhile usurped possession of it. The heavens are now opened, and we see by the Holy Ghost sent down thence Him who is on the throne of God, interceding for us as cleansed by His blood, and gone to prepare a place for us. The heavens were opened not merely for Him to enter as the victorious Saviour, but they are open still where He is exalted. This is the way in which He is now revealed to us. They will be open until the Lord has brought us there. I do not say that they will be closed after that, but that judgments will fall thence. In grace they are open for us to look now into. He whose blood opened them for us is the One on whom they opened, not for judgment, as we read once in Ezekiel 1:1-28, but, as in the very beginning of the New Testament (Matthew 3:16), that God might express His delight in Him, His Son, the perfect man withal here below.

Let us remember then that we too are identified with God's great starting-point for Abram; we are called out, and blessed, to inherit and to be a blessing. Does the grace of it (and it is not the richest part of our blessing) fill our hearts at all times? Take for instance our ways as members of Christ's body, the church, etc. It is not merely that we come together to acknowledge His mercy to us, which of course we do. Thankfulness should be the first thought of the heart that has been opened by the grace of God. Who are we that now speak to God, looking up and singing praises? Sinners brought out from guiltier evil than that out of which Abram was called. I can understand those who never had sin celebrating His praise, where sense of personal delivering grace is not the special character of their thank-offering before God. But who can understand a soul that is redeemed presuming to begin with anything but hearty thanksgiving for the mercy that has plucked him from destruction, and put him so that he can look up to God and magnify his Saviour? But whatever we begin with should not be the end for us. It is very right that we should feel evermore what it is to be the object of the tender mercy of God, in awakening our hearts and lips to thank Him; but we should go on to praise Him for what He is as well as own all He has done. For now we see how worthy He is, and can delight in what He is even apart from ourselves. The heart can thus go out in adoration of another and a higher character, in praise and blessing as well as thanksgiving. But I was going to dwell upon another point. It is not only that we are blessed, and that the spring of thanksgiving is touched, and that praise flows forth from those that are blessed; but there is more than this, an activity of love that looks around according to the goodness we have learnt in Him, as

well as love breaking out in praises as we look on high and see Him who in our midst praised and taught us to praise before He went there. So we see here: "Thou shalt be a blessing," and "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Take the occupation of the Lord's day. That which calls forth our hearts, is it only when we gather round the Lord at His supper? Has not such grace and truth as His furnished special occupation all through the day? I should say that its entire course has its calls and place no less than the assemblage at His table, and I say it the more because there is a danger of a little reaction. Time was when men used to think the chief thing worth hearing was a gospel sermon, and when they used often to bear a great deal that tried them to get what was not even a good sermon, longing to hear something that might help, comfort, and strengthen their souls. There are many Christians in that state still. Are we in the enjoyment of better blessings from God? Have we the sense of what His grace has done for us in heavenly places? But do we, as well, keep up the activity of His love in our souls? or are we settling down, content simply to give thanks for the blessing that we possess as children of God ? Do you suppose that a person can be at the spring of blessing without also knowing more or less of joy in the power of its active going forth? Depend upon it that this is of great importance to the Christian as such and to the assembly; for it will always be found true, that if we are not going forth in the power of blessing, the world in its power of evil steals in upon us. There will be a withering influence that will show itself under perhaps fair forms. Do you say, why should I go and listen to the gospel? What have I to do with the message to the unconverted? You have, you ought to have, a great deal to do with it. You may not be a preacher; but is there no such thing as fellow-working? or even loving interest if not positive help? Are there no hearts that go forth with every word that is said by the evangelist, none to pray with him for every soul that listens, and especially for those awakened by the Spirit? I do say that we are called on, not to be as we once were, with our heads down and our eyes anxiously looking out, if haply we might get something to satisfy our starving souls. By grace we now know God to be no hard master, and we can in our measure see and enjoy the rich provision of His glory. We of all men then should not appear like the bold beggar that having got his morsel goes off therewith content. Can it be that this is what it has come to with any of us? Or that any soul would sanction such selfishness? Take care that we never seem to come short in this respect. Let us look to it that we put far from us every semblance of heeding only our own things but the things of Jesus Christ as to sinners as well as saints. If we value the things of our Lord in the church, so also let us not be slack in the gospel. Let us have this simply and fully before our hearts, to remember that we too have Abram's portion, not only as objects but as instruments and channels of blessing. For indeed it is meant that we should draw from the very spring of grace that is ever flowing, whether for the help of those who are already Christ's, or for those in that darkness out of which we have been delivered by infinite mercy.

There is a fresh point I should point out. "Jehovah appeared unto Abram" — He not only spoke but "appeared," language to me not casual, but intentional. "Jehovah appeared to Abram and said." How it was done, we do not know; but we do know what is written. All that we read the first time is that "Jehovah had said," but now we find "Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land." There is nothing vague any longer, but precise. It is not "a land that I will show thee," but "unto thy seed will I give this land." What is the consequence? There "he builded an altar unto Jehovah," and not this merely, but "unto Jehovah who appeared unto him." It is quite evident therefore to my mind that in this was the needful preliminary to worship, which necessarily awaits the manifestation of the Lord. Worship follows, when He has appeared, and the heart knows Him

as He has made Himself known. So Abram, when Jehovah has not merely spoken but also appeared, builds an altar to Him. Do we know how blessedly true this is in our Lord Jesus Christ? This is precisely what He was showing, but what the disciples were so dull to take in. You remember Philip saying, "Lord, show us the Father," when the Lord Jesus had been showing them the Father in His own self all the while here below. It is what the Holy Ghost soon after made real, not when Jesus was there, but after He had gone, that it might be completely a matter of faith, and that we who never saw but believe might have the joy no less. Need I say, that what the word of God gives us of our Lord Jesus Christ is incomparably more to us than if we had but seen Him ever so long with our bodily eyes? I hope we all really understand this; for it is of no slight moment. We can easily imagine what a wonderful thing it was to have looked on Him and to have heard Him; but no intelligent believer need hesitate to say that we have far more of Himself in and by the word than if we had seen and heard Him all through His life and ministry on earth without that word. Do we not appreciate this? If we believe it, let us give God thanks now as we shall for ever.

I will explain why this is so. Are your eyes and your ears as good as those of God? The word is not merely Peter's or Matthew's or John's impressions of the Lord, but God's truth, though no doubt He employed them to write it. Then think of the advantage we possess in having it not only perfectly but permanently, not left to the shifting sands of memory under the ebbs and flows of the heart, still less to anything before the eye for a passing moment. Here we have God's mind about Jesus faultlessly, completely, and imperishably, in the word of God. And now is sent down the Spirit that we might see the Father in One who alone could make known the Father. What is the consequence? Wherever the heart surrenders itself to God as He manifests Himself, there is an altar built. This is by grace the way and the effect. It is not therefore the fact, observe, that we had the worship all at once. Not the least trace of it appears till now. Possibly Abram may have built altars on his pathway from Ur of the Chaldees to and in Haran; but this I do say that, if so, God makes nothing of it at all. The only altar up to this He mentions is now in Canaan after He had appeared to Abram. It may well be, in point of fact, the first altar that he ever erected; but of this we must be sure, that it was the first that God thought worth naming to us. What a lesson for our souls !

Abram was now in what answered to the heavenly land, and there the Lord gave a fresh manifestation of Himself. It is when the soul has reached this in faith, when (not merely His word and His work, but) the Lord Himself is personally known to us brought nigh to Him (for this is the point that it sets before us as a principle), that one truly worships. If He has brought me near Him and shown Himself to me in Christ, what can I do but use the altar built for His worship? For "we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" — they who prefer Jewish forms and shadows to Christ, now that He is come and has wrought redemption and placed us as children before His God and Father. But there is more than this. Abram "removed from thence;" but if he pitches his tent elsewhere, he none the less worships. Move or not, Abram has his altar, wherever he finds himself in the land of Canaan. "There he builded an altar to Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah."

Alas! a new scene opens to us. "There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there." Did he ask Jehovah before going there? Did he spread the circumstances of the land before Him? Not a word is said implying it; and I think there is the strongest reason to gather from the silence of scripture that He did not. For its silence, if we are familiar with it, speaks to us

no less than what it utters. God brings before us now the sad slip into Egypt of the man who, once called out in the face of difficulty and spite of hindrances which his own unbelief had brought in or allowed, had at last found himself in the place of blessing with God; but, there getting into trial, he goes unbidden into the place of the world's plenty. "There was famine in the land." Why did he not then lay all before Jehovah? Undoubtedly Canaan was not yet as it should be according to God; but had He not called him there? and could not He keep him there? Abram goes down to Egypt to sojourn in it without a word of guidance from Jehovah. It was the direction of common sense, "for the famine was grievous in the land." God states the fact without reserve; He never withholds the truth, albeit to the shame of those He loves.

"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know thou art a fair woman to look upon; therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister." How solemn it is when a saint takes and perseveres in the downward path I It is not only now that he departs from the land that Jehovah had shown him, and given to his seed; that he is distressed just like a Gentile by the famine, and bound for a country (Egypt, figure of the world, as Canaan of heaven) where there was abundance without a word from God; but now, further, having put himself into these circumstances of nature, he falls even from its proprieties.

Indeed, I may ask, do you ever find a child of God taking the ground of nature without going below it? When the Christian deserts Christ to stand on character, wonder not if his character utterly fails. Is God with him in it? A Christian is called to be a witness not merely of justice and right but of Christ. Do you look for no more than honesty in a Christian? Where then is his testimony to the grace and truth of Christ? He is content to give up Christ if he is content to be only an honest man. "He does not want to be always praying and singing, preaching and bringing in his religion." To slight Christ thus is a solemn thing. I did not ask for his religion, but that he should manifest Christ. Is he ashamed of Him? Is his conduct such, his bearing such, that it would not do for Christ to be named by him? Is it not to be feared so? He does not like to name Christ, lest persons should ask, Who is this that talks so about Christ? He who by faith behaves in a way which becomes that excellent name does not shrink from speaking of Him. But the unfaithful Christian is content to be known among his own class as an honest man. Will this last since God is not with him? God upholds those who humbly confess Christ. To speak of Christ is to sound the silver trumpet of the Lord, who thereon will own and be with you; but you who do not sound His name, have you the Lord to protect you? Assuredly you will fail. So it was with Abram at this time. He goes down without Jehovah directing his way, as he seems not to have called on His name: and in Egypt, sad to say, the father of the faithful is guilty of equivocation, with no purpose higher than that of protecting himself at the expense of his wife: not a noble place for a husband, nor a worthy use to make of his wife. But so it is, when one who ought to have been walking in faith falls back on the slippery paths of his own fears and the world's favours.

See another result. Everything now flourishes outwardly. Abram had never been so rich. Had he ever been prospered before as now? Was it not the marked blessing of the Lord? "He had sheep and oxen, and he-asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she-asses and camels." We do not read of this in past times. But how was it all gained? Oh, if Abram had only now got before the Lord, if Abram had but placed himself before Him that appeared to him, not a single acquisition but

would have been a wound in his heart, and the keener too as it was through the denial of his wife. Was this to live Christ? The Lord nevertheless dealt in His own marvellous way; for He did net smite Abram, or even Abram's servants to thin them down, but "he plagued Pharaoh and his house with greet plagues." How striking are the ways of the Lord, and how full of instruction for us! The righteous government of God was at work: for Pharaoh knew well enough that he had no right to take the woman, even if she were Abram's sister. He was taking advantage of his position to claim what did not belong to him. The issue is that, struck by the evident hand of God, Pharaoh calls Abram and finds out the truth. Now it was Abram's turn to feel. If Pharaoh was plagued, Abram was put to the blush: what a humiliation for him! The very world reproaches Abram. And what can he say? He came without God and he went without honour.

Abram quits Egypt. Pharaoh had learnt somewhat of God's righteous ways: what could he think of Abram? Were his riches to his credit? He had gravely compromised himself, and been rebuked by a heathen; but at least he is on the right road again. "He went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south," and afterwards goes to Bethel "unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first, and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah" (Genesis 13:4).

Yet surely, brethren, that passage in Abram's life had not been in vain. Did not grace then as now cause all things to work for good to those who love God? No slight work was that which went on in Abram's soul. He had been compelled to review his conduct, and we see clearly that it was the Lord who brought him back to the point whence he ought never to have departed. Repenting before His sight he returns, and in due time and place is found again a worshipper. But it is in Canaan, not in Egypt, where scripture hints not a word at either tent or altar.

Lot now comes before us. If I do not dwell more on him now, let me remark at this juncture how nobly Abram comes out. There was a strife among their respective herdsmen; and what does Abram do? Lot was the nephew, he the uncle. To Abram, not to Lot, all had been promised; nevertheless, when dispute arises, he stands up for no rights of his. He had learned too well his wrongs. He had been down before the Lord, and is as far as possible from taking a high place, even with one who ought to have been subject. But mark the blessedness of bowing before the Lord and of refusing to fight for our rights, however natural to the heart. The moment that Abram gives up to Lot, Jehovah appears again; and never was a gift in such distinct and large terms to man as that which He now gives to Abram. Lot "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan," and chose the best of it. Now Jehovah says to Abram "after that Lot was separated from him, [that is, after he had taken possession of his ill-gotten gains,] Lift up now thine eyes" — how blessed are the words of the Lord! — "Lift up now tine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

How sweet for Abram to have trusted in the Lord, leaving all the question, though apparently with Lot, really with Jehovah! When shall we learn to be thus simple and confiding? Assuredly we shall also learn at the same time that there never is a giving up of self that is not answered by the Lord, in His grace and in the sweet assurance of it to our souls, by a better gift still through Jesus Christ our Lord!

01.04. GENESIS 14.

Genesis 14:1-24.

I have contented myself now with reading the remarkable scene with which the Spirit of God closes the public history of Abram. We may, if permitted, look a little by and by at the beginning of that which is of a more private and personal nature; but we must now follow up the close of Abram's call with its consequences. It was intended to be of the most public nature in its effects, if not in the fact itself. As already shown, it was not that the secret choice of God was a new principle, — He had always acted on the ground of election in His own mind; but Abram was a person chosen and called out to be a publicly separated witness. This helps us a little more to see the force of that often misunderstood chapter, Romans 11:1-36, where we have the figure of the olive tree introduced. Its root is the divine call of Abram into a separate place of privilege, and consequently of testimony on earth — testimony that might be of an outward character simply, as in the case of-the children of Israel, or rise to a higher object as Christians are responsible for now. But the Jews were what the chapter describes as the natural branches of the olive tree. Nevertheless it is plain that God's glory was for the time being connected with that very testimony; and our Lord Jesus Himself was pleased to go into it as minister of the circumcision, and we ourselves now form a part of it, grafted in there by the grace of God. It must be remembered that this is not at all the highest part of our testimony; and it is only referred to now for the purpose of illustrating the difference between what we have had, and what we may have in what follows.

Genesis 12:1-20, Genesis 13:1-18, Genesis 14:1-24 is the more public part of Abram's history, which illustrates the dealings of God, not so much with his soul, as bringing him out into a place of testimony for the glory of God here below. He is here seen therefore soon put to the proof; for this is a discipline from which no person escapes here below. It will presently be shown how this bears on the chapter just before us. But I mention it in order to remark, the more definitely, the difference between what we have had already, ending with Genesis 14:1-24, and what begins in Genesis 15:1-21.

Here the results soon appear of that which had already come out in the respective ways of Abram and Lot. What took place in the land of Canaan might seem to have not the smallest connection with the struggles of these powers of the earth. But a witness for God, let me remind my brethren, is a very important thing, both to Him who raised it up on the one hand, and to the enemy on the Other. Now we are slow to learn this. The first great lesson of a soul — and that which our hearts feel most (at our starting-point at least) — is when the mercy of God arrests us in the path of our folly, awakens us to our excessive danger, brings us to Himself through our Lord Jesus, and gives us then in peace to enjoy the grace wherein we stand. And there, practically, many of the children of God stop. But there is much more than this, and indeed this is not the first thing that comes out. For the main lesson we have here is very different from what we might have anticipated. If we had had to do with the history of Abram, I do not hesitate to say that we should have begun with Genesis 15:1-21. Ourselves believers, we might have thought first of his soul's need, and so of

bringing him out distinctly as one quickened and then justified by faith. But God shows us here another thought. It is not as if all this and more is not all-important, and the gospel now makes it quite plain. But here God is pleased to give us first of all a general sketch of the public place of Abram. By "public" I mean what Abram was called out to be as a witness for God.

Now Lot, as we know, had chosen for himself. He coveted what seemed to be, and what I suppose really was, the fairest in the land. For as a single eye is very quick to discern that which concerns the glory of Christ, a covetous one is sharp enough to see its own interest. But there is a truth, beloved friends, that some of us have to learn, deeply it may be, that it is better to trust the Lord's eyes than our own; and that although, no doubt, in the world shrewdness may discern much, yet the world at its best is but vanity and assuredly deceives those who love it most. Nor is it only true that God will expose its folly and evil in the day that is coming; for one of the precious lessons we have learnt from the word is, that now is the time when God deals with us in the way of government, just because we belong to Himself; and being in the public place of testimony for God brings us peculiarly under it. Hence, to illustrate practically what affects ourselves in connection with this, God has been pleased in His grace to put us who believe in His Son in a place not merely to gather blessing for our souls, now that by faith we are enjoying His salvation, but in our little measure to be identified with the glory of Christ in the world. Do we know what it is to be in the place of testimony for the truth of Christ? What is the consequence of it? That things which might once seem little become great, as the great have dwindled wonderfully. Thus the old definitions of great and little well-nigh disappear. And no wonder, as we find while God brings us, little as we are, into connection with His greatest things, on the other hand our little things (or that which flesh, when it wants its own way, would call the least) become of importance because they concern Christ and represent Him either truly or falsely.

Now it must have seemed to Lot a very natural thing to choose what would suit himself, as Abram appeared wholly indifferent where he went. At any rate thus he may have reasoned. Evidently there was not a thought of testimony for God or of faith in this. Abram shows in general one who walked in dependence on God. There was this difference in their character: not that there was not faith and practical righteousness in Lot, nor that there was not failure sometimes in Abram, for we see how clearly scripture has laid both before us: but for all that there was generally this marked difference, that in Lot we see one who profits by his opportunities, wherever he may be, while Abram shows us one who went out, as it is said, "not knowing whither he went." Would Lot have done this? I cannot conceive it. Lot, on the contrary, took good care where he was going, first with whom, and next, when alone, he looked well out for what would be useful to his cattle, that is, to himself. As Abram did not seem to be so very particular, Lot thought he would be; so he chose the best he could see. After all he made but a bad calculation, as men always do in such cases; just because they have come into the place of the testimony of God. Lot never thought of this. It did not enter his account; but God had Lot before Him, and He does not forget it. And allow me to remind you, brethren, that we too are there. No doubt there are some that understand the truth better than others, having a graver sense of the conflict, and a more solemn feeling of responsibility to the Lord: but whether we have thought of it or not, whether we have weighed it passingly or gravely, there we are. And what is more, the world feels it, and, one may add further, Christians feel it; and therefore they are concerned and occupy themselves with all who are testifying to Christ in a way altogether disproportionate to their apparent importance. It might be a very simple soul, and

perhaps ever so young, occupied with work of the humblest kind; but they feel all of them, that here is a person distinctly and avowedly identified with Christ before God and man. Consequently what might pass with others, and produce no remark or feeling at all, draws out at once the judgment of those that see and hear him. So we find in this very case: only here it is a more solemn thing, for in this chapter we have God marking, by what He brought about, and by what seemed altogether remote from what is before us, His decision about the matter. This comes in, it may be observed, very abruptly. God leaves us to form a spiritual judgment as to the connection of it with what we have had before. For it is always by the Spirit of God, simply following His guidance, that we are enabled to form a distinct and (in the measure of our faith) an assured judgment as to the lesson that God is showing us. Be this as it may, it came to pass in these days that there was war between the kings named. War doubtless was no such uncommon matter; but there was something very unusual in the results of this battle. God indeed ordered things so as to draw unmistakeably the attention of all to Himself. There was a lesson thereby shown to the world, as there was a lesson now taught to Lot, that ought not to be forgotten. I do not say that Lot did not fail afterwards; for he did. But there was a lesson in this which, if Lot overlooked it afterwards, God has preserved for our instruction now.

These kings then came to a conflict, which raged not at all in the far distant east of some of those engaged in the strife. God’s witting hand brought it close to the spot where His witness walked. We see them in the vale of Sodom. There things came to an issue that seemed final, as it is said, "the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there, and they that remained fled to the mountain. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their victuals, and went their way." Now comes the connection with our story in Genesis 14:12. "And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son." Here we find no particular stress laid on, nor express reference to, any part of Lot’s previous life. Why so? Because God looks for a spiritual understanding in His people. He has not told us the previous tale of Genesis 13:1-18 in vain. He looks for our understanding why it was, without further explanation. Yet we may ask here why not Abram? Why Lot? "They took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods and departed." This might seem natural enough; but we shall see whether all could be merely natural before we have done with the chapter.

I do wish to impress it strongly as on my own mind, so on yours, my brethren: never forget that we as believers have to do with what is supernatural every day. In no case allow yourselves to be beaten out of the true groundwork of faith for yourselves, nor permit men of the world to drag you down from God’s word to what they call "good common sense" — an excellent thing for the world, but wholly short and misleading for the Christian in that which concerns God. And the simple reason is, that we are bound to walk by faith. It is our call. We are entitled to confide in God and His word. What to a man looks so foolish as that? If God is still "the unknown God" to the world, His ear is open to us.

There is a word the apostle uses which perhaps you may never have weighed well, never have had it so before you as to make an impression on your mind; and that is where scripture tells us that "every creature of God is sanctified to us by the word of God and prayer." ■ντευξις is not the ordinary word for "prayer." There is a reason for that; because in 1 Timothy 4:1-16 it is not the expression of mere want. This indeed is not the idea at all. Ordinary prayer is the drawing near to God, and asking Him for what we have not got; but in this case it is clearly not that, because it is supposed we may have the thing in our possession. But is there therefore to be no going out of

heart to God about it? Suppose now it is what we have actually in the house. Common sense would say, "You cannot ask Gad for what you have got." The fact is, it is the expression of a heart open, not only for God to speak to us, which was always true, but for us to draw near to God. It is intercourse with God that is the point, and not only the expression of want: free, simple, happy, communication with God — such is the idea. And this should be our thought and feeling and way in partaking of anything that God's mercy grants to us, whether we have it at the present moment or not. If we have it not before our eyes, it is before His eyes. He loves us, and cares for us — why should we trouble? Does He really hear us as we speak to Him? We have only to bethink ourselves for a moment in order to rebuke our unbelief. But suppose we have the things needed: are we to be independent? God forbid. If there be no wants to present to God now, have you no wish to speak to God now ? — no sense of the blessing of God upon you? Do you not want to tell Him how greatly He loves you, how truly He is caring for you? This is what is specified here; and in this sense to us every creature of God is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. The word translated "prayer" here, you may not have perceived, is the opening of this intercourse with God by which we can speak to Him about anything and everything — even the commonest matters which concern us day by day. I refer to it because all this is very intimately connected with the strength of our testimony. Abram knew its principle well; but now God has revealed Himself incomparably more fully than in the days of Abram, and our familiarity with God ought to be in the measure of His communications to us. As it is said, "every creature of God is sanctified by the word of God." It must begin with Him. It is first He who speaks to us; then we speak to Him; and the consequence of His so speaking to us is that we freely speak to Him. It was just the want of simplicity and vigour, if not reality, the want of living thus before God, that enfeebled the testimony of Lot. Assuredly power of public testimony depends, after all, on faith in what is unseen, and the resulting intercourse that goes on between God and our souls.

Here it comes out plainly. God reminds us that Lot dwelt in Sodom.. This would at once disclose or recall what Lot's behaviour and unbelief had been; how little his soul could taste in daily life of "the word of God and prayer." Was there not the very reverse? It was not Lot standing only for God, but striving to care for himself. The consequence is, when the strife and turmoil of the battle between the powers of the world take place, there is an end of Lot's settling down for the present. But that which was no small rebuke to Lot was the occasion for Abram to come out as one who walked with God confiding in Him, and who shows us, too, that power of grace which rises above whatever had been personally wrong. There was no doubt about Lot's failure in testimony. But Abram thought nothing about his faults now. What he looked at was a righteous man (for no doubt Lot, spite of all, was righteous) swept away by the contending potsherds of the earth. This drew out his feelings of loving desire for Lot's rescue. "When Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan."

We must not misuse such a fact as this. No doubt we do find, in the history not only of Abram but of Daniel and others, that which could be no kind of direction for the Christian now. Most of us know that to use the superior mind or the strong arm to deal with the world would be anything but suitable for a Christian; but then we must carefully remember that there are things which, though right enough morally, would be quite wrong for the Christian because he is brought into heavenly associations in Christ. This I hold to be a very important consideration for practice, as it is a grave

principle to understand in scripture; because otherwise we get either into capricious laxity or into undue severity of judgment. We may begin to reason and conclude that this was a wrong thing on the part of Abram, because it does not become a Christian. If a line of action is clearly outside the path of Christ, does not this decide for us? What were the ways of our Lord when He was here, and what suits Him now (for it is with Him as He is that we are united) is the question for us. We have thus to use the light of Christ to see what is becoming for a Christian now; but it would be altogether a wrong measure to judge Abram by. God had not yet brought in any such unfolding of His mind as we have. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; it was not fully uttered before. The true light had not shone, before which darkness fades away. Hence there are ways that not only were not wrong in Abram, but that God Himself was pleased to bless him in, regarded in those early days without even a sign of disapprobation; and no doubt this was one of them. I see no ground whatever to suppose that Abram had made any mistake, or acted wrongly, in employing these three hundred and more trained servants that were born in his house, with whom he pursued the retreating kings to Dan.

"And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people." Have we not a very marked fruit of Abram's testimony here? Just as Lot had come to nothing, which was the end of his lending himself to his own thoughts, and of his desires unjudged; so on the other hand here was the power and honour of God with Abram. It was, I need not say, far from being a natural affair. Here were victorious kings marching home with their armies; and a private individual,? pilgrim and a stranger, was so led and strengthened of God, that the victors are vanquished in their turn and the faulty believer rescued. But this gives the occasion now for a closing scene of the deepest possible interest in another way, and for one of our grandest types of that which will be displayed in our Lord Jesus at the end of the age. The New Testament makes grave and interesting use of it. "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter . . . and Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God." It will be observed, there is an intentional abruptness in the introduction of the royal priest. It is with distinct design that the Holy Spirit introduces him without the slightest previous mention. He comes forward and he disappears from the scene in a like mysterious way. What are we to gather from this? That Melchizedek was an angel? That Melchizedek was an apparition of the Son of God? No more than it is Shem under a new name. There is no hint of such a disguise here or in any part of the scripture. Melchizedek was a priest, as he was also a king; scripture says so. But there is no ground to suppose that the peculiar manner in which he is here named indicates that there was more than a real and royal and priestly personage in Melchizedek himself. It is the way in which he is introduced by the hand of the Spirit of God that is so remarkable. There is no hint of anything angelic or divine in his person. And one whose ancestry or descendants are expressly hidden stands in full contrast with Shem. Again, he who met Moses on his coming out of Egypt, and who, under very important circumstances, counselled him in the wilderness, was both a priest and king. It was therefore in early days, by no means so uncommon a combination. Prophecy shows that it will be so again in our Lord Jesus, when He reigns over the earth. We may see the principle of it at any rate in David when he wears the linen ephod and dances before Jehovah. This was of course short of the reality; but it showed that even in the days of his throne in Israel, the glory of Jehovah was dearer to him in that which

concerned the sanctuary than anything which touched his own person, about which Michal showed jealousy of unbelief fatal to herself. All these might be shadows; but the great and abiding reality is coming for the world, and the Lord Jesus is the One who alone will display it unfailingly. But still, as a matter of fact, there were men who were both kings and priests in those days of yore, and Melchizedek is one. Further, I see no reason to doubt that he was then living, a real king and priest, at this very time, and in this very quarter; but the Spirit of God introduces him in a way that becomes typically most striking, appearing on the scene and vanishing from it after a singular sort.

All this combination of facts was ordered of God for the purpose of making him so much the better a shadow of the glory of the Lord Jesus as the sole royal priest. The very meaning of the word is "king of righteousness," as the apostle Paul insists in Hebrews 7:1-28 and after that "king of peace," referring to his place of reign. The person, of course, was before the place. The name of the person was Melchizedek, that is, "king of righteousness," and his relation to the place was king of Salem, which means "peace." These facts the Spirit of God, by the apostle Paul, uses beautifully as a prefiguration of the glory of our Lord. It is true of His person, of that which is come and seen now; and this was particularly telling to a Jew, because the story is introduced in that part of scripture which every Jew acknowledged to be divine. If there was indeed any part which to his mind had supreme place in point of authority, it was the five books of Moses; and here in the first of them, in the earliest section of the word of God, stands out this marvellous intervention of a person who appears after the stirring scenes of the defeated kings, and blesses returned and victorious Abram. Now the father of the faithful was no small personage in a Jew's estimation; he had naturally and rightly a very great place; but here comes one who, suddenly and strangely appearing, occupies an incontestably greater. To him Abram pays tithes, as he also confers blessing on Abram; and, beyond controversy, the sacred homage from the one and the blessing from the other alike imply the stranger's superiority over the patriarch. The bearing of this can scarcely be exaggerated. It is a prophetic type. In that land there will be a mighty conflict at the end of this age; and in it the guilty people of the Lord will be involved; and when the victory seems to be won that sweeps them away, the mighty power of God by a greater than Abram will interfere. Then that blessed One whom we await, not merely for our own joy and glory in the heavens, but for changing the face of the earth and all things on it, will answer both to the victorious Abram and to the blessing Melchizedek. It is our Lord Jesus at His coming again, and this at the issue of the world's conflicts when all will be reversed to the glory of God. This closes, we may see, the public testimony. Then will be another scene not so much of testimony as of the application of God's kingdom in power. For the Lord will bring in the kingdom when He comes in His glory. What is going on now unseen, to be then displayed in the kingdom, is proclaimed in testimony. It may be well to say so much here, as often the thoughts of many a child of God are not distinct about the place of Christ as the true Melchizedek.

It is plain that the priesthood in question is altogether peculiar, for Melchizedek offers no sacrifice, nor is there anything of intercession. He brings out bread and wine for man, without a word of sprinkling blood before God. And it is remarkable that, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which refers to Genesis 14:1-24 and Psalms 110:1-7, the moment we come to the exercise of the priesthood of Christ, Melchizedek is dropped, and Aaron is brought forward, and this is what makes the difficulty, though not to a spiritual mind. First of all our Lord is brought before us as the true priest. This is done as early as the end of Hebrews 2:1-18. In Hebrews 3:1-19 it is still pursued. Our Lord is

evidently alluded to as answering to the type of both Moses and Aaron. In the end of chapter iv. Moses entirely disappears, and Aaron remains a type of Christ. But the point there is not at all what Melchizedek was doing, but intercession grounded upon sacrifice. It will be noticed that in this scene of Abram and Melchizedek there is neither one nor other of these things. Melchizedek does not offer up a sacrifice, whatever the ignorance of Fathers or Romanists may dream; it would have been entirely inappropriate here. Nor is there any such thing as intercession in a sanctuary. It is all public. We have seen throughout that the testimony had been public, and so here the action of the royal priest is of this character; whereas the very point of propitiation is that it goes up to God, and the efficacy of it simply to Him, though it may be for man here; and intercession is that which proceeds within the veil in the presence of God. Neither of these had any place in the scene before us. But let us pursue for a little moment what we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to profit by this instance of the beautiful interlacings of the truth, seeing the way in which Old Testament facts are handled by the Holy Ghost in the New.

Aaron beyond doubt is prominently before the mind as the type of our Lord's priesthood in Hebrews 5:1-14. This closes with a digression, which goes through Hebrews 6:1-20, and then in Hebrews 7:1-28 Aaron is dropped, and Melchizedek introduced. What is the reason of so remarkable a break in the chain? It seems to me plain. The apostle wants to show the incontestable superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of Aaron, although Aaron might be the great high-priestly type of Christ. This he proves by the fact that of old a royal priest came out to Abram who gave him tithes of all and received his blessing. The head of a family like Abram was superior to his descendants by the common acknowledgment that a father is above his sons; so the fact that Aaron was only a branch of Levi, as Levi was of Abram, and that it was Abram himself who paid tithes, showed therefore his subjection to a greater than himself. Nay further, not only did Abram pay tithes to Melchizedek, but more than that, Melchizedek blessed him; and, as we are told, "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." The person that confers a blessing is greater than the person that receives it; and so it was that Abram did not pretend to bless Melchizedek. There was an act on Abram's part which implied subjection to Melchizedek, and an act on Melchizedek's part which implied superiority to Abram, giving a double illustration and witness of surpassing dignity.

Such is the argument in Hebrews 7:1-28 and nothing can be more complete in its place as against those who cried up the Aaronic priesthood to deny Christ. For now the apostle shows that Melchizedek was not merely a conspicuous personage of old, of the highest authority and with evident glory attached to him, a king and a priest; but, further, he is introduced by Moses in a most striking manner. As far as scripture tells about him, he has "neither beginning of days nor end of life." Not that he was not born, nor that he did not die, but that scripture says not a word about either; never alluding to children, any more than to his father or mother. So far as the history goes there is a blank as to all this. Scripture treats it with absolute silence in order to make him a type of the One, who, as Son of God, clearly had no father or mother, though He might, as born of the Virgin Mary, still be Son of God, as in fact He was; yet He would not have been Son of God, as born of Mary, if independently of this He had not been so in His own divine right and being. And thus it is evident that there was a deeper glory in the person of the Son of God, on which all the glory that was seen in this world hung, that this glory was eternal, and that it belonged to Him in the title of His own divine nature and person from eternity to eternity. But the royal Psalmist also

takes up the same truth hundreds of years after this scene of Abram and Melchizedek was over. Psalms 110:1-7. speaks of a certain person in quite as extraordinary a way; a man, David's son, whom nevertheless his inspired father, to the contradiction of mere human nature, owns as Lord, and calls Lord. And He whom David thus calls his Lord, though (as our Lord reminds the Jews) really his son, (the great and insuperable difficulty to unbelief,) takes a place quite peculiar to Himself on the throne of Jehovah. And He is not merely there on the throne of God, but acknowledged to be priest. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." He is a priest like Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron: a truth of all-importance to rightly understand the Epistle to the Hebrews. I purposely dwell a little on this, because it is so extremely momentous that we should have simple faith in it, and due understanding of what is meant by it. The meaning is clearly this: — in Aaron's case there was a succession, for his was a priesthood of dying men following each other; the clean opposite of what is said of Melchizedek, (viz. "that he liveth,") not a word being said in Genesis or elsewhere of his death. The apostle uses this as a type of One that ever lives in the fullest sense. Hence Melchizedek is brought before us as a suited type of Christ, who is for ever after that order, instead of dying like Aaron and his sons. Christ stands alone an undying Melchizedek and so needs no successor, the sole and sufficient priest, as the Christian knows.

Melchizedek is, however, soon dropped again. We have him introduced simply to show the glory of his person, and his superiority to Aaron, whether in life, not dying, or consequently alone, as needing no transfer of his functions to successors. But the moment we come to the actual unfolding of priesthood in application to the believer, the apostle takes up Aaron again, and drops Melchizedek. Why is this? The reason is obvious. Though He is the great Melchizedek, He is not acting in that quality yet. What is He doing now? He is interceding in the heavenly sanctuary before God, and this grounded on the propitiation once for all offered for our sins. What has this to do with Melchizedek? Nothing.

Thus you see how perfectly the truth hangs together, and how God uses the person for His own purposes, and then takes up an exercise wholly different. The truth is that the application of Melchizedek, not to the person of the Son in His superiority to Aaron, but to what He will do as Melchizedek, will be at the end of the age, and not before. The force of his bringing out bread and wine to Abram has nothing at all in common with our eating and drinking wine in the Lord's Supper; and it is extremely important to carry this in our minds distinctly and to understand the ground of it. Popery, being blind, has an immense hand in thus leading the blind into this ditch. One of the chief errors of the catholic system of old was applying things to the church which were promised to Israel, and so antedating the dealings of God. It is on this ground that Popery now claims to put down and rule the governments of the world. There is a time coming when the Lord will do so, reigning in Zion, but it will be when Christ takes the reins. The church is incompetent to do it in its present state, as it is also wholly foreign to the grace which is characteristic of the Christian. To suffer with the rejected Christ, while espoused as a chaste virgin to Him who is on high, and looking to reign with Him at His coming, alone suits the heavenly character of the church of God while on earth. But when our Lord Jesus appears as Melchizedek by-and-by, then will be the day for our glory with Him; and the various traits here prefigured will coalesce in Him, not merely the sole dignity of the priest but the exercise of the priesthood in its character of blessing. Then will be the answer to Abram's putting down of the victorious powers of the world, the

deliverance of the poor though faulty people of the Lord (shown by Lot), and finally the bringing out the symbol of what God gives not only for the sustenance of His people but for their joy — the bread and the wine of that day. So it is that the Lord will then act; for this will be one of the wonderful differences between the Lord Jesus as the priest on His throne and all others that have ever governed in this world. It is the sorrowful necessity of those that govern now that they must take the means of maintaining their dignity and grandeur from the people whom they govern; that even the poorest contribute to that which the world owns as greatness and majesty. It must be so; it is the necessity of earthly glory which never can rise above its source; for the haughtiest monarchy of the world is after all founded, whatever the sovereign gift and ordinance of God, on the least contributions of the least people on earth. But when creation is arranged according to the mind of God, and when His kingdom comes in its proper power and majesty, how different! It will be His prerogative to supply all. The instinctive sense of this was what made the people wish the Lord Jesus to be king when He was here below. When He miraculously fed the multitudes with bread, they as it were said, This is the kind of king we want — a king that will give us plenty of food without our working for it. And doubtless the day is coming when the kingdom will be so ordered. That which the corrupt heart of man would like very well now, to avoid toiling in the sweat of his face, the Lord will give, according to His own goodness, when man is bowed down as well as broken and the riches of God's grace are no longer made the cloak of man's selfishness to His dishonour. This is one of the great distinctive features of that future kingdom, and Melchizedek shows it here. It is not only that there is food for the hungry, but he brings out bread and wine for the conquerors. That is, it is not merely the meeting of the necessities of man, but God acting after the victory is won according to His bounty and as is due to His own glory. And so it is that in the great day of the coming kingdom God will do these wonderful things on man for the earth. But mark His wise and righteous way — not before the cross, that is, the mighty work of the Son, is a fact; not before the Spirit of God has wrought to bring the souls of those very men into the acknowledgment of Him that wrought it, and into the appreciation of the value of that atonement which was accomplished on the cross. God will have wrought this work in the remnant of His people whom He will make a strong nation, when the day arrives for the Lord Jesus to manifest Himself in the exercise of His Melchizedek priesthood — not merely to be the anti-typical Melchizedek, for this He is now. At present He is not yet bestowing His Melchizedek favours; but when that day comes, it will be, I repeat, for the exercise of the priesthood, and not merely the glory of that one sole priest. The need of man too will be secured in that day. The people will be prepared for blessing. If there will be power and glory, it will be the portion of a people poor in spirit, confessedly contrite and broken down, sensible of the mercy that God had shown their souls, and made honest enough by grace to confess their sins, a people in short that will have found all their boast in that Saviour whom they once despised and in that which was their abhorrence. Then it will not be a base and selfish seeking of what merely suits themselves and allows them to vegetate in idleness. Not so; but it is the day for the King to lavish what He has Himself wrought, and for God to manifest what was ever in His heart. For God has always longed to bless men; but He awaits the day when He can righteously as well as freely bless them. Alas! man has never yet been in the state wherein he can be blessed. For to bless him when his heart is at enmity to God, where would be the good of it for man, not to speak of God? Would it not be, on the contrary, the grossest mockery to pour out blessing on man who, being unrenewed and unrepentant, must after all be cast into hell? Such is the state of every man naturally; no showers

of blessing from above, if this were all, could change the soil. In his natural state he is not fit for heaven, nor even for the earth under the reign of our Lord Jesus, but only to be cast into the place that is prepared for the devil and his angels. But in the day that is coming the Lord will have a people born of God, washed every whit clean, and rescued out of the hand of the spoiler, by His own redeeming grace and power; and then we see the Lord Jesus bringing out all that will manifest the goodness of God and glory of God, making the heart of man to rejoice before Him, and his face glad for ever. Then shall man know what is the God he has to do with, when he sees reversed and set aside and rooted out every vestige of Satan's old lie that God does not take pleasure in goodness and in lavishing the fruits of it on man here below. This then is the scene that is soon to open, surpassing fable indeed, and yet true. Mark too how all confirms it in the context. Christ is the antitype of Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and afterwards of peace. Then will be the day of peace founded on righteousness. But further He is the "priest of the most high God." Glorious title! It is not merely "Jehovah," nor merely "Almighty." The almightiness of God comes out in protecting His poor pilgrims; and His character of Jehovah, as of old in judgment when the people were under the first covenant, so under the second, particularly when He shows Himself the unchangeable God, who cleaves to His purpose of blessing a people that were alas! changeable more than all others on the earth. But "the most high God " — what is its force? Just this. When all other oracles are dumb, when every false god becomes, like Dagon, a fallen and dishonoured stump before the true ark and Him whose glory dwells there, then and then for the first time, since Satan foisted idol-worship into the world, shall every idol vanish out of it, and their worshippers be ashamed before the only true God. Then shall God have His place as "the most high God."

Yet He is not only this, but "the possessor of heaven and earth." When will that be, and what will display His possession of heaven and earth? We all know He is so now in real title; but when is the due testimony to it on the earth? Where the power that enforces it? As far as one sees, man is the possessor of the earth now; and if one bows to scripture, who can deny that the devil is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air? It is only faith can say that God is really so; but in that day it will be evident to all. His possession of heaven and earth will be manifest when the Lord Jesus comes. For whence does He come? Not from Bethlehem then, but from heaven. He will come from God's right hand and put down all contrary powers here below, and the heavens and earth, long severed, will be manifestly at one. The mind of heaven will be no longer as now in contrast with the mind of the earth. Then will come the reconciler, the blessed One who will unite, for God's glory and under His own sway, "all things, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth" — even in Him "in whom we have obtained an inheritance." This then is the evident meaning of the glorious foreshadowing brought before us in this divine tale of Melchizedek.

I need dwell no more on the history, except to point out one moral feature, the beautiful manner in which Abram, thus blessed, and deeply affected by both God's dealings on the one hand and this remarkable confirmation of his faith on the other, answers the king of Sodom, who, feeling all thankfulness for the mighty intervention of divine power through Abram, offers unsought to give Abram the goods. But Abram at once shows us that faith is more generous still, knowing what it is to be rich toward God, and refusing to tarnish His testimony by anything that would enable the king of Sodom to say, "I have made Abram rich." At the same time he pleads for the others. Whatever may be the self-renouncing grace of Abram, he in the largeness of his heart forgets not what is

due to those who had not his faith. He asks for Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, who had helped him. It was only and quite right that they should participate in the spoil.

I need not spend many words in exploding the petty and nauseous hypothesis which regards the whole chapter, the battle of the kings and the interview of Melchizedek and Abram, as a traditional patch worked in at this point. Certainly there is a discriminating use of the divine names in the different portions of Genesis as everywhere in Scripture even to the Revelation of John in the New Testament; but only the credulity of an infidel could have thence been induced to believe that Genesis, any more than the Revelation, is a compilation of distinct documents by differing writers. A rationalist may be learned; but he is necessarily ignorant of God's mind in Scripture, as his false principle leads him to deny it, and hence not even to seek it, as the believer does who sees in the word of God the Spirit's testimony to Christ.

01.05. GENESIS 15.

Genesis 15:1-21.

There is a sensible difference between the portion we are entering on now, as compared with the chapters we have had before us. They have given not only a distinct, but also, as it appears to me, within their own line, a complete view of that side of the truth which it was in the mind of the Spirit of God to convey. In this way Genesis 12:1-20, Genesis 13:1-18 and Genesis 14:1-24 form a whole; and, as we have already seen, the great thing there before God was the call of Abram, and its consequences from first to last, the public step that He was Himself taking in His own ways, in having a man, not only walking by faith, as others had done before, but set apart openly to Himself as none had ever been before. I do not mean merely separate spiritually now, for no doubt Abel was so, to begin at the beginning. No one can doubt that, before the difference between him and Cain, or the terrible issue came out into view, the moral distance between the first brothers had been existing, and was felt, not only by themselves, but by every one else. It is plain that Cain's own spirit found it intolerable; and it was just this conviction which he resented, and which carried him to lift up, first his hand in violence against his brother, then his voice in irreverence and rebellion against God, as his heart had been a stranger to Him all through.

Here is another thing. For the first time we see the efficacious principle of a separate witness, to whom God conveyed a promise, and a promise too that had to do not only with what was unseen but with what all could see, after coming out at God's word. The latter was indeed the earlier of the two; for Hebrews 11:1-40 shows us that, first of all, Abram was actuated by faith in leaving the country to which he belonged, and when he came into the land that God promised to give him, then his eyes were lifted higher still. Thus does the Spirit of God show us the introduction of the great principle which God has never given up since, but has always been carrying out. He set it publicly before Israel in an earthly way, and now He is giving it effect after a heavenly sort. This seems to be the subject of Genesis 12:1-20, Genesis 13:1-18, Genesis 14:1-24. That it is concluded there is manifest from this, that we have a scene which brings distinctly before us the last great conflict — the battle between the kings of the earth, and the victory which the man of faith enjoys by the power of God, even over the powers previously victorious. In short, it is there we have the type of the great "Priest upon his throne" in Melchizedek, active toward God as well as man, blessing man in the name of the "most high God," and blessing the "most high God" on the part of man. All this will assuredly find its due place and season when Christ appears in glory. To this I have referred in a brief summary, to show you that there is a complete whole in these chapters, starting with the call, and ending with the glory; so that we have the general public picture of the life of faith, with its worship, its drawbacks, failure, and recovery; the disclosure of the earthly mind too, its covetousness, and its disasters; faith's triumph over the world it had left behind, and the sudden appearing of Him who will display the glory of God in the blessing of man, and the harmony of heaven and earth; all brought before us within the compass of these three chapters. But what follows seems rather to come back again, and make a new start. That this is true is most evident from Genesis 15:1-21, as compared with those before it, and indeed it relieves

one of no little difficulty when seen to be so intended by the Spirit. For if it be viewed simply as a continuance of the former chapters, would it not be very extraordinary to hear how Abram is justified by faith? There is naturally, therefore, a fresh beginning. Of course, it is not denied for a moment that what took place at this time did literally occur after the scene with Melchizedek; but we are now speaking of the ulterior and deeper aim which the Spirit of God had in recording these matters. It is a question not only of facts, but of God's mind in His word; and we are seeking to regard it as a divinely given source of profit for ourselves, and of gathering from the Lord why it is; for we may with reverence inquire, and indeed are bound to inquire, seeing this is the way in which we grow in the knowledge of the mind of God.

Why then, we ask, does the Spirit of God introduce the theme at this particular place? It appears to me that here we have a fresh start, and another course of divine lessons for our souls, in looking at the new dealing with God with His servant. And it will be shown further that there is a series, as it is not merely an isolated fact; but! just as we saw in what went before, a chain of circumstances all connected one with another, and completing the subject as a whole. A similar principle governs here as there. There is this remarkable difference, that here we come to what is far more personal, as one may call it. We have no longer public testimony. What we have had bears this character right through from first to last. But here another thing is impressed on us, and very important in its place — that we are not merely witnesses. Here, accordingly, personal faith comes first before us.

Some of us must be more or less aware of the danger to the soul from being so occupied with that which is public as to neglect what is personal. Take, for instance, the gathering together of the saints to the Lord's name — our assembling around His table. Who does not know that, however precious the privilege, however closely bound up with the Lord's glory, however full of comfort, and blessing, and growth to our souls, if used aright, there remains much which is not a question of testimony, but of the exercise of faith individually, carrying one more into God's presence, and intercourse between Him and our souls?

Here, at any rate, in the wonderful book before us, begins a new series of instruction: God is showing His own dealings with the soul of Abram, not viewing him so much as a witness for Him before others. He is looked at alone as in his house, but, above all, with God. Every one could see when Abram had left his country, and set out for a promised land; they could see too that he sometimes failed for a season to accomplish what was before him. And it is all most instructive. Then, again, his pitching his tent, or rearing an altar, was all visible, and meant to be so. So, further, the victory over the powers of the world was that which men generally could not only hear of but feel: it was a real and public testimony. But had this been all, it would not have met what God meant to give, and what He loves to give, for the blessing of the soul. There is such a thing as living too much in the public walk and activity of a saint, to the neglect of that which is more personal. This seems precisely what the Spirit of God enters into here from Genesis 15:1-21 — the dealings of God with the soul individually, beginning with its wants, but leading on to a far deeper communion with Himself. The first thing to notice by the way is, "After these things." This is the usual way of marking off a new division or a fresh subject. You will find a similar expression at another and similar section in Genesis 22:1-24. There clearly begins a line of things quite distinct from what preceded. So it is here. "After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram." We have not had. this expression before, although we have had "Jehovah said to Abram." What makes it more remarkable is, that in the counterpart of it in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:1-60),

we are told that "the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham" at that very time. Thus it is the more striking, because, although He did appear, it is not so said in Genesis 12:1-20. It was according to the mind of God only to speak of His speaking to Abram. Of course it remains perfectly true that He did appear, but not a word of it is mentioned in the history, which adds indeed to the point of it, by Genesis 12:7 where it is distinctly declared that God appeared to him; and worship is thus grounded on it, that is, on the positive revelation of God to his soul, and not merely on a revelation from God. Such, too, is the form in which God presents that which has come out now in Christ our Lord. There the Father was. showing Himself in Him. We are called to the knowledge of the Father and the Son, and truly our fellowship is with both, the Holy Ghost being the power that gives the enjoyment of it. Thus it is not merely His words we have, but the showing of Himself. So one of the disciples said, "Show us the Father," though this indeed He was ever doing, but they were dull to see it. An hour was coming, however, when they should see it. This was the hour for christian worship, which is the answer of the heart, the precious and spontaneous effect of the revelation of God to the soul.

Here then, as one sees, is a new form we have not had before. It is not merely that Jehovah "said," still less that Jehovah "appeared," but, suitably to the fresh lesson of the Spirit of God, "After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram." What "the word" calls for is faith. There we discern at once the reason of it; and faith is the groundwork of all dealings between the soul and God. As, on the one hand, it is "the word of Jehovah" that came to Abram; so on the other, faith answers to His word; and this is the point of truth illustrated here. But there is another trait noticeable, the wisdom of God in not always putting — indeed we may say never — the highest truth first. He thinks of the soul’s need. This is of great moral interest. Even if it were the Lord Jesus from heaven speaking to Saul of Tarsus, still after all He is dealing first with his conscience, though by the light of the glory in Himself. There might be that which Saul, afterwards pondering, enters into far more deeply than when he was converted; but the thing that was blessed to his soul was a divine person, yet a man in heaven, judging all, but in perfect grace, and not something that supplied merely a wonder for the mind to be occupied with. This was not the point. He was made nothing of before the Lord. No flesh may glory. One can glory, but only in the Lord. And so I find here. This scene may not be at all so deep, high, or large in its character as what follows, but it just marks the way of the Lord in dealing with the soul to justify it. The truth is, when the "word of Jehovah" comes to a man, it not only finds wants but awakens them. Such is its just fruit. It is not merely that we are needy. The present case of Abram was not that of one disturbed and anxious about its condition. Abram long ago had been quickened of God, and indeed had walked in His ways, as we know, for many years before this; but God was pleased to make the chapter that comes before us the first of a new series for the opening of His truth in the more hidden and personal life of His servant. The first thing seen here is that He sets him in perfect confidence in Himself.

"Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." No doubt there was a beautiful suitability in this revelation after what had just passed. Abram had refused what the world had to give, and God graciously owns this with complacency, and announces Himself his sufficient reward. If God were his shield, Abram need not fear the jealousy of the Canaanite, nor even the hostile reprisals of the kings he had defeated, nor yet from any other quarter. "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." God would be true to His own word. Here was a bulwark of

protection, and source of supply, at once secured to His servant. But mark the effect. It awakens the sense of wants, and draws out too the expression of those wants. If Abram had long felt in secret any such desire, there is no reason to suppose that he had ever told it out to God before. Now he does. God had given him the land of promise, but with this he was not content, and God meant that he should have more. His unfolding Himself to him in this new way leads Abram to breathe out what he had perhaps never defined to himself before. He was not content with the general terms God had hitherto used to him. He says, "Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Where was the value of God's being ever so great a reward, if after all he was childless, "and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" What matter the lands he might have, if all was to go to his servant?

Now I do not say that this is by any means the highest point of Abram's faith; on the contrary, it seems to me far from what we see not long after. But still there was reality, and this is assuredly one point of moment for us here — that God would always have us in the truth of our state, whatever this may be. Suppose a person is not at ease about his sins, let him not gloss it over. If God is dealing with his soul, He brings it clearly out If to be fully blessed, the person is made as unhappy as he can be, and in fact the same grace which gives to the soul the assurance that God blots out and forgives also brings the soul to look at its own sins to the very depth. So again, yet more, supposing a person is clear enough about his forgiveness, still he may be troubled about the sin that dwells in him. This is another exercise for souls. But, whatever the occasion, God will always have reality; and though He encourages in grace, that He begins with it is what we find in His dealing with Abram now. He sounds Abram's wishes and thoughts, and He brings out from his lips what was at the bottom of his heart. He who had the promises was not satisfied, because he had not a son to inherit all that God had given him. And so he takes this place — "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir."

Soon the word of Jehovah comes to him again. "This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." And then he is taken abroad, and bid to "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. And he believed in Jehovah, and he counted it to him for righteousness" — that very fruitful scripture, which the New Testament uses over and over again for the most important purposes. In all these, however, it will be observed, that the object is to meet the soul at the starting-point individually, which is exactly what I am showing in the account of Abram, though in fact the thing occurred in Abram's history after he had been a believer some time. Still, even the New Testament shows that life is not justification, so that the truth abides substantially alike everywhere. But even though quickened, a person cannot go on stedfastly, or enter into the mind of God fully, until he is clear as to the grave point of righteousness. This too gives us an instructive lesson for ourselves in having to do with others. It makes us feel the incomparable mercy that God has shown us in this respect; for if there is one thing that He has been pleased to bring out into distinctness, and to give the simplest soul to enjoy through faith in Christ and His work, it is that personal freedom, and deliverance from every question, which it is our privilege now to enjoy; and I believe that a greater mercy there cannot possibly be for the believer individually.

Very likely what first arrested one was something quite different. It may have been with us as it was with Abram. Many of those called out in our day were brought into and occupied at first with the public ways of God. What we had understood as the church was learnt to be a mere ruin. We

had received from God truth as to His own will and counsels about us, as Abram had; but God wrought, and powerfully too, in another way. Not of course that any one could assume in such a state to have more than a very partial insight into God's mind in that respect. But this one may say, that unless a soul be at one time or another — perhaps not always at the start — brought into clearance, into thorough enjoyment of its own place by grace through faith, the public walk of faith in testimony and worship will not always possess its charm, still less will the soul always hold it in power for the Lord's glory. The real reason, one will find, why souls (and not infrequently, grievous to say) slip out of the place of witness to Christ, is that they have never been thoroughly broken down as individuals. They have never really been brought into that which would make the preciousness of Christ alone, and liberty by and in Him, enjoyed by their souls. They have slurred over the great matter of personal clearance with God. The public life, in short, has been not only that on which the soul first entered but where it abides, and this entails an unconscious escaping from the question of finding and getting the answer to our wants personally with God.

Now this seems to me of no small moment, not only for ourselves, but also in dealing with the persons we meet from day to day. Were it only a question of what is public, it would not bear the stamp of the truth of God. It might be true, but still there would be something wanting for spirituality of soul.

I believe it, therefore, to be a matter of profound thankfulness to our God that He has not only brought out from His word the path of faith in worship and public walk, and given some few to enter into it more or less, but He has brought the same souls into the liberty with which Christ makes free. Doubtless there are differences of apprehension, and there must be so among the people of God; we are not all equally spiritual or simple. But it remains true that God has of late wrought so that we should by grace enjoy both these aspects of the truth, the public and the personal, and that the very same testimony which on one side of it has made clear to us what is publicly for the glory of the name of the Lord Jesus, has brought the word of God unto our souls to establish us in His righteousness more clearly, and with greater power, than we ever knew before we trod that public place of testimony. Can I not appeal to the souls that read these words for the truth of them? But as some despise what is public in desire for the supply of personal need, so others may merge all in what is public. There is danger, therefore, on either side. The general testimony may expose to the danger of neglecting the more personal part of the truth. As we see, it was not so with Abram; and it is of great consequence that we should look to this for ourselves, if we are not in perfect peace, and for souls generally.

Never assume that those who bear the Lord's name in Christendom are personally clear before God. If they are in thorough departure from the mind of God ecclesiastically, they are just as ignorant and unestablished as to the soul. It is a good thing to bring them out of all that hinders them; but seek far more than that. Do not fail to probe the soul as to the consciousness of its place with God. Do not be content that they should hear a little of what is meant by the assembly; that they should see the importance of what it is to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. This is well, and also most important; but there is a nearer want, which may never have been fully faced and met. Can the person take the place now of standing before God in calm and constant confidence, without spot or stain? Does he know what it is (for that is the form the truth takes for us) to be not only justified by faith, but dead to sin, and crucified to the world? Sometimes, through unwillingness to offend, or assumption that a believer must know, we are apt to slur over these

matters, just as if, because they have taken a public stand, all the rest must be settled. Often it has never been so; and very generally, if not always, it will turn out that those who have slipped aside from the testimony are men that never enjoyed the individual clearance of their souls. "That day" may show that all who have departed from what is due to the name of the Lord Jesus were weak personally. Indeed, if we ourselves come to search, looking back, and weigh that which they have talked, or (it may be) preached, do we not see ground enough to infer that there had always been a lack there? No wonder that the public walk failed, if the personal faith was never according to the just measure of the truth of God. This then is the prominent point here; and you will observe that in this chapter Abram does not rise above the answer to his wants. Let none slight what is so needful and important in its season. It is no use to be asking for great things, if there be an unsatisfied want that is near the heart; and this was the case with Abram. Undoubtedly God meant all through to have given him a son; nevertheless He would have Abram's heart thoroughly searched, and sends His word purposely to bring out what was there, meets him where he is, answers the faith that was exercised, and gives him further enlargement, with a token by which he should know that he should inherit the land. Thus his heart is first drawn out about a son, and if a son, then an heir. The inheritance follows, though after intervening sorrow and trial.

"And he said unto him, I am Jehovah that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord Jehovah, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcase Abram drove them away" (vers. Genesis 15:7-11). It was of course no question of expiation here, but of confirming the divine grant of the inheritance; and in the character and variety of the animals slain God (as it seems to me) took into account the weakness of faith that asked the sign. He does not decline to give Abram the bond that he asked, or to make all sure by death. (Compare Jeremiah 34:18-19) But it was not to be made good without tribulation as well as patience on the part of the seed. "And when the sun was going down," more followed for his discipline and our instruction, which was very appropriate as a sign of this: "a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a horror of great darkness fell upon him." You see it is not one that stands in the light of God, but one that lingered in the region of his own wants, and of all the sorrow that belongs to wants connected with such a world and such a state.

"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full (vers. Genesis 15:13-16).

Ultimately we find the land of promise secured to Abram as punctually as in a map. "When the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces" (ver. Genesis 15:17). Jehovah knew what was in Abram's mind, and so He enters into this covenant — "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates, the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites,

and the Jebusites" (vers. Genesis 15:18-21).

Throughout the chapter, then, it is what man wanted, and this made it a suited scene for illustrating justification. It was not God appearing, but the word that came, and Abram believed, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness. Jehovah had adapted His word to bring this about by saying, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Then Abram asks and has the promise of a son and heir out of his own bowels, his seed to be as the stars for number. The pledge follows whereby he should know his inheritance of Canaan. It is sealed by a sacrifice; and the horror of great darkness which fell on sleeping Abram seems to be in keeping with the prophecy of affliction for his seed in a strange land, however surely Jehovah would judge the nation they should serve, and they in due time come again to Canaan when the iniquity of the Amorites was ripe for divine vengeance. So it was in fact as we all know. A smoking furnace and a lamp of fire passing between the pieces point to this too, while the same day Jehovah covenants with Abram, marking the limits of the land and the devoted races of Canaan. Throughout it is the wants of man on the earth, and God securing the answer, in His grace, by sacrificial death. It is the earthly people to be delivered by judgment on their enemies in and out of the land. Those who fall under the judicial dealings of the Lord are met in grace with definite pledges for their tried faith; and the prophetic word, excellent as it is for all, casts its light as from a lamp on the dreary scene of man’s lawlessness where the sword of the Lord clears the way for the sceptre according to His mind. In none of these passages do we see the counsels of grace for heavenly glory. It is first the individual justified by faith; and next the people to pass through tribulation, but to be saved at the end of God’s allotted time.

01.06. GENESIS 16.

Genesis 16:1-16. But Abram did not know how to wait; and Sarai takes no happy part in the action of this chapter. It is first "that which is natural," though we can also add, "afterward that which is spiritual." Flesh is impatient, and seeks at once the accomplishment in its own way. She proposes her Egyptian bondrnaid, Hagar, and, Abram hearkening instead of walking by faith, the maid conceives, and her mistress is despised. The Epistle to the Galatians gives the certain clue to what we else might never have understood. It is the covenant of Sinai which she represents, answering to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. The law works not peace but wrath, not the accomplishment of the promise but fleshly pride, and a child born in sorrow who cannot be heir. What a contrast to blessing and praise through the royal priest in Genesis 14:1-24, or the altars of Genesis 12:1-20, Genesis 13:1-18! If the justified man take up the law (save to convict others), no wonder if the issue be disappointment on all hands. Such is the solemn admonition of our chapter. The law is good if one use it lawfully; but it is not applied rightly to righteous persons, but to lawless. The believer has no more to do with it for himself now, than Abram then should have taken Hagar. It is interesting to observe that as Hagar was really of Egypt and a slave, so she typically is mount Sinai in Arabia, the covenant that genders to bondage (Galatians 4:1-31). The flesh, the world, and the law work together, and the gospel delivers the believer from all by the death of Christ, as unbelief exposes to mischief from them all.

01.07. GENESIS 17.

Genesis 17:1-27. But now we come to another scene of a wholly different nature. "When Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect." What a change! We see here that it is no longer Abram bringing out what was concealed in his own heart, but God unfolding Himself with a greater fulness than He had ever been pleased to do before with Abram or indeed any one else. Here is the then characteristic revelation of Himself, and farther than this none of the patriarchs ever advanced. El Shaddai (God Almighty) is the substance of the distinctive truth on which the fathers flourished. Here was that which especially became their joy and their source of strength. This they learned in the face of all difficulties and of every foe. "I am the Almighty God."

We must not look at these words merely from the blessedness into which we are brought. It were well to reflect how such a revelation must have told on Abram. He had just before this been proving how feeble he was, and how little he could see before him. He had experienced the danger of listening to his own wife. What ill-feeling followed as the immediate consequence and what trouble there was likely to be in store! Now we have God revealing Himself, though of course in a grace suitable to those He was blessing. Still it is not in view of man's wants on earth, as in Genesis 15:1-21. There, as we have seen, Abram had been faithful, he had not only conquered the enemy's power but refused the world's honour in his jealousy for the Lord; who thereon speaks to him, and, if one may so say, rewards him. Abram accordingly asks according to his own measure. He thinks of what would be sweet and comforting for him then, but it was connected with himself; and so, again, what the Lord shows him is a vista, bright in the end, connected with his seed and with the land which was to be their own. It was all consequently of a comparatively narrow character, gliding into prophecy as to Israel and the land. Not so here, and for the simple reason that now there is a still deeper lesson to be taught and learnt.

It is not failure by the way; this we have had in chapter 16. It is not merely want supplied, most true and important in its place, and useless to be slurred over. How vain to ignore what we do lack, and talk of things we do not feel! Abram brought out what he felt, and God met him there most abundantly. But now there is far more than this; not what Abram feels or wants, but what God wanted for him and loved to give him. God therefore imparts the richest revelation ever made known up to that time. "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." What was the consequence? No horror of deep darkness follows now, no deep sleep falls on him here. "Abram fell on his face;" nor was this all: "God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." Those enumerated in the end of Genesis 15:1-21 were the enemies, the races that had usurped the land and were to be subdued; but now a far higher range of things opens. Abram should have a child, and be the father "of many nations." It is evident therefore that the circle is immensely enlarged, and all in pure grace. Abram has not asked a word; nor does he seek any pledge or token.

It is not Abram now that presents what God had, as it were, suggested and drawn out of him, what was then in his heart, and what was of importance to be forced out because it was there. Far other things are here. Abram had been humbled, feeling his weakness and his foolishness, and Sarai's too. Accordingly God now, out of nothing but His own grace, unveils Himself in this special manner: "I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect." If He was the Almighty God, it was not merely a question of enemies now. Not a single word is said about them. It would have been unsuitable at this time to have talked of putting down this or that people. They do not require God's almightiness to deal with them; and Abram had already counted on His power upon this fresh revelation of Himself; and surely not in vain. But He needed to be the Almighty God to bung about the blessedness He is here speaking of. The connection of El Shaddai, I repeat, is not with putting down foes, but, wonderful to say, with Abram's walk before Him! "Be thou perfect."

What an introduction of Abram to new privileges! What a groundwork to go on! There he was, a stranger, surrounded by those who wished him evil, and after having just proved his own weakness. No matter what all else might be: "I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect; and I will make my covenant between me and thee." Is it not intensely personal too? All the questions that could rise up as a matter of trial, all thoughts of disappointment, have now disappeared. God had already met his wants as a man; and if these had not been perfectly met, would there have been the same suitability in this fresh vision? But they were: the void for his heart would be filled; nothing in this respect could trouble more. The one thing that remained lacking for Abram's present comfort, a son and heir, God would take in hand. His wife's expedient had only brought sorrow on them all by her haste. He had everything else. But now he leaves all in the hands of God, who here speaks after a wonderful way.

After God has brought in Himself in His almightiness before Abram, He speaks of the land for ever given to him and to his seed. But not a word of this in the first instance. It was of all importance to Abram that there should not be a word about his prospects till after the revelation of God Himself. God does not even say, "I am thy God." He does not connect Himself with Abram in any such way. The first word here was the simple revelation, "I am the Almighty God." On this Abram's heart rests. It is not Abram seeking it of himself with God, but God unfolding Himself to Abram. Such is the great thought, and this as "the Almighty." "I will make a covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." How it was to be He does not yet explain; but it follows in due time.

Then see the effect on Abram. He never felt so overwhelmed in the presence of God, just because he had never been so near Him in spirit before. "He fell upon his face, and God talked with him." Yes, Abram is in the dust before Him. It is not worship at the altar, nor a sacrifice to secure a promised gift, but communion: God deigns to talk with Abram. His falling on his face is not conviction of sin, or darkness of soul, but lowliness before God. He is really far nearer God practically than in Genesis 15:1-21, and can confide more simply in His word. Then he had unsettled questions: then too a horror of darkness; and failure ensued in Genesis 16:1-16. But here is the blessing of Abram personally, the establishment of an everlasting covenant between himself and his seed, and the promise of many nations and kings.

Notice further the expression of communion. "God talked with him." It is so put purposely by the Spirit of God; for He had nowhere else used this language before. It serves, I have no doubt, expressly to show nearness of intercourse; and a very weighty thing it is. Such is the force we see

in 1 Timothy 4:1-16, where we are told of the wondrous place into which we are brought, far beyond that of Abram (though the scene we have before us may be viewed as a kind of premonition and shadow of it), that "every creature of God is good," — "for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer," that is, by free intercourse with God in His grace.

Here in Abram's history we have it. If the "word of God" comes in Genesis 15:1-21 and in the chapter which follows, as we have seen, now we have this familiar intercourse with God in Genesis 17:1-27. The word "prayer" in 1 Timothy 4:5, as is well known, is not the ordinary expression of wants. It is not the word for supplication; which has its own place and a very important one too. However blessed we may be, we never get out of that need here below. Were any one to assume now that, because we have intimacy of fellowship in Christ, we cease to be in the place of need, and no longer are called to persevere in prayer as the expression of our dependence on God, need one say what a dishonour to Him is done, and what a downfall must be at hand? But still there is something more than prayer; there is the enjoyment of intercourse; and where souls do not enter into this, where they cannot get near enough to God, so to speak, and do not habituate their souls to His talking to them in His word, and their free pleading before Him, which is what the Christian is entitled to now (I am not speaking of formally kneeling down and presenting our needs, but of being able to draw near to God and speak about everything), there is a great lack in the private personal life of the Christian.

It is well to note that the intercourse in the scene before us is the fruit of God's revealing Himself more perfectly to the soul. Thus all was founded, not on a fresh start taken by man, but on His gracious ways with the soul. It is far from the vain idea of a self-consecration, or the higher life that men prate about, however one may share their protest against the habit of others to go on sinning with a measure of contentment, or at least with a sense of necessity that so it must be. The reverse is seen here; even God's unfolding Himself by a fuller revelation of His name. He was making Himself known in a way that never was heard of before. It is one thing for man to summon up from his own mind what he would say to God; quite another what God says about Himself as the suited revelation for the blessing of a man's soul. Here there can be no doubt about its character. He appears to Abram, and says "I am the Almighty God." He does not even say He is the Almighty God to him. It was not called for. When a soul is young in the ways of grace, God links Himself with him, vouchsafing various helps to the soul that yet knows Him feebly, unable to enjoy Him unless He stretches out His hand to. help the struggling sinking soul. But it is not so here. Abram did not want it at present. He had learned both about himself and about God, and he shows the profit of it here. Now that God says "I am the Almighty God," it is enough for Abram. No doubt He adds, "I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly," but the way in which He reveals Himself is not so much what He was to Abram, but what He is in Himself. When justified by faith, we are entitled to enjoy this. We can joy in God (not only in the blessing but in the Blesser) through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it is that, though in the first dealings of God with our souls there is no one that has not found it an immense thing to know Him as Father — the "babes" (1 John 2:13) being distinguished by this very thing, they "know the Father," and there being no Christian who does not enjoy Him as such, DO matter how long he may be in the ways of the Lord — yet I am persuaded that when a soul advances in the knowledge of divine things, there comes out, not merely the cleaving to Him as Father, but the ability to "joy in God." But if one has to do with worldly men, they do not know what you mean

when one speaks of God as his Father, save as the Father of everybody. They use this which is true to deny His special relationship to the Christian. It is then no small thing for the soul to know that "God is my Father," in the Spirit to cry, Abba Father; but it is another thing, where all questions are settled, and we are able peacefully to enjoy Him as God. This is assuredly of great moment and will be found to be true in the ways of God with our own souls. It is evident that our Lord Jesus meant that we should find and enjoy it; for if we refer to the message on the resurrection day, He says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father" — but this is not all — "and to my God and your God." I do not believe it is possible to enjoy "His God and our God" until we have known what it is to look up with perfect rest in Christ and in conscious relation to God as "His Father and our Father." In short all true real believing enjoyment of God as such follows the enjoyment of the Father. As long as there remains a single question unsettled, there will always be a shrinking from God as such. Note the calmness of Abram here. He can enter, without anything to come between, into what God is in Himself as "the Almighty God." But further, it is said, "God talked with him;" not "the Almighty" nor "Jehovah," but "God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations I have made thee." Not merely has the patriarch a new name given him, but mark how everything rises now. It is not only the land where the Kenites and others dwelt, but "I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee; and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant." It is not then alone that there is such an immensely greater sphere opened out for the hopes of Abraham, but the time also is unlimited. It is an "everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger." God had not forgotten the lesser gift in presence of greater things — "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

Observe too another thing that goes along with this. No longer now does Abraham ask for a token whereby he should know that he is to inherit the land. Not a word of the kind is dropped. But God speaks of the seal of circumcision. It is not now something outside him, as we saw in the dead animals of chapter 15, but "Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee: every man-child among you shall be circumcised." What does it mean? Flesh mortified before God; the sentence of death put on man in His sight, and this in Abram’s own person as well as in his seed afterwards.

Circumcision here accordingly is not introduced in a legal way, any more than the sabbath in Genesis 2:1-25. It is really the answer in man to the grace of God. It is that which God has made the Christian’s portion in our Lord Jesus, that "circumcision without hands," which God has given us in Him, for in Him we are circumcised. It is not the death of a victim now, but every child of Abraham takes the place of death by this sign, which typically sets forth our death with Christ, the perfect deliverance of the individual as dead with Him. Until one knows what it is to be thus dead, there is no possibility of enjoying what it is to be free unto God. What a precious thing it is that this is precisely what God has made true in an incomparably better way to us now, bringing us into the calm and peaceful enjoyment of Himself, with the certainty that everything that is offensive to God — our very nature as children of Adam has the sentence of death on it, not only pronounced but

executed! This is what one knows now as a Christian. It is no longer a sign, precious as this was to Abraham (and I pretend not to say how far he entered into it), but we are entitled to understand its truth; it is a part of the wonderful blessing in Christ that God has given us. It is not merely His meeting our wants; for I do not believe when it is a question simply of wants, that a soul ever enters into the sense of personal liberty and deliverance. But after having Christ for all our need and wretchedness, there is the further blessing that He is bringing us into, living intercourse with Himself now. We require a sound and solid basis for this; and God has given it to us in our death with Christ. But this also you may observe: it is not our asking for a token. Who would have looked for such a thing as to be dead with Christ, or risen with Christ? Never did such a thought enter the heart of man. It is all God's grace, His own perfect wisdom and goodness to our souls. Yet is it all the fruit of the work of Christ Jesus our Lord. It is not merely a man risen; persons had been raised from the dead: but what was this to Christ being raised? They would all have to die again. But now we have got to the knowledge of resurrection in a wholly different and far superior way to this, for Christ rose, breaking the power of death for us, and we shall experience it soon as the consequence of that which He has done already. As dead and risen with Christ, we are waiting for a resurrection like His from among the dead, or a change, which is the same thing practically — when we shall be with Him, and be like Him, endued with the same incorruptness and glory according to the power of His resurrection. But he that had obtained such favour was moved for the child of the bondwoman and said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" If Sarai was to be thenceforward Sarah, to become nations, and kings to be of her, though he and she were no better than dead, why should not Ishmael share the covenant? But nay: the child of promise and of the free-woman is the one with whom God establishes His covenant, though Ishmael for Abraham's sake goes not without His blessing, begets twelve princes, and becomes a great nation. And the selfsame day Abraham is circumcised, Ishmael and every male born in his house or bought with his money (vers. Genesis 17:25-27). Thus fall the reasonings of a saint, and God's will alone stands, even in blessing outside the covenant of promise. Even there no flesh shall glory in His presence. In no case is it improved but passes under sentence of death. May the Lord, then, give our own souls to enter into these wondrous lessons of God, whether they be the public ones for a life of testimony, or the individual ones for personal intercourse with God!

01.08. GENESIS 18.

Genesis 18:1-33. The portion read now is founded a good deal upon the previous chapter, and the general train runs on to the end of Genesis 21:1-34. We can see at a glance that Genesis 22:1-24 introduces a series of truths altogether new. The distinctive mark already mentioned, "After these things," makes a decided break, a fresh start in thought; and you will observe how completely this is the fact, because there it is not only an altogether new train of communications from God, but also of a different character. The death and resurrection of the promised son are brought before us in a figure, and all the other dealings of God that are founded on this grave fact; as for instance the passing away for the time of the covenant of grace with Israel in Sarah, and the call of the bride in Genesis 24:1-67. Of course I do not mean to enter on these subjects just now; but I make the remark in order to help persons to read the scriptures for themselves, that they may have a clearer understanding of the order of these things, and have more fixed in their souls the consciousness that it is the word of God, and not the thoughts of ingenious men, really a matter of divine truth, and altogether independent of anybody's fancies. This I hold to be a capital point for the children of God, particularly in these days; that they may have a distinct ground to go on, not only for their own souls, but also in case of being challenged by others. For there are those who, not knowing the truth, are the more ready to doubt the reality of the blessing which they do not themselves enjoy. They have the miserable desire to spoil the happiness to which they are themselves strangers. Hence we cannot be too simple. Besides this, we do well to seek to be thoroughly established in the truth that we receive — to see how it is all bound up with the personal work of Christ, as well as revealed in the word of God, foreshadowed in the Old Testament and clearly set out in the New. In this case then the communication is in a measure founded on Genesis 17:1-27, which we saw introduced an unfolding of God's name in a way that was an advance on all before. But in this case it was not as with Jacob, where he sought to know the name of God, who withheld His name. Indeed the difference is remarkable. With Abraham there was more ease, and God begins to speak out plainly. Not but that Jacob was afterwards brought to hear God unfolding the very same name of "the Almighty God;" but to Abraham it was brought out at once. There was no such thing as the desire — still less was there any "wrestling." Abraham, on the other hand, intercedes with Him; and indeed "wrestling" is not exactly the word that would be suitable to the character of Abraham's intercourse with God. It was both more peaceful and of a higher character. In Jacob's case there was immense activity of nature. I do not mean sin, of course, but nature in its best sense, that is, domestic affection. The love of family was exceedingly strong in Jacob's case: no one of the patriarchs seems more marked by it than Jacob. It is not meant of course that either lacked in this way, for they did not. Witness in Isaac a character remarkable for his home attachments, with a life more equable than Jacob's.

Abraham, however, had this distinguishing feature, that he was a man who very simply went to God about everything as it rose. Consequently God could act more freely and immediately in His dealings with him. There was not so much that required first to be broken down, as we find in Jacob's case: how often he must be made nothing of before God could be revealed! Therefore it

was comparatively late in the history of Jacob before God made His name known to him. To Abraham, as we saw, Jehovah appeared, and opened out His name, unasked, as the "Almighty God;" and there followed the making of the covenant, which supposed the death of the flesh, the express figure of that which we now know in its truth and power in Christ; would that so wondrous a weapon of deliverance from all on that score were well wielded by all saints t What a source of trial, difficulty, and perplexity, do the great mass of God's children find through not knowing it! For, as many know, it is not in their case a question so much of the faith that overcomes the world, as it is really doubt about their own personal clearance before God. He that is dead is justified from sin, but this they do not perceive. They are as yet under law. But we have seen that here circumcision is not at all connected with the law, but, on the contrary, with that covenant God made in grace long before it. It is the sign of blessing God was to give in Christ Himself. Circumcision is viewed as the type of the complete setting aside of the flesh before God. This is what we have had in Genesis 17:1-27. Now we enter on a further activity of God, and its consequences, which are carried on to Genesis 21:1-34.

Here again the Lord appears, though we may notice this special feature about it now, that He leaves it to Abraham to find out Who was visiting him. There is no outward token of the majesty of His presence — no special intimation betrays Who was there. It is also to be noticed that on this occasion the Lord personally came, attended by two others, who, no doubt, were outwardly much like Himself. He deigned to take the appearance of a man; as it is said, "He (Abraham) lift up his eyes, and looked, and lo, three men stood by him." We have no reason to suppose that it was in such a manner that God was pleased to appear to His servant oh former occasions. It was a dealing with Abraham, founded on what went immediately before in Genesis 17:1-27, but having its own distinct character. This is preserved throughout.

"When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door." He was one of those who, like Lot in the next chapter, had an ungrudging hospitality, which had its reward in this, that, ready as they were to receive those who looked but strangers, they were really entertaining "angels unawares." Nay, more: this present occasion was the most remarkable entertainment ever enjoyed by any on the earth until Jesus came. Some might count it even more wonderful than that; because the Lord Jesus, being pleased by being born of a woman to become a man and to tabernacle amongst us, came down habitually into human circumstances as a man with men. I do not doubt, however, that, in all these manifestations of the Lord in the Old Testament, we are to understand the Son of God was the one manifested. Not only was He pleased to come in the appearance of a man, which may have been the case on other occasions also, as seen in the history of Noah, Gideon, and others; but here it is said there were three men, meaning by this of course what they seemed to the eyes of men. The peculiar privilege here was that God Himself deigned to be the guest of Abraham: yea, and more than that, for He treats him as His intimate, stamping on the patriarch for ever that remarkable designation, "the friend of God," which is founded on this very chapter. Assuredly the circumstances are such, that we do well to look into them with care.

Abraham then "bowed himself toward the ground" — as far as we are told, not knowing at first who the three were. But God is gracious to His people, and leads on step by step. We can see at a glance whose grace it was that put into the heart of Abram the habit of what we might call indiscriminate generosity and kindness; and this readiness is the more to be observed as it was the part of one called out to be separate to the Lord. A grave and important lesson it is for us in

this respect, that the man who was most of all separate is the same whose heart went most of all out towards others, and that strangers.

There is nothing in the most complete separateness to the Lord to hinder the largest and most active kindness, not merely to the people of God. but to all men. Abraham did not know at this time who or what his visitors might be; he merely saw three men, and his heart was at once towards them. Not strained nor scanty was the flow of divine goodness; there was a heart ready at once to meet and even seek others, desirous of their blessing. Is it not in the highest sense so with the Lord? Does He not constantly pour blessing into the heart of the man that is intent on the blessing of others? In this case, too, there was a greater honour in store, though the object of it knew it not.

Though we must not suppose that at first Abraham knew the divine dignity of one of "the three men," there is the remarkable fact that he addressed himself to one, and I can hardly doubt to which of the three. However that may be, he says, "My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant; let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet." He does not confine himself to the one to whom he had at first addressed himself. He is thinking of that which was needful, not only in courtesy but in love. "Rest yourselves under the tree, and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts." We can scarce doubt, I think, that he is treating them according to the appearance in which they stood, though we shall find that it is not long before he learns more. "After that ye shall pass on, for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said."

Abraham accordingly hastens, making Sarah the partner of his kindly toil, and soon after stands by them under the tree as they eat. Then comes their turn before us. They said to him, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" Perhaps it was then that the first word, intimating the divine power of Him who deigned to be there, fell on the attentive ear of Abraham. "I will certainly return unto thee." It does not become man to talk of certainly returning. Was this lost on Abraham? Assuredly not; more particularly when his long-cherished hope is about now to enjoy the promise of a specified, and, I may say, dated accomplishment. "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." If it appeared vague before, it was henceforth distinct and defined. But the one who was immediately concerned had not the same sense as Abraham of the presence of God. There was not the same preparedness of heart for it. Sarah, no doubt, was an honoured woman, but her state was spiritually different from that of Abraham. We hear of her during this conversation behind the door. I dare say she ought not to have been there, but there she was; and if she was where she ought not to have been, need we wonder that she indulges in feelings that little became her? She laughed in her doubt of the word. Could any of us imagine Abraham behind a door? Was there not a simple dignity in him incapable of hiding and listening behind a door?

We can understand easily an eastern wife’s temptation to conceal herself in more modern times, when woman was more of a prisoner, and otherwise degraded; but it is evident that in those early days no such reason operated, and no excuse could thence be for anything of the kind. For we find Rebekah, and others far later, going to the well, without any idea of impropriety. Sarah must no doubt have enjoyed no less a degree of freedom, but would have from her circumstances much more. She, the matron, by no means young now, was under no conceivable custom of keeping out of sight. Wherever such manners as those before us are resorted to, never expect anything good

or worthy. It is no light mercy to be delivered from all the darkness and all the pettiness of nature, and to be brought to walk in the light as God is in it. It is sweet to think of it as the Christian's place, but it is what we all want to }earn more of. What else enables one to stand so simply in the presence of man? Not that we begin with man, and then know how to stand before God, but just the other way: God gives us the root of the matter first, and this is where we are brought in virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ. He could not do more, nor would He do less. He has brought us by and in Himself near to God. This is what in its spirit was true of Abraham; and he was one who enjoyed much of the conscious presence of God; and it is this that I am persuaded had its reward now. He had a conviction of who it was that was addressing him in words which could not fail. There was a sort of instinctive feeling, a growing assurance, in Abraham's soul who the guest must be he was entertaining.

It is remarkable, however, that he hears these words quietly. No astonishment is expressed. How happy when the soul is thus kept calm before God! We are not then taken by surprise: we expect good, and not evil. Instead, therefore, of stooping to the ways which let out how mean the flesh is, the sense of His presence preserves, and true dignity is associated with the utmost simplicity. It is not in this case self-possession, nor the pride of being anything, nor the vanity of desiring what we have not; but all is founded in the deep sense that it is God with whom we have to do, and whose voice we hear and obey.

Abraham, then, as I have said, stands in marked contrast with Sarah hiding behind the door, and laughing within herself. But when charged with it, she is ashamed to own the truth, which she felt an ignominy to herself. But He that was on the other side of the door soon shows that such an obstacle could not keep Him from seeing and knowing what passed in the heart of Sarah, as well as where she was. "Jehovah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?" How surprising it must have been to her, and how sharp the rebuke, though conveyed without a harsh word! "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?" How blessed to accustom ourselves, beloved brethren, to this one answer to all difficulties I For this we are called to walk by faith, not by sight. God never had a thought of a Christian, or of His church, being exempted from difficulties. To hinder this is the main effort of man after the flesh.

Directly men look at the church as a human institution, they want to smooth its way, to put it on the ground of natural rules and arrangements, and thus reduce the Christian to a walk of mere prudence and common sense. They forget it is God's habitation through the Spirit, and cease to walk in dependence on the Lord. No doubt morality is quite according to the law of God: I quite admit it. But all that is entirely distinct. Supposing a person were to walk within the letter of the ten commandments every day, he never would behave in a single particular as a Christian ought. The doing of all the commandments would not meet the will of God about the Christian. It would be very proper for a man, and excellent in a Jew; but far from being Jews, now that we are in Christ, we are no longer sons of Adam, but, according to His grace, His children by faith. We are born of God, and brought into a new place by redemption, and are blamed if we are walking as men. So the Apostle Paul with the saints at Corinth. He reproaches them because they "walked as men," not as bad men, but "as men." It was unworthy of grace that they should be on mere human ground. If a brother offended another, is one to have him up before the law-court? We can understand that the Christian might easily reason about it, and say, "For my part I cannot but feel that a Christian is a great deal worse than a man of the world if he is guilty of a wrong, and

therefore I must have him tried and punished by the magistrate." The premise is true; the conclusion, false. For it is not at all a question of wrong or right, but of Christ. I perfectly grant that a Christian may do wrong, and that the assembly should judge it; but to do-right is not enough for a Christian. He is sanctified to the obedience of Christ, to obey God as the Lord did. It is a question, not of doing the law, but of obeying like Christ. This is what is written on us, as the law was on the tables of stone. Israel ought to have represented the law graven upon stones. We have Christ on high, and are called to walk and witness accordingly. This is the point of the apostle's words in the chapter referred to. The Christian is the "epistle of Christ," and nothing short of a manifestation of Christ can satisfy the mind of God as to him.

Here we see Jehovah as man in a beautiful way. So it was, I believe, in this case, although not of course as yet the Word made flesh, yet the nearest approach to it; and just as we shall see in the series that follows (Genesis 22:1-24), the resurrection of the Son of God in type, and the dealings of God founded on that great fact, so here we have, as far as it could be, the coming down of God to be among men, and the grace that accompanied His presence here below. Thus I read this very scene; and that is the reason why here, and here alone, the Lord takes the place of a man.

How beautiful to look back, and see how suitable it is that, before the series that introduced the work, there should be the series that introduced the person, in as near an approximation to His taking flesh as was possible to be beforehand! If there be one thing that marks a man with others, it is sitting at the same table in social intercourse. This is what the Lord does here. It is one of the very things in which an unbeliever finds an enormous difficulty: but what is poison to an infidel is the food and joy of faith. Accordingly, where faith receives it, we rejoice in so blessed a thing as God thus deigning to be at Abraham's table, and partaking of his hospitality, with His angels round Him; but this in the guise of men.

After He has thus put Himself along with His servant on familiar terms, He speaks of that which was nearest to the heart of Abraham. He knew that he was surely to have a son; but he had waited long, and wanted to know when the son would come. Now it is fixed; there is a distinct time allotted, and for the first time. God here too shows Himself considerate of Abraham's feelings. As we saw, Sarah was not up to the mark yet; she needed a rebuke. The communication that God makes brought out what was not according to the proprieties of the presence of God. She was not used to it, like her husband, in spirit, day by day; and when the Lord did come, she did not know how to behave herself; but Abraham did, and there is nothing more remarkable than the ease, and calm, and comeliness of Abraham in all this scene. He was in no way thrown off his balance when it begins to dawn upon him Who it was that deigned to talk and eat with him; the wonderful fact that he stood before the true God, the Lord of heaven and earth — the pledge of the incarnation, when He should take flesh and dwell among us.

Jehovah brings all out plainly now. "Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah laughed in her incredulity and then, convicted, she denied it, saying, "I laughed not" — denied it for the same reason that some of us may have had to reproach ourselves for no less. "She was afraid!" How often these sad departures from the truth arise from nothing but the want of moral courage! What would train up the soul in unflinching and most scrupulous truthfulness is exactly what Abraham cultivated, and what Sarah failed in — habitual acquaintance with the presence of God.

There is no safeguard so efficacious, even supposing we be ever so disposed to exaggerate, uncareful, quick to speak, slow to consider and weigh what is said. There is nothing that would keep and form the soul more simply in truthfulness than this very thing, the constant sense of the presence of God. This it is that characterized Abraham more than most; not that we may not find failure, for Abraham was not Christ. In this particular too, under solemn circumstances, Abraham broke down, and, sad to say, twice about the same thing — once in the earlier part of his career, and once later. For God would give the terrible lesson, that flesh in no way ever improves, and that Abraham needed the presence of God to keep him towards the close of his career, just as much as at the beginning.

Now we see that as the Lord convicts Sarah for her own good, so He blesses Abraham more and more. But though it is sad that a saint of God should fail in truthfulness, it is no small mercy that God should make that untruthfulness felt where the soul has been guilty. I do not know anything worse for any one who has fallen into untruthfulness than that such a one should go without the discovery of it, and without its being painfully brought home to the soul by God Himself. Here we have it. The Lord does not do it in this case as in so many others in the Bible; for one of the remarkable features elsewhere plain is that we have cases of untruthfulness, and other things equally bad, found in God's people, but they are left, either without conviction, or with the fact simply stated. Here it was brought home for Sarah's profit, and we know that she gained it, But we must turn to the Lord's way with Abraham. This is the very thing that perplexes unbelievers. It is not so to faith. God disciplines and exercises the hearts of His people in judging these things from their acquaintance with His own character, and with His word in general. In this particular case there was a lesson to be taught, and therefore God does not pass it by. He does not permit that Sarah should simply say, "I did not laugh;" so He says, "Nay, but thou didst laugh." The sin is brought home by the unmistakeable voice of God. Oh, what a thought for Sarah afterwards, and how humiliating, not only that she lied, but that she ventured on a lie to God Himself, and that, at her one interview with Him, this she should have to reflect on! It was the last word that passed between her and God Himself.

This, no doubt, is a serious thing for our own souls, worthy of reflection, yet full of comfort also. For what a God we have to do with! What patience, long-suffering, goodness! and this with (not a human being merely, but) a child of His! And His way is to let a word from Him act on her conscience. Never do we hear of any repetition of the evil on Sarah's part. It was a lesson not to he forgotten, yet how gracious!

We read next that "the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom." Here we enter on another part of Jehovah's action at this time. We have had Him coming down in richest grace, and dealing with the utmost possible tenderness, even with such a failure as that of Sarah. But now we have to see the manner in which all this operated spiritually on the heart of Abraham. "And the men rose up, and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them, to bring them on the way." Here is another beautiful feature in Abraham, which also had its reward. His was not a mere hospitality that receives like a patron without going farther. There was nothing of what we may call the condescension of a great man in Abraham, which is scarcely to be called true, or at least christian, hospitality. He in whom that is found will, on the contrary, be found filled with the importance of himself, his family, and his position; he scorns to act below the idea he has, and would impress on others, of his own dignity. Who that reflects could call this grace? "This did not

Abraham." Genuine humility was there, and yet withal an unmistakeable stamp of dignity in his character, yet none the less of true kindness, of lowly and persevering love. Thus he hangs upon their steps; and no wonder. At this time it was not merely the ready heart for a stranger, but a sense of the glory of his visitors, and among them of One especially. Who can be surprised that Abraham was loth to see them depart, and accompanied their way? But again, let me say that scripture speaks of such a reception of strangers as though it were no unwonted thing for this generous man. I do not suppose that it was the first time for him to bring such forward on their journey after a godly sort, any more than to receive them into his tent, and treat them as he did.

"And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment; that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." What a character! But I would ask myself as well as you, beloved brethren, is that what the Lord can say of you and me? Does He really know this of us? I do not mean that He said it to Abraham, but in His word about him. Now He has written it for us; and for what purpose? That we should merely know what He felt towards Abraham? Nay, but that we should search ourselves, and see whether there are grounds for the Lord to speak so about ourselves and our households. For you generally find that a saint's ways are shown, not merely in his own personal conduct, but even more in the relation of his family all round to the Lord, as the fruit of his faith or the lack of it. This is the reason why (in the New Testament), no matter what gift a man had, no matter how much he might be personally excellent, if his household were unruly and not in subjection, such an one could not be an elder or bishop. How could a person rule the church of God, if he could not rule his own home ~ Because, where moral power would be shown most is, not in a discourse, or in company, or in a visit, but where a man unbends, where he is no longer the teacher or preacher, where he can either familiarly bring in God or habitually leave Him out, where he can have a free and constant circulation of that name, with all its fruitful consequences, in the family, or he proves that his heart is in ease. Show or money for them is really for himself. The Lord assuredly looks for a reflex in the household of the ways of God with the head of it; because there it is that God should manifestly be owned, and habitually govern; and there it is that the one who stands at the head is responsible to God for showing what his mind and heart value. It may be done with great simplicity, one need not say, with tender attention and care and interest in what goes on with each member of the family. And I do not mean merely the children, though the children have the nearer place; but servants also, supposing there are such in the house, Servants, it is true, are not expressly mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:1-16, possibly because some of the elders might be among the poorest, and perhaps servants themselves. Therefore God puts the matter in a general way; but where there are such domestics, just the same thing should be found. For that which sheds blessing among the children secures blessing among the servants. At any rate there should be godly order, even if the children or servants be not yet brought to the knowledge of God. So it most assuredly was at this time, and ordinarily, true of Abraham's house.

"For I know him:" was it ever so said about Lot? It would have had a sorrowful meaning in Lot's case; it has a blessed one in Abraham's. For this is the knowledge of approval, of divine complacency; it is the knowledge that prepared the way for his being the depository of the secrets of Jehovah — the one to whom He could communicate that which no angel knew, save those who

had their orders from Him and were just about to be the executioners of His judgment. But the angels in general, I venture to presume, knew little or nothing of it. It was enough for them to learn it when the thing had taken place. Thus it is that they learn about the church, and the wonders that God has shown to us. The church of God is His living lesson-book for the angels (Ephesians 3:1-21); it is by the dealings that He carries on with individual Christians, and with the assembly above all, that He is instructing them in His ways; as He did already by our Lord Jesus Christ in the highest degree, when He was here and exalted on high. He was not pleased to tell them of Christ beforehand; whereas one of the most remarkable privileges saints of old had was the revelation, as far as it went, of the sufferings of Christ and the glories after these. And now we know things to come, as well as the things of Christ above. "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before." This is, or ought to be, one of the cherished privileges of the Christian. For every child of God now really has, not only a priestly place in the grace of Christ, but what may be called a prophetic one. He is not of course a prophet, in the sense of giving out inspired communications from God. This the prophets did, as part of the foundation of the church, and it might be in what is called prophesying. But all ought to enjoy the reality of seeing, and testifying the things that are not as though they were, according to divine revelation, giving us to enter into the mind of God before His word comes to pass. The whole of the New Testament supposes that a part of what the Holy Ghost is come down here to do is, not only to "take of the things of Christ, and show them to us," but to show us "things to come" (John 16:1-33). In this chapter, and in the fresh scene that I am dwelling on, we have the very pattern of Christ when He was present here; I do not say when the sacrifice of Christ was offered in sign, which comes before us in Genesis 22:1-24. But here there is a remarkable anticipation of the presence of Jehovah — of God's presence in Christ, when He tabernacled as a man among men. Hence the wonderful opening out of that which was in His own heart; just as the Lord did in John 15:1-27, which may be viewed as the counterpart of what we find here. He had, as we know, been with the disciples in the tenderest love. There, it is true, it is not courteous furnishing of water for His feet, but (wondrous way!) His washing theirs. Supper time was come for Him and them: and He would stoop down and wash their feet, as a witness of His work of love when He should leave them; but, before He goes, He would tell them what was in His mind. He is treating them as friends; so He lets them know what the Holy Ghost is about to do when He Himself is absent on high. "It is expedient for you that I go away, else the Comforter will not come." But He went, and the Holy Ghost came and more than made up for His absence. So we find in measure with Abraham. The angels proceed; Jehovah remains behind with Abraham, who enters into a phase of communion with Him far beyond what he had enjoyed before.

"And Jehovah said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." He is speaking here just after the manner of men. Jehovah adopts the familiar language of common life, and deigns to adapt Himself to that which every one could understand in a man. It is wholly above our comprehension how God knows all things at once, without inquiry or investigation. He condescends here to speak so that Abraham might be thoroughly free in His presence.

"And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before Jehovah. And Abraham drew near, and said." How precious is this access to Him who had thus come down! Abraham shows no shrinking behind the door. He has confidence in God.

"Abraham drew near." The Christian can understand it all, now that redemption has been accomplished, and sin has been judged, and we have been left, according to the word of God and the work of Christ, without a single spot or stain to arrest the eye of the Judge. Such is the efficacy of the blood in which we have been washed from our sins, even as we ourselves are a new creation in Christ before Him. But is there always in us, as here in Abraham, a real readiness to draw near and speak to our God? Are we happy in making due use of the: privileges we possess? This is a serious question for our souls. We see how it was with the patriarch.

"He drew near" and says, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Now, mark, it is no longer a question about himself, or about the son. The son was soon to come. All this was settled. He rests upon it, his heart is perfectly free. He has no longer a single want for himself; not one suit remains to be spread before Jehovah. His heart is drawn out in a spirit of grace, which answers to the grace of the Lord towards himself. He entreats Jehovah about others. He does not yet mention the one that no doubt lay heavily on his heart. His nephew was in Sodom; Lot dwelt there. Who was there living that knew the faults of Lot better than Abraham? But Abraham entered, in his measure, into the feelings of God. For if faults, if blots, could have fumed away the love of God, where should we be? Lot had done Abraham no little harm; he had been the cause of considerable trouble. It was a case of risking life itself on one occasion never to be forgotten.

All this, however, made little or no difference to Abraham. But now he could only think in sorrow of Lot as in the very midst of the doomed city. We need not suppose that he had only mourned over Lot for the first time. Could it be an entirely new thought to Abraham that Sodom and Gomorrah were nests of wickedness, and utterly unfit for the sojourn of that righteous man, Lot? Why should he "vex his soul" there? It was certainly not God who had called him into it. Was the old man hankering after wealth or honour in town, as once for the well-watered plains of Jordan near it? He had not reamed his lesson, and now a far more serious chastening was at hand. Now he was only going to be saved so as by fire. Soon must he abandon that seat of honour in the gate of Sodom he too dearly loved. Lot must now taste the bitterness of what he had chosen. Whatever is our wrong must in the long run be our chastening. But look at Abraham. "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" All his heart is moved, now that he has a glimpse of the destruction so swiftly coming on the plains which had beguiled his kinsman. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou also destroy, and not spare, the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? Such is his plea with Jehovah. He pleads as one whose heart felt deeply; end when our hearts are engaged, the work is not done badly. That is the real secret of it. We may do things simply — and we cannot be too simple — but we see the mark clearly where the heart feels aright. It was so with Abraham. He intercedes earnestly and with perseverance, giving expression to that sentiment which the New Testament brings forward under the hand of the Apostle Paul — "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Of course He will, and here we have the answer of grace: "Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

Then Abraham ventures to take a little more courage, and brings his request down to forty-five, to forty, and to twenty (vers. Genesis 18:27-31). At last he says, "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake." Why "this once"? Alas! our faith never reaches up to the grace of God. We weary and fail, not He. We get enough, through His grace, for our blessing, but rarely do we venture into

its depths. Sound as we may, we certainly never get to the bottom. It was to be proved so here; for although Jehovah answered to the full all that Abraham's faith and confidence in His grace essayed, His grace far exceeded, for it descended after all to that one person who lay on the heart of Abraham, though he had not the boldness to say so. But Jehovah knew it; and while He surely did not spare that wicked place (and it was according to His righteous government that it should be made an example of divine judgment), none the less did He rescue that righteous soul spite of his faults. But I refer to this now in order to note the gracious effect on Abraham's spirit of being brought into the knowledge of God's mind about the future. For it issues not merely in prayer, but in intercession for others. It may be well to ask, beloved brethren, whether we are given to similar intercession, who know that the Lord is soon coming to judge the habitable earth? There are few persons in this room who do not know a great deal more of what is coming to pass on the earth than those who have the credit for learning and theology in this day of ours. We know how great are our shortcomings, and how little we know; but still, as a matter of undeniable fact, it is certain that we are accustomed to look into the future, that we are used in spirit, where God has made Christ our all, to enter into that to which He points us on. We have no doubt what is coming on the world, and on the different parts of the world, as clearly as if we saw it on a map — one painted blue, and another black. We know perfectly well that there is a land where the eyes of Jehovah rest, and He will surely magnify His name. On the other hand, we know of other lands that shall be given up to desolation. The revealed future is thus a matter of settled knowledge to us which has its results practically, though of course in different degrees. But I ask again, what is the present effect of all on our souls? Does it draw us out in intercession? Are we pleading with the Lord? Ought it not to be so, if we really believe what is coming to pass on the flower of Christendom? Has it engaged our hearts in intercession? Are we sufficiently alive to the way in which God's children are at this moment dishonouring Him by unworthy, mistaken, unbelieving thoughts? or to the great danger from this to their souls? Can any of these things be without loss or peril to them? They are deeply injurious, these false expectations, as well as the want of faith in what is before men. They look for the improvement of society and the progress of Christendom. They believe not in a judgment of the living to be executed by our Lord when He comes in His kingdom at, or just before, the end of which He will judge the wicked dead. This trifling with the word of God, this blotting out from the future of God's warning, have present consequences of the most serious kind; but do they stir our hearts in desire for the saints of God? We know, of course, that nothing can stay the judgments that are coming on the ungodly, and that God will shelter the righteous in that day; but are our hearts going out to Him about His people? We see how Abraham interceded. The Lord give us to be like Him! It supposes hearts at rest in His grace as to all that concerns ourselves before Him. But that very grace gives us confidence in Him for others dear to Him; and their failures, or dangers, should draw out intercession; yet HE is beyond all that we ask or think.

01.09. GENESIS 19.

Genesis 19:1-38. The connection of the solemn history which now opens before us is one of contrast, especially full of instruction for us who find ourselves on the eve of a judgment of incomparably larger extent. Our Lord Himself pointedly applies it no less than the catastrophe in the days of Noah to present warning. "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Luke 17:26-33.) It will be a judgment of God, not merely in providence, but directed by the Lord, and as none of the wicked shall understand, so shall none escape. It essentially differs from such scenes as the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, to which the commentators so perversely refer it. The intimation of verse 34 seems expressly added to refute such a notion. Let us turn to the facts, as scripture records them.

"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned into him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat." (Genesis 19:1-3.) Jehovah no longer deigns to accompany His messengers, nor visits Lot, like Abraham. He would have been ashamed to be called the God of Lot, who "sat in the gate of Sodom," instead of running to meet them "from the tent door," like his kinsman pilgrim. Yet was much in common: no less courtesy, perhaps, but a little hospitality. Nevertheless, we see a certain shrinking on the part of the angels, as we have already noticed the absence of Jehovah. Not even He, much less they, said Abraham Nay, or proposed to stay without. To Lot, even though it was, they decline his proffered shelter, and propose to abide in the street all night. At length they yield to his pressure, enter his house, and accept of his unleavened bread. Their visit gives occasion to the open and unnatural depravity of the inhabitants, "both old and young, all the people from every quarter" (Genesis 19:4). They foam out their shame shamelessly (Genesis 19:5). Lot goes forth to plead for his guests, to remonstrate with his fellow-townsmen (alas! he calls them "brethren"), and offer his two daughters (Genesis 19:6-8). For he has lost the simplicity of faith, and, instead of looking only to the Lord in this scene of difficulty and danger and surrounding wickedness, he chooses in worldly wisdom what he conceived the lesser of two evils. Could we expect better from a righteous Lot which "sat in the gate of Sodom?" "And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one

fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door" (Genesis 19:9).

How often had Lot flattered and excused himself, as he gradually drew nearer to guilty Sodom, that his was the wise and right course, not like his exclusive uncle, Abraham! What is the use, what the duty, of a good man in the world, if not to improve it? Was there not a haughty and self-righteous stiffness under the lowly guise of Abraham, who kept himself apart from all his neighbours in the land? Separate from the present world, he in his tent declared plainly that he was seeking a better (that is, a heavenly) country. But did not Lot's conscience ever smite him, lest (under his assumption of a more active and benevolent zeal) there might lurk an unjudged unbelief of God's estimate of the present and promise of the future, which left room for the rank growth of covetousness, and the love of ease, honour, wealth, and power? Abraham had not a question as to God's favour and kindness, any more than as to His purpose of blessing and glory by-and-by: as little did he doubt that the world and, above all, the races in the midst of whom he pursued his stranger path, were doomed to divine judgment, though there might be a defined delay in its execution. Lot had no such clearness of vision. He anticipated better things. He had more confidence in human nature, more assurance of the moral influence of a good man like himself. He hears too late the rebuke of his folly from the lips of the most unclean Sodom: "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge." They felt that a righteous man had no consistent place in their midst; and they were not so blind to his motives as himself. What had Lot gained, with his position, but vexation to his soul, as he saw from day to day their filthy conversation and lawless deeds? Certainly he had not pleased the Lord, whose will and lessons he had despised: how had he fared with the world to which he had held? How different it was with Abraham before the sons of Heth in Genesis 23:1-20! But the hour of destruction was at hand for the cities of the plain; and when the miscreants came near to break the door, the angels "put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of Jehovah; and Jehovah hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for Jehovah will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; Jehovah being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, 1 have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast

spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (vers. Genesis 19:11-26).

Even in the hour of deliverance, it is humiliating to read how Lot "lingered," though he might not, like his wife, "look back," and become the lasting witness of the truth of the warning. No wonder there was no power in such a preacher of righteousness! Dwelling among the men of Sodom is the way neither to glorify God, nor to win their souls to the Saviour. Even the last fatal night "he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law," as we have seen what a storm he brought on himself from his townsmen. What a contrast with him of whom Jehovah said, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of Jehovah, to do justice and judgment; that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him!" Yet, to worldly philanthropy and wit, did Abraham seem a useless person in his day and generation; to faith he is the man of whom God said, and of whom faith is sure, "Thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Just so, there are many Lots; but where are those blessed, and a blessing, with faithful Abraham? If content to be less, we certainly sink below even this sad level, like Abraham's seed, who were not Abraham's children (John 8:1-59.). We may, in the pure and sovereign mercy of God, be "delivered" men, like Lot: but are even now, like Abraham, men separate to the Lord, and knowing these things before? (2 Peter 3:1-18). Is it enough for us to be snatched, as it were, out of the fire, when the word is, "we will destroy this place; escape for thy life, lest thou also be consumed"? Or do we covet the portion (which indeed it is the Christian's shame not to covet) of being with the Lord before a sign of doom appears, morally far apart from all that cries for divine vengeance, sharing His mind who deigns to open His secrets and treats us as His friends? Are we interceding for others in love, as Abraham in Genesis 18:1-33; or deprecating what we dread, as Lot in Genesis 19:1-38? "Oh, not so, my Lord; behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: behold now, this city is near to flee into, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." So it is always. The saints who live like others in the world share the world's fears. Their prayers savour of its state. Its troubles oppress them, as its successes ensnare them. This did not Abraham. "The mountain," which was the source of fear to Lot, was the scene of communion between Jehovah and Abraham. There he had prayed, with touching importunity for the righteous endangered by the approaching judgment, and not in vain; for God did better than he asked. He did destroy the guilty cities, but He delivered less than ten righteous found there, righteous Lot himself, who was here begging (and not in vain) for the least city of the five.

And, now that the blow is struck, the difference between the heavenly-minded man and the earthly minded is still kept up as strikingly as ever. "Abraham get up early in the morning to the place where he stood before Jehovah: and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham,

and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt. And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters" (vers. Genesis 19:27-30). Was not Abraham even here, where it could be least looked for, not only blessed but a blessing? Nothing could be done to Sodom and Gomorrah till Lot came to Zoar; but was it not for Abraham's sake? It was even then and there, because "God remembered" not Lot but "Abraham." This then was the end of the place where Lot had lived and laboured, or at least talked. He was as little in the secret of Jehovah as the men of Sodom, though no doubt he was vexed, or rather (as scripture so pregnantly tells us) the righteous man vexed his righteous soul from day to day. But God never called Lot to Sodom, as He had called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan. Abraham's groans were gracious, and had profitable fruit; Lot's were not without his own fault and torment, groans barren even for himself. Abraham is attracted to the place where he had enjoyed the presence and converse of Jehovah, and looks down on the scene of desolation which attested in its solemn way what it is to hate Jehovah, and what to love Him. And there Lot too goes up out of Zoar: afraid to go at God's bidding when there was no ground for fear there, afraid longer to stay in Zoar, and not afraid to go where and when he had feared most of all, had he been aware into what a snare he was about to be caught by wine and women — alas! his own daughters. Such was the end of him who would needs be a judge in Sodom, but only the beginning of those who should inflict sorrowful results on the children of Abraham throughout their history, till that day come when Sodom's doom finds its antitype, and the Branch out of Jesse's roots shall reign, and Moab, with Edom, shall be the laying on of Israel's hand, and the sons of Ammon their obedience (Isaiah 11:14). And have saints who now court and cleave to the world, valuing position and honour in it, no reproof to learn?

01.10. GENESIS 20.

Genesis 20:1-18.

Nevertheless a signal time of favour and blessing may precede a great humiliation through unwatchfulness and sin. So it was now with Abraham, as he sojourned in the land of the Philistines. Was it that he too, as well as Lot, feared to abide under the shield of the Almighty in view of the scene of the recent judgments? This were to tempt God, as Israel in the desert when they questioned His presence in their midst and His care. Certain it is that he journeyed from where he once stood before Jehovah in intercession. and a little later in awe-inspiring contemplation of the judged land of the plain whence the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of the furnace. Long-before it the pinch of famine induced him to journey toward the south, even to Egypt, and to sojourn there. Now he dwells between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourns in Gerar; and now as then he denies his true relationship to his wife. "She is my sister" says Abraham of Sarah among the Philistines, as at an early day he told her to say so among the Egyptians (Genesis 12:11-13; Genesis 20:1-2). What! the father of the faithful? And this again, after all the times which had passed over him?

Alas! "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of Jehovah bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." No difference in this respect distinguished the first father of Israel. Abraham sinned now, like Adam at the beginning; and he who taught his wife to prevaricate before they entered Egypt falls into the like snare himself in Philistia.

Christ has never denied the church; though I would not weaken the warning that if we deny, He also will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He at least abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. But the church in spite of His warnings and His faithful love has denied her true relationship to Him, has denied it because of fear of the world or the world’s seed that borders on the heavenly land, utterly failing in faith of His unseen presence and that power which would assuredly arm her where He did not call on her to glorify Him in suffering or death. But where sin abounded grace super-abounded. For if Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah, God came to him in a dream by night, and said unto him, Behold, thou art a dead man for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is married to a husband. The Philistine king, however, could plead the sincerity of his heart and the innocency of his hands, identifying his people with himself. "Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?" Abraham and Sarah were both guilty of deceit. Yet it is to be noted that, while God allowed the plea, intimating indeed that He had kept the king from actual sin, He maintains the special place, in which Abraham stood. "Now therefore restore the man his wife: for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine. Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid" (vers. Genesis 20:7-8). This is a principle in God’s ways, and as evident in the New Testament as in the

Old. Thus the Lord may reprove (however graciously) the Baptist who inquires through his disciples whether He was the Christ, pointing simply to His irrefragable proofs; but He turns round and at once vindicates the place of honour given to John beyond all born of woman. So here it was unquestionable that Abraham was wrong, and that far more grievously now than nearer the commencement of his course. Yet Abimelech must restore him his wife, "for he is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live:" otherwise he must die with all his.

"Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reproved. So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. For Jehovah had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife" (vers. Genesis 20:8-9). It is a sad picture when the believer has to own his fault as Abraham was now doing not only before Jehovah, but before the power of the world; and when his account of his motives is but the laying bare of unbelieving fears, the more guilty because the deception was planned and agreed on between man and wife. But when does one sin stand alone? and where is sin so ugly as in saints of God? It was an early fear, the root of it was not thoroughly judged in Egypt, and as lack of self-judgment exposed them to it in Gerar, so it was attended with severer abasement the second time than the first.

It is even so with the Christian. It is not that he who is bathed loses the virtue of that divinely given privilege: the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost are not at all the working of man's will, ephemeral as this is, but of God who begets sovereignly by the word of truth. But he does indeed need to wash his feet. Defilements from walking through the world must be removed: else one has no part with Christ. In His incomparable grace He thus keeps clean the cleansed, or removes whatever grieves the Holy Spirit. This Peter had to learn, though reluctant in his haste and folly, first in word, that the Lord should stoop so low for his sake, and then in all the depth of the truth. How little did the disputing apostle anticipate that he would so soon feel his own need and bless his Master for the active constancy of His love! It is grace suited to the saint as necessary as that which the sinner wants (1 John 2:1).

Here Abimelech restores Sarah to Abraham with many a sheep and ox, manservant and maid, and gives him express leave to dwell in the land where it was good in his eyes, yet not without a severe reproof to Sarah and indeed to her husband. The Philistine had paid his reparation price; but what a covering of the eyes had the husband been for the wife to all that were with her and with all others! Is it not humbling when the Gentile can thus justly rebuke the people of God for

failure in holding fast their privileges till it end in a breach of common truthfulness? Nevertheless God listened to the prayer of Abraham, and the judgment which had fallen on the house of Abimelech was removed. "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another, he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." If He was thus watchful of the children, He cared no less for their father. He would only relieve an Abimelech at the intercession of Abraham; but Abraham must first be put to shame before the Philistine, and make confession of the sin which had exposed him to the censure and rebuke of the uncircumcised. How often has fear of the world been thus a snare, and equivocation on the part of those who should have been a faithful witness (as being elect and called) thrown the portion of faith into the hands of the world to the confusion and danger of all! But God is faithful and knows how to extricate for His own name's sake those who should have walked in separation to Himself.

How holy and wholesome too is that word which God has magnified above all His name! Where spurious holy writings venture on the ground of fact, they cry up their heroes, and hide their faults with diligent care, even when they do not descend to positive fable. Far otherwise does the Spirit of God deal, in the Old Testament, with the conduct of the fathers or the people of Israel, in the New with the sins even of an apostle, with the shame of a whole assembly. So with the portrait of the father of the faithful here, drawn by Moses for the chosen nation, yea by the Holy Spirit for all saints of all times: who but He would have so simply and truthfully set before us Abraham and Sarah on the one hand, or Abimelech the Philistine king on the other?

01.11. GENESIS 21.

Genesis 21:1-34. The power of God was now accomplishing what His mouth had promised. The child is born of Sarah, the son given to Abraham, type of Him, the Son, whom God sent forth, when the fulness of the time was come, to effect redemption, and be the centre of all His purposes for heaven on earth, and the judge of all He will cast into hell.

"And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was torn unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was an hundred years old when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age" (vers. Genesis 21:1-7).

Thus was Isaac's birth the occasion of joy in measure, as his very name imports, when Sarah laughed no more in unbelief, as once (Genesis 18:12-15), but in gladness of heart, as in the fellowship of all that hear of the goodness of the Lord. It is a lovely witness to the power of grace when faith thus gives the victory in what had been one's weakness, and sin, and shame. And so, if Abraham gives the name to his son, Sarah needs no prophet, but explains the mind of God in it for herself, and for ever. But another sight of the family of faith is next vouchsafed to us. "And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed" (vers. Genesis 21:8-13). Of this incident, which our light hearts might quickly pass over, the Holy Ghost makes a great deal in the two Epistles of the New Testament, which either assert or vindicate the fundamental truth of justification by faith. The first occurs in Galatians 4:1-31, where the apostle is convicting the bewitched Galatians of their folly in departing from grace to law. If they desired to be under the law, why not hear the law? The two sons of Abraham should have had a voice to every believer. One was by a slave, the other by a free woman; one born after the flesh, the other by promise, as the mothers answered to the two covenants, Jerusalem that was in bondage with her children, and Jerusalem which is above, the free mother of the free. But this, though much, is not all; for after citing from Isaiah a marvellous testimony to the reckoning of grace during the desolation of Jerusalem, the tale of the child of promise is again used to show (1) that as he that was born after the flesh then persecuted him that was after the Spirit, so it is now;

(2) that the sentence of scripture is, Cast out the bondmaid and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. Grace refuses partnership with law or flesh. The child of promise alone inherits.

It is the more instructive and important to note that in this transaction Abraham was weak, and Sarah strong. He did not give glory to God as she did; hence God called on Abraham to hearken to Sarah's voice, whatever might be the natural subjection of wife to husband — a subjection in which the apostle Peter expressly cites this very Sarah as an admirable pattern to christian women generally. But here the weaker vessel was by grace the stronger of the two, and Abraham must not regard Sarah's feeling as the mere affronted pride of the mistress who could not brook the airs of aspiring and mocking Ishmael. She was in the secret of Jehovah more deeply than her husband; while he was allowing unduly the claims of flesh, and was grieved at the proposal of expelling the bondmaid's son from the house. But so it must be according to God. Sarah was right. Her child was of promise, as the word was which declared Jehovah would return at the time appointed and Sarah should have a son.

It was not so with Hagar and Ishmael, though God would make a nation of him because he was Abraham's seed. But there must be liberty in the house for all that are of God, and no entangling with the yoke of bondage. Every remnant of law, world, and flesh must be expelled, and what was of promise alone abide. But it is all ever thus judged till the day of "a great feast." Then comes the decisive moment, and what is of the flesh persecutes what is of the Spirit, and grace gives the Sarahs to speak out, and God will have it heard and acted on, though an Abraham may be grieved: but then, and not till then, is the bondmaid cast out with her son. The Sinai covenant that genders to bondage and her child after the flesh can be no longer tolerated in the household of faith. The second quotation is in Romans 9:7. The apostle is combating the pretension of the Jews to enjoyment of the promises by natural or national descent, so as to exclude Gentiles. This he establishes in the most conclusive way by an appeal to Abraham's own seed, Ishmael. If the promise necessarily falls to the seed of Abraham as such, the Ishmaelites must be let in. As no Jew would allow of this, he must abandon his principle. It is a question of promise, not of fleshly descent but of His own sovereignty who had limited the call to Isaac. "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Sovereignty therefore is the only source of hope for Israel, which is reasoned out still more fully in the chapter, and applied to Jacob, to the exclusion of Esau, though of the same mother as well as father, and even twins. But the same sovereignty of God is shown to be the sole resource for Israel at Mount Sinai, when all else had been ruin for the people as a whole by their worship of the golden calf: so completely were they silenced on the score of their own righteousness. Driven thus from the ground of law, as well as of lineal descent, on what could they fall back? On the sovereign mercy of God. This alone did, or could, save a sinner or a sinful people in entire accordance with Exodus 33:19; but if they owned this, who were they to dispute that sovereignty calling Gentiles too, as indeed the prophets expressly declare that He would, when Israel became for a season Lo-ammi by their idolatry and their rejection of Messiah ?

Here we go beyond the passage which has given occasion to the apostolic argument. Still, looked at in the narrowest point of view, how fruitful is scripture, and how marvellously does He who wrote in the Old Testament use the facts and words of the New Testament! How self-evidently divine are both! Ishmael, like Israel after the flesh, cannot take the inheritance by law, but are cast out, though preserved of God.

It does not come within my present scope to dwell on God's dealings with Hagar, the comfort He gave her then and afterwards as to Ishmael, or his subsequent history (Genesis 21:14-21); though we may notice in passing that, as the bondmaid mother was an Egyptian, so the wife she took her son was out of the land of Egypt: law, flesh, and world go together. But in the next section we see Abraham in his true place and dignity. "And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son; but, according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear. And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing; neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but today. And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them. Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines" (vers. Genesis 21:22-32). In the beginning of the chapter we saw that the servant abides not in the house for ever: Ishmael and his mother are dismissed. The son abides always: Isaac is there, the heir of all.

Now we see that the Gentile king, who once inspired Abraham with guilty fear and became the occasion of a foul snare, not only seeks favour of the father of the faithful but is himself reproved. The power of the world acknowledged God to be with Abraham, and asks for a covenant between them. (Compare Zechariah 8:23). Earthly righteousness is now asserted, as before we saw heavenly long-suffering, save where a corresponding pledge of the coming kingdom came before us in Genesis 14:1-24, which concluded that series, as this concludes the later series. Here therefore the well of the oath is recovered and secured, and a grove or orchard is planted there, for the wilderness shall be glad, and the desert blossom as the lily; yea, there shall break out water and brooks, and there shall walk the redeemed. And Abraham "called there on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days" (vers. Genesis 21:33-34). He is in type no longer the pilgrim, but the head of the nations and heir of the world.

Thus the second division of Abraham's history terminates with the figure of the kingdom in manifested power of glory, when beauty is given for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

01.12. GENESIS 22.

Genesis 22:1-24. The last chapter closed that series of divine dealings with our patriarch which opened with Genesis 15:1-21. We can readily see that it forms a natural conclusion. The long-promised heir is come; the legal covenant and the child of flesh are cast out; the prince of the Gentiles is reproved instead of reproving, and seeks the friendship of the father of the faithful, who plants a grove and calls there on the name of the everlasting God. Thus, as in Genesis 14:1-24, we are brought again to a picture of millennial peace and power and blessing. In Genesis 22:1-24 we begin another series of yet deeper character and moment — final too, as far as Abraham and Sarah are concerned.

"And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." It was the greatest trial to which God had ever put the heart of a saint. It was not tempting with evils any more than God is tempted with them. It was, on the contrary, His own good that was before God, who would make His friend the witness of it, while testing his confidence in Himself and His word to the uttermost. Isaac was loved as only a child so promised, born and reserved for a wondrous destiny, could be — to say nothing of personal qualities that must endear him to his parents. How the father's heart must have pondered on God's covenant with "thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant," and the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; especially after Hagar and Ishmael were expelled, and the word of promise came, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called!" The father was assured therefore that this son, and no other, was that of the promises. God could not lie; but He might and does try, and those most whom He loves best. So with Abraham now. God demands that the father shall offer up his only son for a burnt-offering on Mount Moriah. It was the shadow of His own incomparable and infinite gift, but only the shadow; for Christ really did suffer and die, and God the Father sent Him, in divine love, to be thus a propitiation for our sins.

Abraham was only "tried"; still he was tried most severely, and by grace endured the trial, and was blessed accordingly. There was no delay in giving up his son to God, any more than he had doubted of God's word that he should have a son of Sarah when both were as good as dead.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, as took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (vers. Genesis 22:3-5). The moment was come when Abraham must challenge his heart for the last time, counting on God to make good his promise, and give him back that very Isaac to be the heir of all assured to himself, and the channel of blessing to all families of the earth. God must raise Isaac assuredly, as his own mind was made up to sacrifice him at God's bidding. "And Abraham took the wood of the

burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering" (vers. Genesis 22:6; Genesis 22:8).

Unconscious prophet of a truth too well (too little) known, Abraham anticipates exactly what God has done in the gospel, of which this very scene stands out, in some respects, the most eminent type. Guilty man, in his heart of hearts, thinks all depends on some atonement he is to make, even if he also, in ever so orthodox a manner, confesses our Lord Jesus as a Saviour. But this he confesses for all the world: for himself to get the benefit, he really trusts to a sort of compounding for his sins. He hopes to give up his sins, most of all, and that God will be merciful. Such is the gospel of the largest part of Christendom, where it is not even an avowed confidence in life-giving ordinances, and saving rites and works of goodness. What a contrast with "God will provide himself a lamb!" What grace on God's part! What a call for faith on man's! "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace." Nor could any other way suit either. Sins are thus borne and judged, and forgiven to the believer but yet to God's glory, while His grace reigns to eternal life. Anything else would depreciate God, as it would exalt the sinner, for which certainly Christ did not die; but suffered once, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God; and this He has done for every believer cleansed from every sin by His blood.

"So they went both of them together; and they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided" (Genesis 22:9-14). Thus was Abraham fully tried, and God magnified and honoured by his simple-hearted trust in Himself. Yet not a drop of Isaac's blood was shed. God remains God. He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all. In all things Christ has the pre-eminence.

Still Abraham shines brightly in the scene, and God marks His appreciation of it. "And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (vers. Genesis 22:15-18).

Galatians 3:16 casts fresh light on the blessing here pronounced. The blessing is twofold. In Genesis 22:17 it is Jewish, and consists in a countless progeny, which possess the gate of their enemies. In Genesis 22:18 no number is attached to "thy seed." This, accordingly, is what the Holy

Spirit contrasts as "the seed" of Abraham to which the promises were made. "He saith not, And to seeds as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Thus the Seed with no number or multiplicity annexed to it is shown to be Christ, typified by Isaac, risen again from the dead in figure, who blesses all the Gentiles, as now in the gospel, contra-distinguished from the numerous Jewish seed, who are to subject the nations and rule over them, in the age to come. The Seed risen from the dead has evidently broken the link with life or relationship on earth, and is in a wholly new condition wherein He is able to bless the Gentile as freely as the Jew. This Christ is doing now, as the Epistle proves, wholly apart from law or circumcision which suppose the flesh and the Jew still under the probation of God, and so in effect deny the cross.

We see accordingly how harmonious is the teaching. of Hebrews 11:17-19 with Galatians 3:1-29. Christ is the true Seed of Abraham, and this not only of promise but, as dead and risen. It is, thus the promises are secured; it is thus also that they open out to all the nations or Gentiles; even as it is written, In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The Seed dead and risen is as free to bless the Gentile as Jew. Both were lost in rejecting Him; but He is risen from the dead, and God is pleased to bless in Him not only the Jew but all the Gentiles. The Seed of the woman is the Son of Abraham risen from the dead after being offered up. And the blessing is unconditional grace, independent of the law which came in long after the promise and for a wholly different end, as the apostle argues and proves to the bewitched Galatians. Law can only bring a curse on those who take that ground for their souls with God. Blessing is by faith in virtue of Him who died and rose again, and can thus in pure grace reach the believer, spite of flesh, law and world, which ensure only condemnation for sinful man. But Christ is dead and risen, and the blessing is confirmed in Him by God’s oath to all the nations. So much the more awful will be the lot of all who despise Him, trusting in themselves, in others, or in aught else! The rest of the chapter (vers. Genesis 22:20-24) calls for no particular notice now. It was meant to prepare the way for Rebekah, by showing her relationship with Abraham’s lineage, in view of a still closer tie.

01.13. GENESIS 23.

Genesis 23:1-20. The death of Sarah follows, and God takes special notice of it, not only for Abraham's sake, but, as it would seem, for its typical bearing, since it comes after the sacrifice and resurrection of the son, and before the call of the bride. In this point of view we must remember that, as Hagar represents the legal covenant of Sinai, Sarah is the shadow of the covenant of promise (Galatians 4:1-31). One cannot wonder that her death as a figure is unintelligible to those who regard her as symbolic of our best and characteristic church blessings. But it is not so: scripture is right, theology as usual wrong. Sarah sets forth the covenant of promise presented to the Jew after the cross (but on his unbelieving refusal) passing away to make room for the call of the church to heavenly glory and union with Christ on high. Of all this the reader may find the key in studying the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Compare especially Acts 3:1-26, which answers to Sarah, with Acts 9:1-43, on the total rejection of this in the death of Stephen, when God begins to send the gospel outside Jerusalem, raising up Paul as minister of the church in its full character.

Certain it is that Abraham's wife is the only woman whose years are carefully noted. To her death and the account of the purchase of a burying place the whole chapter is devoted. "And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" (vers. Genesis 23:1-2). Faith does not enfeeble affection; it heightens our sense of the havoc sin has wrought. But we sorrow not as others who have no hope, looking for His coming who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Again, we are expressly told in Hebrews 11:1-40 that these all (Sarah included) died, not in possession, but in faith. Of this the scripture before us is the most striking witness. Till the burial of Sarah Abraham possessed not so much as to set his foot on. He abides the pilgrim and stranger to the last. He has to buy even for a burying-place. He would have Canaan only under the glory of the Lord, and in the day of resurrection. He is content to wait till then. The time of faith is the time of Christ. While He is hidden, believers are hidden also; when He appears, then shall they also appear along with Him in glory.

There can be no greater mistake than that faith destroys lowliness, or promotes a want of considering others. It really brings God in, and thus is self judged, and love can flow. See the admirable bearing of Abraham with the children of Heth.

"And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear

me and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a burying-place amongst you. And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land" (vers. Genesis 23:3-12). God had given him the moral respect of his neighbours; but he neither presumes on his favour in their eyes, nor will he take advantage of their feelings. As he rises above the sorrow that pressed on his heart, so he does not accept what cost him nothing for the burial of his dead. If he exceeded the sons of Heth in courtesy, he was none the less careful that the fullest value should be paid in due form, and with adequate witness.

"And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant."

"And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and al} the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city" (vers. Genesis 23:13-18). Faith never was meant to encourage a careless spirit, as Abraham’s conduct in this business exemplifies, at a moment when any one else would have rather availed himself of another’s help. Whatever the circumstances, faith makes the believer superior to them all.

"And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the sons of Heth" (vers. Genesis 23:19-20). God works, doubtless; but the believer himself is exercised before Him and is delivered from his own will, or from the influence of objects such as the enemy uses to divert from God. So it was here. God gave Abraham such a place in the esteem of his neighbours that there was no difficulty whatever; but Abraham bore himself as one who sought not his own things but the will and pleasure of Him who had called him out by, and to, His promises — promises as yet unfulfilled.

Burial in the land began with Sarah. It was no mere feeling or fancy, sentiment or superstition, but a fruit of faith, in Abraham. He looked to have from God’s hand the land wherein he laid her body. The gift of Canaan was far surer than any possession of a burying-place meanwhile. I deny not that he desired a better country, that is, a heavenly, that he looked for the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. But he rejoiced to see the day of Christ and expected in it the wresting of the earth from the hands of the enemy, and knew that all the land of Canaan would be his for an everlasting possession.

Hence the importance to the patriarchs, while preserving their pilgrim character, of burial in Canaan. So, when Abraham was gathered to his people, his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the same spot, "in the cave of Machpelah in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre, the held which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife" (Genesis 25:9-10). There too was Isaac laid by his sons Esau and Jacob (Genesis 35:27-29). And so it was with Jacob, though he died in Egypt, for Joseph had him embalmed; "and his sons did unto him according as he commanded them, for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying-place of Ephron the Hittite before Mamre" (Genesis 50:12-13). Joseph again (Genesis 50:25-26) "took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." Hence he too was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt; but when deliverance came, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (Exodus 13:19), which the children of Israel in due time buried, not in the cave of Machpelah but in Shechem, "in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph" Joshua 24:32).

Very different is the spiritual feeling which the hope of Christ’s coming forms in the breast of the Christian. As His presence on high, in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, calls one in worship from earth to heaven, and thus makes it no longer a question of Jerusalem any more than of "this mountain," so we look for Christ to come, gather us round him in the air, and present us in the Father’s house, as well as to reign with Him after a heavenly sort over the earth. A special resting-place here below vanishes from a mind thus formed and nourished. We look, not for death though we may meanwhile fall asleep, but for Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and will change us whether we wake or sleep into His glorious image, transforming our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory according to the working of the power which He has, even to subdue all things to Himself. Thus the opening of the heavens for us, consequent on redemption and our Lord’s ascension, makes the earth to be of no account for the Christian in any way or for any present purpose.

01.14. GENESIS 24.

Genesis 24:1-67.

It is not my purpose to dwell at length on the call of Bethuel's daughter to be the bride of Isaac, however attractive the subject may be; but I would only point out in passing the striking propriety that here, after the death of Sarah, we should have the introduction of Rebekah. He who is at all instructed in the ways of God recognises in the latter the bride for the risen Son and Heir of all things, and this after the figure of the covenant of promise in Sarah has passed away. Till the Jews had refused the fresh summons of God to own their Messiah, now risen and glorified, there could be fittingly no bringing in of the Gentiles, no formation of a heavenly bride, the body of a heavenly Christ. Not that the tale of Rebekah opens out the mystery which was reserved hidden in God for the apostle Paul to reveal to us, itself revealed not to the Old Testament writers, but to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This however does not hinder, but rather help, us, now that the secret is revealed, to understand the type of Rebekah as far as it goes; but it may be noticed that it does not set out either of the two great parts of the mystery — first, Christ, the Head of all things, heavenly and earthly; secondly, the church, in which Jewish and Gentile distinctions disappear, united to Him as His body in that universal supremacy, conscious of the relationship even while here on earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from on high. The type fits in with all, but cannot be said to reveal it. My task now is to say a little of Abraham's part in what is here recorded. "And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware that thou bring not my son thither again. The Jehovah God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter" (vers. Genesis 24:1-9). In all this the Father's purpose seems clearly foreshown; a new thing was in progress — a bride to be fetched for His Son. None but the most careless can forbear to see the great and unusual solemnity of the transaction. Thus his trusty Eliezer is employed "that ruled over all he had," who aptly prefigures the place of service which the Holy Spirit is pleased now to take in executing the purpose of God as to the church in this world. In no other case, not of Genesis only but of all the Old Testament, do we find an oath introduced, the purport of which is so urged again and again. The subject of it too is no less to be observed. A wife must on no account be taken for Isaac from the daughters of Canaan. She must

be sought from the country and kin out of which the father of the faithful had himself been called. Angels are not called, fallen or unfallen: sovereign grace chooses from the world. But there is another provision no less insisted on — the risen Son must on no account be brought again to the world for calling His bride. It is the Holy Ghost who accomplishes this work, not the Bridegroom. The Spirit is sent down from heaven to preach the gospel, and so to effect the formation of the church. The risen Bridegroom abides exclusively in heaven, while the call proceeds. Most impressively does Abraham admonish us in type of what moment it is to see that Christ has nothing but a heavenly relation to the church, and in absolute separation from the world.

How true this is in Christ for the Christian! "We all with open face beholding [or reflecting] the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit." "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." So our Lord Himself said (John 16:1-33), the Comforter, on coming, should "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe on me; of righteousness, because I go away to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The righteous One was cast out by the unjust and lawless world, but God the Father has accepted and exalted Him at His right hand. This is the righteousness of God in its heavenly aspect; and there we know Him, not as the Messiah reigning on earth, but as the rejected One exalted in heaven. He is in no sense of the world; and Christians are not, even as He is not. Nay, more, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). The practice depends on the principle: the position of Christ determines the walk, as well as the spirit, of the Christian. Rebekah was to have Isaac in Canaan before her; there only was to think of him. On no account — not even to win his bride — must the bridegroom leave his place, save only to receive her to himself at the end. Isaac stays in Canaan and there only is known, while she is being led from her father’s house, across the desert, by trusty Eliezer.

We may notice next the place which prayer receives in the servant, and this, not through pressure of trial as in Jacob, but in giving (as here) character to the walk of faith. "And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water, at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. And he said, O Jehovah God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master" (vers. Genesis 24:10-14). So it is with the Christian in the world. "We walk by faith, not by sight." "Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Intercourse is established between the believer and God. He knows Whom he has believed. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we seek anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know

that we have the petitions that we desired of him." "And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a tattle water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her, held his peace, to wit whether Jehovah had made his journey prosperous or not" (vers. Genesis 24:15-21).

Thus faith is kept in constant happy exercise. It is the work of the Spirit in man, especially now that redemption is known. Conscience is at rest, and the affections are free. But there is more than prayer which distinguishes the christian and the church. The power of the Spirit finds ground of thanksgiving as well as of prayer and supplication. It is indeed the hour when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him, and the figure of this we find here. "And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ear-ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold; and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. She moreover said unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped Jehovah. And he said, Blessed be Jehovah God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, Jehovah led me to the house of my master's brethren" (vers. Genesis 24:22-27). That which came forth from God in guidance goes forth to Him in praise, a still more evident characteristic of the Christian. If we live in the Spirit we should walk, as well as worship, in the Spirit.

Along with this difficulties disappear. As the Lord directs, so He opens the door and blesses. There is the comfort of this — the comfort of knowing that it is His own hand that does all. Whatever may be the hindrances, the mission of the Spirit is accomplished. It stands not in persuasible words of man's wisdom, but in the power of God. No doubt there are gifts which accompany from the first the message of the witness, and array the bride, but the work is eminently one of faith and not of human influence. And hence it looks for, and has, the blessing of the Lord.

"And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban; and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. And it came to pass, when he saw the ear-rings and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man: and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. find he said, Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah, wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And Jehovah hath blessed my master greatly; and he is

become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son. And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. And he said unto me, Jehovah before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house: then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath. And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Jehovah God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink; and she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom Jehovah hath appointed for my master's son. And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ear-ring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed down my head, and worshipped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son. And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me: that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left. Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken. And it came to pass that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped Jehovah, bowing himself to the earth. And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things" (vers. Genesis 24:28-53).

Lastly it is the work of the Spirit to give, and keep up, and strengthen the desire of being with Christ and of His coming, whatever communion of saints may be enjoyed here. "And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. And her brother and her mother said Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go" (vers. Genesis 24:54-58).

So, in the Revelation, the Spirit and the bride say, Come, when Christ presents Himself as the bright, the morning, star. It is the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom! go ye out to meet him," which awakens the slumbering virgins at midnight. It is this which recalls the saints now to go out, as they were called at the first, to meet the Bridegroom. "And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto

her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi: for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: And he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (vers. Genesis 24:59-67). So will it be with the heavenly bride. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with 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, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The Father's purpose shall not fail of accomplishment, and all heaven shall rejoice and give honour to Him, "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

01.15. GENESIS 25.

Genesis 25:1-34. The first part of the chapter, comprehended in these verses, gives us the closing scenes of Abraham's eventful and instructive history. The Jewish tradition which identifies Keturah with Hagar is not only without proof but set aside by Genesis 25:6, which speaks of "the sons of the concubines which Abraham had;" and as Hagar was one, so Keturah was the other, not (as I think) to imply that she filled this relation during any part of Sarah's life, but rather to affirm her inferiority of place. Keturah is expressly called Abraham's "concubine" in 1 Chronicles 1:32; as Hagar, on the other hand, is styled his "wife" in Genesis 16:3. Nor need we revert to the Gentile difficulty, that sons were begotten of Abraham after Sarah's death, which has induced not a few of old as now* to believe that Abraham took Keturah during Sarah's life-time, and that the whole paragraph, if not chapter, is placed out of its chronological sequence in order not to break the main narrative. Proof of this is wanting, as the whole paragraph flows naturally, after Rebekah's marriage with Isaac, up to the several portions of the sons, as distinguished from the heir, and the death of the patriarch which was severed from Sarah's by at least thirty-seven years.

One may refer for instance to Mr. E. S. Poole, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," 2: 12.

"Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country" (vers. Genesis 25:1-6).

Here then we see, after the call of the bride, the blessing of nations associated with Abraham. It is a very distinct thing from that which faith receives now; for they which are of faith, the same are the children [sons] of Abraham. It is now a blessing open to all or any of the nations; and they are blessed with faithful Abraham. Through the cross the blessing comes to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith; and as Christ is dead and risen, and thus the accomplisher as well as object and crown of the promises, so there is no Jew nor Greek. Fleshly distinctions disappear. All are one in Christ Jesus. In that which is typified by the concubines' sons to Abraham we see the strongest possible contrast with Isaac. Midian may be there, and Jokshan, with the rest; perhaps Sheba, Dedan and Ephah, the son's sons. All these were Keturah's children.

Still it is written that "Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac." The risen son is the heir of all things; and if we are of Christ, then are we Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away. They receive gifts, not the inheritance of the promises; and they are sent away, instead of abiding in the house for ever, as does the son. So it will be in the age to come on earth, when, the church being completed, the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. Blessing will

flow, and the land of the morning will be no longer "the immovable east." I do not speak of Israel, the head of the nations under Christ's reign here below; still less of the glorified saints on high; nor do I mean only those that may then be born of God in every nation or people or tribe under the sun. But all the Gentiles are to rejoice with His people — a principle more deeply true, doubtless, in the present election for heaven from among Jews and Gentiles, but to be far more openly and widely seen in that bright day; and this, too, even in that quarter of the globe where dark superstitions of Christendom grow up rank, and side by side, with the Mahometan imposture and heathenism of every type.

"And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; the field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife" (vers. Genesis 25:7-10).

Thus peacefully passed away the man who, of all in Old Testament story, most strikingly combines the title of "friend of God" with "stranger and sojourner on the earth." Not that others — his son, grandson, and other descendants — did not carry on the blessed line of pilgrims who also walked with God. As a whole, however, what saint of old equalled him in these respects? Still less could any be said to surpass "the father of all them that believe."

Let us not at the same time forget that we have to do, not so much with the promises as he had, but with accomplishment in Christ (Romans 4:1-25); and that, whatever promises of God there be, in Christ is the yea, and in Christ the amen, for glory to God by us. We are more than Abraham's seed, being blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Sovereign grace alone accounts for a purpose so rich and above the thoughts of men or even the ancient oracles of God. Do we believe it for our own souls and for all that are Christ's? Do we walk and worship accordingly as we wait for Him from heaven?

03.00.1 THE CHURCH OF GOD.

SIX LECTURES ON FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

CONNECTED WITH THE CHURCH OF GOD. BY

W. KELLY.

LONDON:

W. H. BROOM, 34, PATERNOSTER ROW;

G. MORRISH, 24, WARWICK LAXE, PATERNOSTER ROW;

E. CROCKER, 112, PENTOXVILLE ROAD, N.

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1865

03.00.3 Biography

WILLIAM KELLY

BIOGRAPHY THE last prominent survivor of the first generation of "Brethren" fell asleep on the 27th March, 1906. Mr. WILLIAM KELLY - the title-pages of whose writings generally bear only the initials "W. K." - was born in the north of Ireland in 1820. Being early left fatherless, he was already supporting himself by tuition to the family of the Rev. Mr. Cachemaille, Rector of Sark, when, in 1840, he made the Christian confession, and he shortly afterwards embraced the view of the church characteristic of "Brethren," with whom he then at once united. He retained a close connection with the Channel Islands for thirty years, residing chiefly in Guernsey, but for the latter half of his Christian career his home was at Blackheath.

He was a graduate, in classical honours, of Trinity College, Dublin, and was recognised as not merely a sound, erudite scholar, but a controversialist of formidable calibre. Besides aiding Dr. S. P. Tregelles in his investigations as a biblical textual critic, Mr. Kelly himself published, in 1860, a critical edition of the Revelation of John, which Professor Heinrich Ewald, of Göttingen, declared was the best piece of English work of the kind that he had seen.

Such studies were carried on concurrently with the editing of a periodical entitled The Prospect, which latterly was carried on by Mr. Kelly to the time of his death as The Bible Treasury, a paper that, as taken by various prominent clergy in academical circles, brought the editor into correspondence with such men as Dean Alford, Dr. Scott the lexicographer (whom he convinced of the true force of the word unhappily rendered in the Authorised Version of 2 Thessalonians 2:2 as "is at hand"), Principal Edwards (who confessed to Mr. Kelly his conversion to the pre-millennial standpoint), with Professor Sanday, of Oxford, and other living theologians. After the capitulation of younger ecclesiastical associates to the Higher Criticism, Archdeacon Denison spoke of Mr. Kelly’s periodical as the only religious magazine any longer worth reading - so steadfast was the editor in his rejection of what he believed to be Christ-dishonouring views of the Bible. His simplicity and self-suppression may be illustrated by the reply he made to a Dublin professor who had expressed an opinion that, if Mr. Kelly did but settle there as a teacher, he would make a fortune - "For which world?" His supreme delight was in ministering in things spiritual to those whom he described as the "few despised" ones of Christ’s flock. To such service he gave untiring energy, put forth to within two months of his decease. He identified himself whole-heartedly with the body of doctrine developed by the late John Nelson Darby, whose right-hand man he was for many years. The "Collected Writings" of "J. N. D." were edited by Mr. Kelly, who has done much by his own expositions to give currency to the views enshrined in them. His own merits were manifest alike in oral and written ministry.

Mr. C. H. Spurgeon, judging by the latter, has applied to Mr. Kelly, in the "Guide to Commentaries," the words of Pope, "born for the universe . . .". In the list of his writings will be found Lectures or Notes on all the books of the Bible. How long he retained his clearness and vigour of intellect comes out in the fact that several of his best expositions have appeared during

the last fifteen years. Within the lifetime of "J. N. D." (1800-1882) Mr. Kelly was already well known to outsiders by his lectures on the Pentateuch, the Gospel of Matthew, the Revelation of John, the Church of God, and the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, besides Notes on Romans, etc., recommended by Professor Sanday. Since 1860 he has put forth "In the Beginning" (Genesis 1:2), commended by Archbishop Benson an Exposition of the Prophecies of Isaiah, of the Gospel of John, of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of the Epistles of John; a volume of 6oo pages on "God's Inspiration of the Scriptures;" and his last words on "Christ's Coming Again," in which he vindicates the originality of "J. N. D." in regard of the "Secret Rapture"; this had been impugned by an American writer.

Shortly before he passed away, "W. K." said to one by his bedside: "There are three things real - the Cross, the enmity of the world, the love of God." At the interment was read Acts 20:25-38, and amongst hymns sung that commencing "For ever with the Lord." An aged clergyman, who had long resorted to him for counsel, on hearing of his decease, wrote:

"He was pre-eminently 'a faithful man, and feared God above many' (Nehemiah 7:2)."

E. E. W.

03.00.4 Synopsis

SYNOPSIS.

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03.01 "One Body"

Lectures on the Church of God by William Kelly

Lecture 1.

"ONE BODY"

Ephesians 4:1-32 The subject on which, with the Lord's help, I propose to enter to-night is the one body, the body of Christ; and this too not only as a great doctrine which the Holy Ghost has laid down with the utmost clearness, and throughout a considerable part of the New Testament, but also, as far as I am able in a short space, deducing some of its practical consequences, and showing its bearing upon the communion and the conduct of every member of it, that is, of every Christian. But in order to develop the special characteristics of Christ's body, it will be necessary to explain how it differed from that which God revealed or set up in past dispensations; for there are distinctions, and even contrasts, between the past dealings of God and that which He is now accomplishing to the honour of His beloved Son. While there was of course always the only true God: while He had in times past those He loved upon earth; while He ever wrought by His Spirit; while there was necessarily faith at work in order to the blessing of souls; yet for all that there are essential and deeply important differences, which, none can overlook without loss to himself, without sure weakening of his testimony to others, and, above all, without coming short of the just perception of what God Himself has nearest to His own heart-His own glory in Christ.

Now it is perfectly plain, if we take up the Old Testament, that when man fell into sin God gave certain revelations of blessing, all of which find their centre in the Lord Jesus. We see this from the very beginning of Genesis. When sin entered, not only righteous government but grace instantly followed. God was there; and in the presence of the guilty pair, and in defiance of the serpent, the mercy of God spoke of that same blessed One of whom we are about to bear further and deeper glories. In due time God brought out, in a distinct and personal manner, blessings in connexion with Abraham and his seed. There we have the domain of promise not only revelation of mercy, but distinct promise to a given person and to his seed. This had not been the case in the garden of Eden. Man fell there; and it is evident that fallen man could not possibly be the object of the promise of God. There are promises for such: there could not be a promise to such. When Abraham received the promise, he was not a fallen man merely but a believing man. It was as one elect, called, and faithful, that God made him the depositary of promise. But it was when Adam fell, before there was anything of the operation of divine grace in him; it was when he and Eve had completely separated themselves from God, that mercy, entirely irrespective of their condition or desert, held out a revelation of grace in the person of Christ. The woman's Seed was presented more particularly as the destroyer of him that had wrought this deep and, as far as it went, irreparable mischief, irreparable to the creature, but only furnishing the opportunity for. God to bring out His own grace to the glory of Him who, bruised Himself, was to bruise the serpent's head. The effect of the promise to Abraham was that a family was set apart unto God, and, in due time, a nation. Next, we find that, as this nation was full of confidence, in its own powers, God was

pleased, in the wisdom of His ways, to try them by the law, as we all know, given at Sinai. I need not enter into the details, but just state the general outline of the divine dealings for the purpose of clearing my subject. But the issue of that trial, however long God might delay, was not doubtful for a moment; for at the very mountain where God spoke, the children of Israel set at nought the authority and the glory of God, and bowed down to the work of their own hands: that is, the law, as a moral question between God and man, was overthrown from its very foundations at the outset. God lingered-long lingered-in patience, and meanwhile brought out His ways in every possible variety. The crowning experiment of all was the-presence of Christ, the Seed of the woman, and the Seed of promise, too; for now came the person who answered to all the revelations and promises, the ways and types and prophecies of God. He came, in whose person was found all that was worthy of God, and that was suited to man. But the coming of Christ brought out the awful truth, not only that man is himself corrupt, depraved, and loves his own will, but that he hates goodness-yea, divine goodness -in a man. He is the enemy of God when manifesting Himself in the most blessed manner-in His own Son; when manifesting Himself, not only in power for we can understand a guilty creature alarmed at holy power-but in perfect love, coming down in humiliation, putting Himself at the foot of man, beseeching man; for this is in truth not a figure or exaggeration of man's mind, but God's own word. Hear His description of it: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us," etc. His love beseeching sinners was the attitude of divine grace in the person of Christ. What was the result? That man proved there was no possibility of extricating himself by any means that God put at his disposal: that if it were a question of man's delivering himself, no matter what might be the mercy or the blessing, no matter how deep and full the grace displayed in a living person, man was too far gone-nay, so truly dead in sin, that, far from being won by God's love, he only took advantage of it, and when Jesus put Himself at the foot of man, he lifted up his heel and trod on Him, the Son of God. But if man thus, under Satan's malicious guidance, cast out and crucified Christ, God in the cross not only demonstrated His love (herein is love, indeed!) but wrought out redemption, a work suited even for those that crucified Jesus, capable of blotting out the foulest sin man was ever guilty of. God has triumphed where man did his worst against Him. But this is not all. In the previous dealings of God, when He had given His law, God had separated the nation that was called out of Egypt - had marked them off in the most distinct and positive manner from all others. It was needful. Men might have complained that there had been no fair trial; the corrupt examples of others would naturally lead astray. God set Israel apart by their institutions, rites, ordinances, services, and His law; and by that law, and by those rites, He severed them from all others; so that it would have been sin against God for a Jew to have communion with a Gentile, no matter how godly and disposed to respect the law of God. No doubt there might be such a thing as being brought out of Gentilism, at any rate to a certain extent; but still, all through the system of God's dealings by His law with the Jewish people, there was the express and total severance of His people from all the nations. I do not speak of the abuse of it, working upon the corrupt heart of man against others - the pride of men's heart who despised others because of their own divinely isolated position; but apart from the evil use that Israel made of their separation, faithfulness to God then required it, and His will was in the thing itself. God was proving before the whole world the painful and humbling truth, that let a nation have ever such mercies, ever such privileges, ever such wisdom directing their movements, outward and inward-nay, everything pertaining to them,

the issue of all is increasing enmity against God Himself The death and resurrection of Christ introduced a new thing in every sense. Now, Christians admit this in general as to the work of Christ in its application to the need of the soul. There is no person of ever so little spiritual intelligence, who does not confess, with more or less clearness and thankfulness of heart, the all-importance of the cross of Christ for his need before God. There may be a scanty perception of the extent of the deliverance, an interrupted and feeble enjoyment of the perfect peace that has been made by the blood of Christ's cross; but there is no believer who does not in some measure hold it and enjoy it, and thank God for it. But there is more than the sinner's need met in the cross; and I direct your attention to what the Holy Ghost gives us in Ephesians 2:1-22, as showing the place of the cross in the ways of God-not merely in the salvation of the soul. At Ephesians 2:13 it is written, "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." Now, it is evident from this scripture, that the cross is not only the basis of peace for the soul, but the foundation also on which rests the "one body" that God is now making of Jew and Gentile before Himself. And we see this most plainly if we only look back to our Lord's own presence on earth. He forbids His disciples going into the way of the Gentiles - forbids their entering any city of the Samaritans. Need it be said that it was from no lack of love? It was not that His heart did not yearn over the most reprobate of Samaritans; it was not that He did not appreciate the faith of a Gentile-He had not seen "such faith., no, not in Israel." Notwithstanding, they were to go only to the lost sheep of Israel, because to such only He was sent, and so were they too. Now, here we find at once that, while there was this perfectness of grace in Christ, the holy order of God was none the less fully maintained. Law claimed a state of things essentially different from what we have described in Ephesians 2:1-22. There was a positive barrier even during His lifetime, the very thing being formally prohibited, which, after He died and rose, was not merely a duty, but the delight of love, the only adequate answer in the saints to that death and resurrection. (See Matthew 28:19.)

How comes this to pass? On what is so mighty a change founded? On the cross. It brings out the worthlessness of man, and most of all, the worthlessness of favored, privileged, religious man-of man under God's law. For if man under that law failed, what other law could avail? The law of God was the wisest, the best, the most holy and just dealing that it was possible to bring to bear upon man's natural state. And here was the total failure of man; and God well knew it all from the first, for He took care that in the earliest book of Scripture, and all through, embedded in the very law itself, there should be plain words as well as shadows, showing that man would sin, and that only Christ, by His blood-shedding and His death, could avail. The very first revelation of the garden of Eden is a witness of both. Faith had no other expectation. But nevertheless there was a full, patient, long-suffering trial whether it was possible to get any good out of man, in the dealings of the only wise God with man. And now it was demonstrated in the cross that all was ruined in man, and that the highest advantages, short of God's saving grace, brought out the ruin most distinctly. Now there is room for grace to work; and, beloved friends, it is upon this that it is my joy to speak a little to-night.

We have come down the stream; we have seen what man was when it was a question of his working for God : we shall now look -briefly at God when He puts forth His glorious power to work, not merely for man, but for His Son; for oh! we never the full blessing until we see this great and glorious truth, that God has at heart His Son - that God is thinking, not merely of a blessing for you, for me, for any of those that love Him-yea, and in sovereign grace, for those who love Him not, if they repent and believe the gospel-but that He has His eye upon Him who did all and suffered all for His glory, and has bound up that glory of God with fullest, richest, everlasting blessing of all who believe in His name. And now, then, as the fruit of the cross of Christ (where we have the weakness of God, where nevertheless we have the triumph of God - God Himself coming down lower and lower still in love, not merely, so to speak, beseeching man, but laying all the weight and burden of sin upon the Lord Jesus, thereby meeting the desperate need of sinners by His Son suffering for them,) what do we find? That in the cross He has given the death-blow to sin; He has "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," as we are told. But besides, by it all the distinctions of, Jew and Gentile pass away, and God brings out that to which He had looked onward - that which was in His counsels not only from the foundation of the world, but before it, and which consequently He had shown before there was a question of law, and before there was a question of sin. For it is remarkable that the magnificent type, which the apostle applies in Ephesians v. to the mystery of Christ and the church, was brought in before sin entered. (Genesis 2:1-25) In truth, it was a counsel that flowed out of what God was and is. It was God in His own love, even God working from what was in Himself. No doubt, the entrance of sin has given occasion for God to bring out His grace in blessed ways; but, for all that, we must ever remember that there were thoughts and counsels of grace in God Himself There was that which He ever had in His own mind, for the revelation of which, no doubt, sin might furnish the fit occasion. But sin was in no wise the suggestive spring any more than the measure. On the contrary, we see God indulging, so to speak, in the activity of His own perfect love; at any rate, we see Him thinking of, filled with, working for, His own Son. And I think it is of deep interest to observe the fact just referred to-the shadow of the church’s union with Christ preceding the entrance of sin and the provisions of grace in view of sin. And observe further, that as just seen in the type of Genesis, so it is in the epistle to the Ephesians. where is it that you have the counsels of God traced out? Is it after man’s sin has been portrayed in chapter ii.? No; but in the earliest verses of Ephesians 1:1-23, where God gives the richest development of the counsels of His grace, entirely passing over and ignoring, in the first instance all question of man’s sin, shame, and need. This we have afterwards and in the profoundest way. There is perhaps no part of the word of God which shows us the depth of human evil more than Ephesians 2:1-22; but this is not at all the first thought. Hence we find in Ephesians 1:1-23, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he bath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." And then it is only just by the way that the apostle alludes to the fact of their sins, and in a single verse (Ephesians 1:7), where we read, " In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." With the exception of that incidental notice of the fact of our needing redemption, the remission of sins, you would not know from the first chapter of the epistle that the saints of God, these blest ones, had a single evil, or a particle of sin connected with them. That is, it is God perfectly acting from Himself, in and for His own Son; delighting in Him, putting honour upon Him, giving Him what was suited to Him out of His own

resources of love, and hence boundlessly to the saints, the body of Christ, as the end of Ephesians 1:1-23 describes them. It is thus that the Holy Ghost is pleased to introduce these astonishing counsels of grace.

Then, in Ephesians 2:1-22, we have man's state looked at most thoroughly. We see him weighed and found wanting as in no other part of Scripture. We have him here, not as an active being, alive in sin, but as all over with him, dead in sin-" dead in trespasses and sins." He is, therefore, hopelessly lost and utterly powerless in sins. The whole case is closed against him; and it is to this condition of manifest moral death and subjection to Satan, that the grace of God applies itself, in His quickening, raising, heavenly power in Christ Jesus.

But, again, we find that in the latter part of Ephesians 2:1-22 the cross of Christ is taken up, not merely in connexion with God's counsels, as in Ephesians 1:1-23, nor even in view of their desperate need who are the objects of His counsels, as in the beginning of chapter ii., but in contrast to the previous ways of God upon the earth. He is addressing Gentiles. Was it not a suitable occasion for God to unfold to them. the one new man, the mystery of Christ and the church, the body of Christ? They were hitherto ignored, evidently outside all that God had been doing of old. God had taken up a separated people and had tried them. The Gentiles were as non-existent, so to speak, before God. Not, of course, that the secret providence of God did not watch and work-not that the grace of God did not act as to individuals; but, regarded as Gentiles, they were outside. But now these are the very objects of heavenly grace; toward Gentiles the call goes out loud and large. Not that they alone were brought into the church, for it consists of Jews also; but it was Gentiles whom it seemed meet to God to bring into relief, in contrast to the condition in which they were once, so as to make more manifest the blessing which His grace now confers on both, in Christ the Lord. "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ , being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one."

There we have another fact, not only that they are made nigh to God but both made one-Jew and Gentile that now believe made one body, as is explained more fully afterwards, the middle wall of partition broken down, the enmity abolished in His flesh, "even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man." It is not merely a new life, but Christ and the church form one new man, a condition of things that had never before existed-"one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." Thus the Gentiles had been dispensationally afar off, the Jews were comparatively nigh; but now they were taken completely out of their old condition. It is not, you will observe, that the Gentiles who believed are raised up to the level of the privileges which the Jews used to possess, but that there is now "one new man," wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile. Both, consequently, quit their previous states for a new and most blessed position of oneness in Christ, which had never existed before save in the counsels of God.

Here then is the church, the body of Christ; this is what God is working out. He is not only saving souls, He is gathering; not only is He gathering into one, but He makes the believing Jew and Gentile, while they are on earth, though previously by His own command the most separate, now to be one new man in Christ, even His one body.

There is another truth connected with the church,, revealed at the end of the chapter, which I merely notice by the way. Not only is there a body formed-one body in Christ, but there is a building, upon earth, in which God dwells. Although it is not my business to-night to take up the subject of the dwelling or habitation of God, yet I cannot deny myself the joy of saying a few passing words on this wonderful place which God has given to His church. And first of all it is to be noticed, in the Old Testament there was no such thing as a building or dwelling of God, until there was a type of redemption. No matter what might be His mercy or condescension to those He loved, He could not dwell with man until there was a basis of blood-shedding, by which He could righteously abide with him. Hence, all through the book of Genesis, for instance, God does not dwell with men; nay, He never speaks of it or promises it. But the moment the blood of the passover is shed, and you have Israel passing through the Red Sea-the combined types of redemption (one answering to the blood of Christ, the other to the death and resurrection of Christ, in which a complete redemption is set forth in figure)-immediately you bear of God having a habitation: God could now dwell in the midst of His people. It is not because the people were better: who could imagine that ? Look at Israel at the Red Sea; what were they to be compared with Abraham or Isaac or even Jacob? -Yet He who only visited the fathers can now dwell among the children, and put this word into their lips," I will prepare him a habitation." How comes this? Ah, beloved friends, how little any of us estimate the mighty change and the wondrous effect of redemption? It is not a question of comparing . men, or their faith, or their faithfulness. God’s estimate of redemption is the point; and He shows that if there be only a type of redemption, He can come down typically, He can then dwell in the midst of His people. I admit this was only a preparatory thing. There was a visible token of it, suited of course to an earthly people; but still the great distinct fact is engraved on Israel’s history, as the very centre of their blessing, that God Himself deigned then to dwell in their midst. (Exodus 15:2; Exodus 15:13; Exodus 15:17; Exodus 29:43-46.) The same thing is found here far more blessedly for the church on earth. On earth-and mark, not before the cross but since-God is pleased to make His people to be His habitation. He came down in the person of Christ, but Christ abode alone as far as the dwelling-place of God was concerned. "Destroy this temple:" He was the only true temple But when He died and rose, what then? Redemption was accomplished; and now God could descend holily, righteously, suitably to His own character and could dwell in His people. It is not because the New Testament saints are more worthy in themselves than those of old. He that knows himself and redemption knows that such an idea is a fallacy and a falsehood; he knows that human nature is good for nothing as before God; he knows that, in His presence, there is no question of flesh, or what flesh can glory in, " but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord:’ But this is not all; not only is there a Lord to glory in, but now we have actual redemption in Christ through His blood. How does God estimate the precious blood of His Son? What does He feel about those on whom that blood is put by faith those who are washed in it? Does He not as it were say, "I can come now and take my place in their midst?" This is indeed one of the precious characteristics of the church. It especially is even now the habitation of God. In virtue of this it is that the church is called the "house of God" and His "temple," in different parts of Scripture. But I must not dwell longer on this because my subject is

"the body."

We find, then, in Ephesians 4:32, that the Spirit of God presses this exhortation, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Next, He explains, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Will it be imagined that this grand truth of the "one body" does not affect the judgment and conduct of the Christian as well as his affections? We have been brought, I will suppose, to the knowledge of Christ; we have found in Him the Son of God, the Saviour; we rest on Him as our peace before God; we call on Him as our Lord. But have I no relationship with others on earth? Am I left here simply and solitarily to look up to God? Have I to thread my way through the mazes of this world, only using the word of God with prayer? Let me ask, What are my relationships? Am I only a child of God with other children of His here and there? What at am I to feel, as I look round upon those that name the excellent name-that call upon the Lord Jesus Christ, both mine and theirs? The ONE BODY is the answer. God it is who forms it for the glory of Christ: it is united to Him. "We are members," as it is said, " of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." It is not for you, it is not for me, to define, even in our natural relationships, our brothers and our sisters. Thank God, we are not asked: God does it; He gives what suits Him, even if it be only in the domain of earth and flesh. He does not give us what we might choose: we know our folly in this respect, He assigns each man a place - puts the high and the low according to His own wisdom. And in that which He is doing for His beloved Son, has He less to do or less to teach us? Is God’s will of less moment there than in the mere outward world? Nay, my brethren, nay: even moral men dispute not the will of God as to natural relationships. We know what human lust may do-how it may break through every line of demarcation; but still after all poor man finds even for himself, without thinking of God, the need and the value of owning the relationships which have been established in nature here below. Now, is it not a most solemn thought, and is it not a fact which ought to shame every Christian heart, that in the church which is so near to God, in that which is the fruit of His own perfect love, in that which He is creating for the everlasting glory of His beloved Son, what God orders, what God wills, what pleases God, is regarded as of infinitely less account to Christians than even their natural relationships to each other? Is it or is it not the fact? Is it or is it not a grievous sin?

How do you account for this? Whence the terrible triumph of the enemy? Why is it that there is such darkness over the whole subject of the "one body" now? Is it because God has not revealed His mind? What can be plainer in Scripture? Only a portion of the proofs has been produced from a small portion of God’s word; but what can be clearer than that, founded upon the cross of Christ, a new condition has been introduced and established of God? that He is now calling out the Jews and Gentiles who believe, and forming them into "one body?"-that, as He owns no other body than Christ’s, so this is His will about us, and our obligation to Him, even as it is the evident and only meaning of His word that speaks of His church? How is it, then, that such a truth escapes the thoughts of man-that you may search in vain to find it in writings new or old-that we have, some of us, long lived as Christians, and many of us once churchmen and dissenters so called, yet all utterly ignorant of its character? But if so patent, and with such a fulness of truth about it in God’s word, how comes it to have been a forgotten thing among His children?

It is not because there has not been sincerity - "godly sincerity" if you will - among Christians. But whatever is near to God, whatever is the present operation of God, is always that against which

Satan sets himself with all his might and subtlety. And this, because it is bound up with Christ, because it is the special actual will of God for His people. Therefore Satan seeks to thwart and mar. He does not now try so much to darken other truths, but he takes up that which most nearly concerns the glory of Christ as now displayed; whatever that may be at any given time, there is the battle-field, there the arena, where no means are untried to blind and hinder God's children from understanding and doing the will of their God and Father. When God is gathering out His church, then is the enemy's season of active unceasing effort, to oppose, confound, and obscure all the truths connected with it.

Besides, there is another question. How comes it that Satan finds it possible to succeed in the face of such evidence as the New Testament affords ? Alas I the reason of this, too-the moral reason-is evident, The children of God may be the more readily deceived, because the doctrine of the church, the body of Christ, brings God too close to us-sets His grace too richly before our souls-makes us feel (if our souls believe, bow, and enter into it) the vanity of all things here. Alas! our hearts shrink from the feeling. We naturally love ease; we like position in this world; we are fond of a little reputation, it, may not be perhaps in the vulgar world, but in the so-called church -something, at any rate, for self, something outside the portion of Christ and the cross. The body is only for the Head, for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. Man in nature disappears; his glory wanes and vanishes; his will is judged as sin. We do not like a doctrine and practice so peremptory, and withal so heavenly. Men like to do something, and to be somebody. Man has in himself, whenever this is allowed, that which exposes him to the power of sin, to the malice and wiles of Satan; and hence it is, that this great truth was no sooner revealed than it began to fade. There is no testimony to it whatever in the early fathers, and of course a position more and more distant and antagonistic as you descend. Take up any writings you please:-Papists and Protestants, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Arminians - ignore it. It is not that you will not find enough truth asserted and preached for souls to be saved by; but the bare salvation of souls is not the whole truth, nor that part of the truth which reveals the church of God. Were not souls saved before Christ? Was not salvation of the Jews? Were there not faithful souls before God had a people upon earth? Was it not so from the very beginning, before the flood and after it? Most clearly and certainly. But there comes in another thing which was not true before, which God had not revealed or established till the rejection of the Messiah, and for which He had reserved the sending of the Holy Ghost from heaven. Now in the cross of Christ God has laid a foundation for this new work and is gathering together out of Jews and Gentiles His assembly, made in Christ one new man. Man likes to be of importance to himself, and in this world. Just in proportion as he allows this, he falls a prey to the working of the enemy; and the more easily does he deceive himself, because up to the cross of Christ there was room left; for man more or less. His total ruin, his enmity to God, his hatred of grace in the revealed person of the Son, were never brought out in their fulness until then. Till then God was not, could not, be known as He now is. But the only begotten Son declared Him, and this in respect both of sin and of His righteousness-a new kind of righteousness, which, by all means and on every side, clears and blesses the guiltiest who now believes in Jesus.

Now, it there is to be a heart growing up into the revelation which God has made of Himself in Christ according to His grace towards the Church, the one body of Christ, there must be the judgment of nature, rout and branch-the judgment of the world in which man arrogates some place

to himself. The church of God is based on the proved ruin of man, and is for the glory of God in His Son, as maintained by the Holy Ghost. Now, this will show the immensely important place of this truth as a matter for the soul both in communion and in conduct. Away with what does not touch upon practice and the soul's relationship to God! But the fact is, that so far from the truth of the church leaving out heart and conscience, intercourse with God, worship and service, there is nothing which brings them out so much, and binds them so fast together, save only the truth of Christ's own person; there is nothing more commanding, comprehensive, and penetrating for the walk or conversation of a Christian man.

Take, for instance, all the difficulties men gather from the Old Testament: on what are they founded? I speak now of the legitimate difficulties-at any rate what seem to be legitimate and authoritative to the mind of an uninstructed believer. What, after all, is their gist? Reasoning founded upon Old Testament precept or practice. But is the analogy just I How can we reason in an absolute way, if there be this "one new man"? - if the church is a novel special thing which did not even exist then? It is evident that conduct (for instance, found in a David or a Solomon-in an Abraham, or an Isaac, or a Jacob) may not apply now, but, on the contrary, be out of harmony with the ways God looks for in His church. I am not speaking of those moral landmarks which always condemn falsehood, corruption, or violence: no Christian is supposed to produce the sin of any of these men to justify his own evil. I speak of what was right and according to the will of God as then revealed. The moment the doctrine of the Church, the body of Christ, is seen, all such reasonings and difficulties have no more a place. God has now His Son in His presence as the risen man. There could not be such a thing as the body of Christ till Christ was there, not only as the Son, but as man, the Head of the body; Christ could not be there as man till the work of redemption was accomplished. Of old He bad the title of the Son of man given, looking onward to His assumption of humanity, when He who was God and the Son of God became a real man. But bow could He take this place in Heaven ? He was born a man on earth. He was not a man until He was born into the world. How take this Place in heaven? Christ was not Head, still less was there the body, the church, till then. " The church, which is his body," assumes that Christ had become man, and, more than this, that He is Head, as the risen and ascended man. It is only after He died, as we know by His own figure of the corn of wheat, that He produced fruit. (John 12:1-50) But more than that: not to stand upon figures only, but to take any Scripture that speaks in precise terms upon it, what do we find? Read the end of Ephesians 1:11 What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and 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 world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." Thus He has been given to the church Head over all things; but it is after He was raised from the dead, and set at God's right hand. The risen man is Head there: even He never was head till after redemption. He took His place there and thus.

What is the consequence of that, beloved friends? The body of Christ is heavenly, as the head of the church is. Man does not relish this-nay, many a Christian man finds it too high and hard. If he is a heavenly man where is the room for the pursuits and plans and projects of literature, of science, of politics? Where are all these things that fill the mind and the appetites and the desires of men? Are they in heaven?.. Are warlike schemes-are courtier dreams-in heaven? You hear no

doubt of the battle against the devil, who is turned out of heaven, as the Lord wars by the angels of His power by-and-by. But I need not say there is no place in His body for the pride, ambition, or energy of man.

What then is the great idea of the church of God? It is the body of Christ, after He has accomplished redemption; and consequently, sin, as far as God's judging the believer, is completely gone, put away in such sort as to glorify God and justify the believer. Founded upon this, those who believe are consequently not only born of water and the Spirit, and justified from their sins by the blood of Christ, but united to Him, their blessed Head, at the right hand of God. The church of God accordingly does not consist merely of the redeemed or saints. A " Christian " means more than a " saint " - much more! I am aware there are many who think it means much less, and would count my doctrine strange; because they consider everybody in these lands a Christian, and but very few on earth a saint-perhaps none till they get to heaven. But it is to me most evident-nothing more certain-that a Christian is a saint, and a good deal more; and that good deal more is, that he is a saint after God effected redemption in the blood of Christ; that he is a saint united to Christ at God's right hand; that he is a saint who has God dwelling in him by the Spirit, for God now can dwell there. The atoning work is done: the blood has been shed and sprinkled. God can take up His abode there and does! How do I know it? Because God has told me so in His word. One may, alas! have poor enjoyment of it-that is another thing; but the enjoyment of the truth depends upon the measure in which our souls first rest upon it believingly: even then, unless we judge the flesh that hinders the realization of it, we cannot enjoy it either long or much if at all.

God shows then in His word, that the church is the union of believers-one with Christ, by the Holy Ghost, after He died and rose and went to heaven. The consequence is, that we must consult what God enjoins on the members of that body, if we would know how we are to walk and worship; how we are to act and feel towards the other members of Christ; and how to behave in "the house of God." The New Testament occupies itself with these subjects, more particularly the epistles of St. Paul. It could not be formally or definitely in the gospels, because they are devoted for the most part to a living Christ, closing with the facts of His death, resurrection, and ascension. You may find there preparations for the new work and testimony - not a few intimations of what was going to be done; but all show that the building of the church was not yet begun. In the epistles, on the other hand, we have revelations altogether founded upon the great fact that the building was going on, the body was being formed. And mark another thing, which I hope to develop on the next occasion I address you, namely, that along with the body of Christ goes the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It is only just referred to here to show the connexion: we shall find its importance afterwards. Those who have not examined fully the testimony of Scripture will feel the weight and value of the instruction there furnished, when that point comes more at, length before us. But this at least is plain, that though it is a new work, entirely distinct from all that God bad wrought before, there are great moral principles, as already hinted, which always abide. In every part of Scripture, in that which speaks of the times before the law, or during the law, as well as now under the gospel, God is the righteous, holy, almighty, faithful One, a God of longsuffering, and goodness, and truth: all this remains. Even here the difference is, that all these attributes of God shine out more gloriously, and, in consequence, deepen the revelation of God, in addition to other new ways and workings of grace which were not and could not be expressed before. What

an accession of light when Christ, the true light, shone! What an infinite display of God Himself in His person! And what shall we say of the cross and death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus as the manifestation of God?

Hence, in this new man, all the moral glory of God of course abides; but now, in presence of that infinitely fuller manifestation, and the accomplishment of eternal redemption, is there to be no answer in the thoughts and hearts and ways of His children to what the God and Father of Christ is doing? If, for instance, God calls a person into the place of a servant, there are certain responsibilities that attach to a servant. But suppose these servants turn out thoroughly unfaithful and end in rebellion, and God says, " I will have no more of this; I will create a family and adopt children to Myself; I will bring people, according to My sovereign pleasure, out of the old condition into this new place." What then? It is evident that to go back to what was true of the servants might be a most misleading guide when it became a question of the children; and, in point of fact, it is and must be so. On that mistaken ground Christians meddle with the world, occupying themselves with those things that please the flesh and give importance to man. In contrast with it, God has given us the glorious truth that He has, as it were, but one man (the first Adam being done with, and pronounced to be ruined, and dead, and buried in the grave of Christ). We Christians belong to the second Man, the Lord from heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:1-58) There is cone new man," not only in contrast with old distinctions, but as uniting all, Jewish or Gentile saints, in one body-His body; for that is the way in which it is presented in Ephesians ii. The consequence is, that we need, and God gives us, a new revelation; He furnishes fresh instructions which had no place before. Supposing you had the New Testament in Old Testament times, what would have been (I will not say the worth, but) the effect of it then? Perplexing beyond measure! A Jew would not have known what to do with it. He might have been struck with the wisdom, beauty, holiness, and love of it all; but how to act upon it and reconcile it with the law given by Moses, it would not have been possible for him to know. He would have been commanded by the Old Testament to keep wholly apart from the Gentiles; he would have been told by the New Testament that they formed one body, and that they were all one in Christ,-that both had access by one Spirit unto the Father. He could not have put these things together; and no wonder: they were not meant to be together. They belong to distinct times and to totally different states. The confusion of the two is one way in which Satan has triumphed in the professing church. Alas! it was not otherwise under God’s dealings with the Jews. While He was standing by His law, they were breaking it; while He was holding up the unity of the Godhead, they were set upon idols and going after the gods of the nations. They were utterly unfaithful to their testimony; but I am persuaded that a Jew, dark as he was and little versed in the mind of God, would have perceived that the instructions of the New Testament were irreconcilable with his calling. But God never gave it thus. When the work of atonement was finished on the cross, God brought out these new revelations by degrees. Why? Because there was a new state of things-,, one new man"-that did not exist before. Consequently, a new word of God was given., suited to bring out the due relationship of Christians to one another, and the working of God in the Church, the body of Christ.

Let me notice briefly, before I close, the practical effect- "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." What interest this has, if really applicable in the face of our divisions! Consider for a moment the case of a Christian; he is awakened, finds peace, but questions what he is to do. How truly it has been the fact that many of us have been perplexed in such

circumstances! We may have known very little of the word of God; but still we found difficulties in reconciling that word with what we saw around us-especially such a word as this, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit," Bat it is really a plain and humble path. I have nothing to do with making the unity; I have not to set up something, or join what others make. What then? I am to be diligent in keeping the unity of the Spirit. In other words, God the Holy Ghost has made a unity; and the business of the believer is to observe that unity-to keep it. What an amazing relief for a humble soul, that feels his liability to mistake, in danger of being either too lax on the one hand, or too narrow on the other!

What is the unity of the Spirit? Where does it begin and end? What is its nature and character? Scripture tells us that He has established a unity among men, yet apart from and above them. What is it? The answer is, It is in the church, which God has made the body of Christ. What a comfort it is for a believer that he has simply to judge by the word of God where the unity of the Spirit is! But how? I come to a place, and I am at a loss to know where to turn. Where shall I find the unity of the Spirit of God? How do I know it? God has left landmarks; He has given clear distinct light in His word. I search and see that He is gathering together the children of God into one; He gathers them unto the name of Christ, assuring them that where they are thus, He is in their midst. I never get the key to any spiritual difficulty without Christ. Do I merely look for the unity of Christians? It is a delusion and a danger without Christ. Christians -where shall I not find them? In what pit of error may I not discover some stray child of God? If I go in quest of the children of God, I may easily see them in this form of worldliness or in that; I may know them unattached here, close and bigotted there; I may find them gathered together according to human rules, and for entirely minor objects; I may hear them setting up the names of men, certain special doctrines, favorite views, as their centres of union. Is this the unity of the Spirit? What then is His unity, and how is it to be kept? It is that which He forms for the glory of Christ.

Christians of course are those that compose the unity; yet keeping it consists not in the bare fact that they are Christians, but that they are gathered unto Christ-gathered not to His bodily presence, but unto His name, now that He is in heaven; none the less, however, for that, but the more counting on His presence with them, though unseen, faithful to His own word. If I isolate myself where I may thus meet, I am indifferent to that which was an object of the death of Christ (John 11:52), and I am setting at nought the unity of the Spirit; if I value the one and am diligent to keep the other, I shall meet on that ground and on none other. Many members of Christ no doubt are elsewhere now, who ought to be there, as truly as any that are gathered to that name; but am I who know my Master’s will to hold aloof, because others see it not, or are faithless if they do I Am I to say His will cannot be done?

Therein lies part of the ruin of Christendom; there is the painful fact, that what Christ died for Satan has set himself to oppose, and has succeeded in it. Wonder not; for everything that God undertakes is first of all put into man’s hand, who is responsible to use it for Him. Alas! there is but one issue-the utter failure of man; and there will be no reversal of the tale till Jesus comes again. Nay, even then will be another trial of man-to show whether he uses the coming and kingdom of Jesus for God’s glory; and the end of the millennium will prove that, as it was before, so it will be then. Nevertheless, faith overcomes at all times. See that you hold the truth fast Let none cheat you out of the blessing which God has given, and calls you to enjoy. Founded on the cross, united by the Spirit to Christ, waiting for His return, the church is the precious fruit of God’s grace.

After His people departed from the power and even let slip the bare form of this great truth, He has brought it before them anew. I cannot doubt that its recovery, in any measure, is vouchsafed of God in view of the Lord's speedy coming: else how do you account for it that God has been pleased to recall the bride to put herself, as it were, in readiness for the Bridegroom, signally bringing out again that mass of heavenly testimony which had been despised, deserted, and forgotten? Happy are they who not only bow and receive the grace of God in it but keep the treasure faithfully! "Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Be assured, brethren, that we are in the same danger as men ever were in of letting slip that which God has given us; and that every engine which Satan can devise to drag us away-taking advantage of carelessness, difficulties, trials, or anything that can tax us to the utmost - will all be put in force, because be hates not only us but Christ and His truth. But as the Lord has been pleased to raise up again a testimony to His person, work, and heavenly glory, so I pray and beseech you, especially the younger of my brethren and sisters who are here-all who may not have felt its force and preciousness-more particularly you who have been trained from your earliest perceptions of truth, brought in, as it were, rather than out, at comparatively little cost, and who have not known (as some others) the wrenching of many a tie, with a deep disciplinary work in the heart, realizing gradually the true condition of Christendom;-I call upon you all to beware lest Satan should, in any insidious way, lead you from the only solid divine rock in the midst of the rising surges of apostasy. Fully do I admit, that all who are brought into this glorious place, the body of Christ, ought to walk and carry themselves in a way suitable to such a position. It is a deep shame where there is no devotedness beyond what existed before this further measure of truth dawned on our souls; not only shame to us, but a serious hindrance to the truth, and a reproach upon the grace of God that revealed it and brought our souls into it, that after all there should be such an unworthy manifestation of its power. But how are we to deal with this? Are we therefore to slight or doubt the truth? Are we because of our unfaithfulness, to put aside the plain word of God that condemns us for a lower ground on which we can rest more consistently and comfortably? Are we to yield to that which the fleshly mind has often sought and fallen into-to set up other centres than Christ, other ministry than that of the Spirit? Are we to abandon the only place and principle which the New Testament allows for the members of Christ's body, on the unbelieving plea that, as to walking according to this heavenly light, it is a thing impracticable in such a world as this? There are beyond question difficulties and perils neither few nor small in maintaining it There is constant need of self-denial most surely, if it is to be walked in with God. But how are we to judge, if not by the word of God? Are we prepared to surrender His word as our only standard of judgment? Now, while that word of course condemns deeply the shortcomings of those who are thus privileged of God-not only brought into the unity of the Spirit, as all saints are, but brought into the conscious knowledge and faith of it; while the failure of such is in a certain sense more inexcusable than that of any others, yet at least such are justifying God and His word and Spirit against themselves in a humbling way. Taking our stand upon this, that no one should glory save in the Lord, we shall find (and painfully too) that we are brought into this place to learn our faults as we never knew them-the shortcomings of others as we never suspected them. We may be astonished at the manifold failures, trials, hairbreadth escapes, and deep occasions of shame; but how come these to be so seen and felt? Because it is not the ground of the church? Nay! but because it is. And one of the most comforting things to our faith in that which naturally might perplex is, that we learn the present and permanent value of the Scriptures as we never proved it

before. Take all the ways of God in discipline: they did not apply while we were mixed up with the world-church; but how precious, profitable, and indispensably needed when we endeavor to keep the Spirit's unity I Take again all the warnings about the world: we hardly knew what it was. Is it not with Christians a constant question what the world is; or is not the answer that they give us the proof of an unsuspected blinding influence? They have something or other which they avoid doing, and this they call " the world." But the moment we see the body of Christ, the world acquires a plain meaning: if we realize what it is to be among those it within," those "without" are no longer a vague uncertain question.

Let us not fear then to quit all for the honour of God in this world; let us look to Him for grace that we may bear all rather than abandon it. There may be only two or three ; but yet if they contemplate the body of Christ, shutting out none save according to His will, not for any feelings of their own, it is the only thing that is or ever was divinely large in this selfish world, as far as men are concerned. I do not mean that any who blaspheme Christ, or who make light of blasphemers in their deeds, if not in their words, - should be sanctioned. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." It is vain to argue that the Spirit's unity can make so light of Christ and His glory. I say not that individually such may not be Christ's. We know what Satan may do even with one who really loves the Lord-how he may ensnare him into denying his Master, and denying Him with oaths too; but who would contend for justifying such sin or having communion with the guilty, till it was put away?

I repeat then, if there be only two or three, and they endeavor to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," with them is my place as a Christian. My heart should go out to every Christian, in whatever circumstances, whether nationalist, dissenting, or, if there be such, in popery; my heart should go out, spite of the error and evil-yea the rather because of these things in intercession. But then am I to give up diligent observance of the Spirit's unity? Am I to follow and join them in what I know to be un-scriptural and sinful, because there is a Christian or many Christians there? Surely not! We ought to get them out with and for the Lord. How is this to be done? Not by plunging ourselves into the mud, but on the contrary by taking our stand resolutely on the rock outside of it; and there seeking grace from God that, by the manifestation of the truth in every man's conscience, and by holding out the light of Christ in the word-pressing too the responsibility of walking as Christ's body on His members, they may be turned from the error of their way. Never deny that they are members of the body of Christ; remind them of that very fact and of its gravity that they are members of His body: why should they value any other body? If members of that "one body" why not own it, and own it always, and nothing else? If they belong to the unity of the Spirit, why not endeavor to keep it? God is now raising a question, not about Popery and Protestantism, but about Christendom's denial of His church, Christ's body. Our business is not to originate a church of the present or future, but to cleave to the church God has made, and consequently to confess the sin of all rivals-to repudiate them and come out from them. Let us put away every human invention in the things of God, and keep ourselves from idols. The word of God at all times calls upon His children to be subject to Himself and to His will. Are we so doing? On the one hand, " If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" on the other, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Surely, if there be one thing in which., more than another, human will is most evidently sin, it is in that place where God exalts the Lord Christ; where He has sent down the Holy Ghost that He may be a spring of power in His people's

obedience.

Though this be merely an introductory lecture, and therefore I cannot be supposed to enter into all the proofs now--only laying down a kind of foundation for the subjects which we hope to pursue; yet I do trust that enough has been said to make plain, even to the least mature of those who hear me, the immense importance of their seeking from God to realize that they are not only saints but Christians, resting upon redemption, united to Christ, and responsible to act as members of His body, diligent in keeping the unity of the Spirit and none other in this world. This is a divine obligation superior to any changes in the church's state here below. It is no question of numbers, but a duty always binding, even though there were only two or three who saw the truth.

03.02. "One Spirit"

Lectures on the Church of God by William Kelly

Lecture II "ONE SPIRIT."

1 Corinthians 12:1-13. My task to-night is that which I am persuaded ought to be the business of every Christian man, not in word only, but in deed and in truth-to assert the rights of the Spirit of God in the church of God. I say, "to assert His rights;" for I assume here the personality of the Holy Ghost. It is needless now to give any proofs of this any more than of His Deity. These truths can be taken for granted, not as if there were not abundant proofs in the word of God, but because they are at present uncalled for. But it is another thing, beloved friends, when we speak of the rights of the Holy Ghost-His proper sovereign action in the church, flowing from His personal presence as sent down from heaven. On this subject many find difficulties and obscurities; and great ignorance exists even among the children of God, and those too who may have been greatly blessed; in and by whom the Holy Ghost may have acted powerfully for the good of souls. Unless however we know this truth from God, unless we have it as a divine certainty in our souls, it is dear that whatever grace may do in giving us practical subjection, yet there must be much lost if we do not know the special ways in which it is the will of God that the Holy Ghost, present both in the individual and in the church of God, should be honored. On this theme-a large one for a single discourse-I propose now to enter.

Here too, as in treating of the "one body," I would show from God’s word that which was always true of the Spirit, and which therefore has no special connexion with the present time, in order that we may the better discern in what God is now manifesting Himself, and how it is that Christians - for of them I speak- are apt to be mistaken as to this. A mistake here is so much the more serious a thing, as it is a question of duly recognizing a divine person. If we maintain the title of the Holy Spirit to act as He will in the church, no question is raised about His work in souls from the beginning. No person intelligently acquainted with the Scriptures doubts the fact or its importance; neither is there the least thought, wish, or motive to do so. The Holy Spirit has always been the direct agent in whatever God Himself has undertaken, If we look at creation, the Spirit had His part there. If we look again at the elders who obtained a good report through faith, no believer questions for a moment that it was only by the operation of the Holy Ghost that man believed then as now. He wrought in Abel, Enoch, Noah, and in all others whom the Scriptures testify as the line of saints. So again when God espoused His people Israel, if He wrought in any especial fashion suited to the display of His glory in their midst, it was the Spirit of God who was the energetic power behind and within. It was He that wrought, for instance, from a Moses down to a Bezaleel, from Samson up to David. When we come to the prophets, it need scarcely be said it was under the power of the Holy Ghost that holy men of God spoke; the Spirit of Christ made them to be witnesses beforehand of His sufferings, and of His glories that were to follow, little as they might themselves understand His sufferings. Thus, in those who stand for present privileges, there is no disposition whatever to obscure, but on the contrary to give the fullest value to all that the Holy

Ghost has ever wrought; for in truth there never was anything of God in which He did not work. But when we come to the New Testament, a new thing comes to view. A despised, crucified, depart Son of man was a strange sound. (John 12:34.) They looked for Christ to abide for ever, and to reign in glory and righteous blessing upon earth. But gradually, as man and Israel especially rejected Him, the truth- astonishing to the Jew-dawned more and more, that He, the Messiah and Son of God, was going to leave the earth. Gentiles, I am aware, think little of this; but do they therefore show superior wisdom? To the Jew it was a most startling announcement, and at first sight irreconcilable with the law and prophets. They had looked for Him, the promised One, and their hearts delighted in His presence: it was what kings and prophets had desired most earnestly. God had put the desire into their souls; but now that it was gratified in His coming, He is going to leave them, to sink down in sorrow and shame and death -the death of the cross! under man's, ay, and under God's, hand! And not merely this, but when He rose again-instead of maintaining His glory from the throne of His father David, and filling the earth with the blessedness that was foretold, and accomplishing, and more than accomplishing, all that their hearts had so fondly hoped was just about to dawn and for ever brighten this world-He was about to leave the world in its darkness; at any rate, He was about to retire again to the heavens whence He came. But if He was about to go on high, it was not as He came down; for as the Son of God He had come down to become man,,the Word was made flesh; "and now as man, risen from the dead, He was leaving the world to take His place at the right hand of God; and during His absence on high, He would send down the Holy Ghost in a way never before known. The Old Testament prepares the heart for a present Messiah, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost as the needed appropriate meed paid to the reign of the Messiah over the earth; but the Messiah, on His death and resurrection, disappearing from the view of the world that had cast Him out, entering into a new and heavenly scene, and the Holy Ghost sent down personally in His absence to be here while He was there-all this was something wholly unexpected by the Jew. If Gentiles do not turn aside and wonder at the great sight, it is certainly not from excess of spiritual feeling or intelligence. We may find of course the wonder of stupidity; but there is such a thing as no wonder, just because there is no real thought about it. I believe this is the reason why, if there be on the one hand the wonder of men who are surprised, there is a lack of wonder in others because they are too engrossed in earthly things to be really concerned.

Now this, next to Christ, is the central truth of the New Testament; but so far from its being the, solid ground on which Christians are now walking, in point of fact all is reduced in their minds to a mere continuation of the influence which the Holy Ghost has always exerted. The consequence is, that all men who reject His special presence in person on earth as a consequence of redemption are driven into the most painful expedients in order to evade the plainest scriptures. I may just mention one case: it will perhaps startle some that such assertions should be made, and especially by a person of large reputation for spiritual knowledge. It will show where want of faith as to the great truth of the actual presence of the Holy Ghost in a way never experienced before lands those who oppose it systematically. In order to escape the clear intimation of a new and incomparable blessing in the shape of the Comforter, they allege that the Holy Ghost (who had always been given!) departed from the earth when the Lord was here, in order that the Lord should give Him once more on His own ascension to heaven. Thus, the time of the Saviour's presence on earth would be, not a bright and happy feast, but dearth as regarded the Spirit of God" just name the -thought, in order that you may see the excessive violence, not to say worse, to which unbelief

reduces even intelligent men of God. Need I say, on the contrary, that those who surrounded the Saviour and were blessed by His teaching had all the Old Testament saints ever enjoyed, and a great deal more? The Holy Ghost had quickened their souls, like their predecessors, by giving them faith in Christ. Besides, the disciples had the Messiah's presence and the manifestation of grace and truth in Him, and all His words and ways. No doubt there was much they could not then bear, as the Lord Himself told them; but still they were as truly believers as any had ever been before them. The fact is that such reasoning is the puny effort of man to escape from the solemn truth of God. The New Testament is most explicit. Our Lord first of all brings out the doctrine of the Spirit; and this as fully meeting the need of man to be born of the Spirit and to have the Holy Ghost, in order that he should be able to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But more than this, He prepares the disciples for the mighty work in spreading the truth and the grace of God. The Holy Ghost was necessary for this; and accordingly we have it in chap. vii.-a scripture which it is impossible to escape. The Lord bad put it in a figurative way, that out of the belly of him who believed should flow rivers of living water. " This spake he of the Spirit," (which should not be given to a person in order to make him believe, but), "which they that believe should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given], because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Lengthy reasoning on such a scripture would be a dishonor to the word of God. Where there is an obscurity, we may try to explain and illustrate; but where the language employed is plainer than any that could be substituted in its stead, I feel that it is due to Scripture simply to press that plain meaning. In the later chapters of the same gospel again we have our Lord bringing out, not merely the fact that after the glorification of Jesus the Holy Ghost was to be given, as He had not been before; but, besides, we have His personal action, when sent and come, entered into fully and definitely. Hence in John xiv. He is spoken of as the Comforter. Mark the importance of this. We may reason about the Holy Ghost being given, as if it meant no more than a spiritual power, but we cannot thus attenuate the sent Comforter. Who is He but the Holy Ghost Himself? No one can say that "Comforter" means a miracle, or a tongue, or any operation you please. Doubtless He works in all these various ways; but it is a real person who replaces the Messiah when He leaves the earth. Just read a few verses of the chapter in order that it be made still plainer: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." There again we have what is most evident. Miracles have been; tongues cease; prophecies and knowledge pass away; but here we have a divine person who abides with the saints for ever-"even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The world was bound to receive Jesus, and after an outward manner it had Him there; but here we find One who, not having become incarnate, could not in any way be brought before the eyes of the world. I admit of course that the world does not really receive Jesus in a spiritual manner any more than the Holy Ghost; but still there is a pointed reference to the manner of the Holy Ghost's presence here below, which excludes Him from all apprehension on the world's part as an object either of sight or of knowledge.

Again in John 14:26 we read, " The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." It is not a gift or power or influence merely, but one who is really sent--a person who teaches all things and brings all the Lord's sayings to their remembrance. Then in John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come." It is not merely in this case "sent" (because some

might argue perhaps about the sending of an influence) but "come." "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth [in every way guarding this most weighty theme], which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness., because ye have been with me from the beginning." Assuredly we have the Holy Spirit's coming presented with solemnity and distinctness. In the former chapter the Father sends Him in Christ's name; in this Christ sends Him from the Father. In the one case He is said to bring all things Christ had spoken to their remembrance; in the other He comes down from the Son, and bears witness of Him. They had been conversant with Him upon earth, and were to attest it as witnesses; also the Spirit from Him in heaven comes down, that there should be as it were these joint witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then in John 16:1-33 we. have the truth still further unfolded, and, if possible, with increasing energy, as it is indeed of the deepest interest and importance. In chapter xiv. the Lord bad told them that they ought to rejoice because He went to the Father. He was leaving a scene of humiliation and suffering to be in the home of the Father's love and glory. Had their love been simple, bad they been thinking of Him, not of themselves, they would have rejoiced because He was going to the Father. But now in John 16:1-33. He puts it upon other ground: "It is expedient for you [and not only as it were for me] that I go to the Father." What! expedient for those poor weak trembling disciples that He had watched over, in the face of all Israel who despised Him and would not be gathered to Him? Surely under His wing, He had gathered those little ones, and sheltered them; yea, in the very hour of His own rejection He had turned His hand upon them. And now He must leave them. It was expedient for them that He should go to the Father. How could this be? There is but one answer; and it is the answer that the Lord gives. It is what in His mind made it expedient Blessed as it was to have the Messiah, His presence (just because He was a man upon earth with a group of disciples around Him) was necessarily limited. He could not thus be as man everywhere throughout the earth. The Holy Ghost had not, like the Son, taken human nature into union with His person. But more than that, when redemption was effected, He could in the most intimate way bring into the hearts of the disciples all the value that flowed from Christ and His work-Christ exalted to heaven and estimated of God the Father there.

Thus then were the great foundations of truth laid. The Lord Jesus would not leave this world or go to the Father, until every question that God had with guilty man was settled for ever. When sin was put away by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, when righteousness was established in Christ risen from the dead and exalted on high, it was not merely all pure grace as before, but now it became a question of God's righteousness through the work of the Saviour. The efficacy of His blood turned the scale in favour of man; for it was the man Christ Jesus who bad thus glorified God about sin. No doubt He was His own beloved Son, the inestimable gift of His own grace; and man could boast nothing, for He was despised and rejected of man, hated without a cause. Still, there was the fact that God had so looked down upon earth, more especially upon the cross, to find the man who suffered all, that God Himself might be glorified. This truth changed everything. Now it became a question, so to speak, for God: what could He do for this blessed man? If He was God's Son, was this a reason why He should love or exalt Him less? He raises up from the grave the man Christ Jesus, and sets Him at His own right hand. That was not only a personal act in honour of Christ, but for believers it is the measure, in infinite grace, of acceptance which is now theirs in virtue of Him. All heaven was filled with wonder and praise at the sight of man, made a little lower

than the angels, taken up in the person of Christ far above all principalities and powers to sit on the throne of God. Yea God Himself from that moment has made it His business and delight to show His value for the man who, in the face of sin and death and Satan and divine judgment, retrieved all His character, and brought glory to His name in delivering, by suffering for, the guilty to the uttermost Before this man had been the constant public agent in dishonouring God. Never was God so alighted, insulted, provoked by any of His creatures as by man. Satan , when lie left his first estate, once and for ever forfeited his place. There might still be a more terrible judgment awaiting him; but there was no mercy-no beam of hope pierced through the darkness into which sin plunged a fallen angel. But now, after man had preferred darkness to light, after his manifold course of rebellion against God was run, the tide was turned in the death of Christ, and God was placed by His work under an obligation, so to say, to man to bless him by faith through and in Christ the Lord.

Hence that expression of which St. Paul is so full "the righteousness of God." If man was more than ever proved to be lost, God now had a debt to pay. As a part of His discharge of it, He sets the Lord Jesus as man at His own right hand; He justifies freely and fully every believer; and He sends down the Holy Ghost in order that He might be the divine link between that blessed Man in glory and those who believed in Him, even such as had trembled at the thought of His departure. What a change there is now! Not only was there spiritual intelligence now, but power also. Peter, who had denied the Lord, could now stand boldly forward and say, " But ye denied the Holy One and the Just." They were all dumb. His denial was completely gone, and I might venture to say with more glory to the Lord than if he had never uttered it. A positive strength and triumph glowed in his soul, a knowledge not only of his own weakness and worthlessness, but of God, of resurrection, and of His grace-a sense of what Christ was for him that was beyond all he had ever known before, I do not say beyond grace, unless Peter had done what he did; but surely there was immense force in his words. They knew well what he had done, Publicly done, in the high priest’s hall, and before people ready enough to see the faults of a disciple. Yet he who repeatedly and recently denied his Lord was, through abundance of grace, so full of courage as to stand forth and confront and tell them that it was they that "denied the Holy One and the Just." His conscience was purged; he had no more conscience of sins (Hebrews 10:1-39): all was blotted out that could be against him before God. Yea he was justified from all things. This was merely one fruit, precious as it was; and out of what did it grow? Peter had been a believer before, and was already born anew: what then was its spring ? It was part of the result of the great salvation made good in the power of the Spirit of God come down from heaven, and thus working in Peter. No doubt there was previous moral exercise, deep penitence for his sins, and the restoration of his soul; but more than all this followed,-the gift and positive power of the Spirit. It is here, though not here only, that the church shows its weakness through unbelief. To the believer it is not a mere negative question now, but one of real present power; as was said of Timothy-who needed to be reminded of the fact-that it was not a spirit of fear he had received, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. But now we must return to the great truth: the Lord Jesus, in John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33 shows what was to replace His personal presence upon earth-a real divine Paraclete-He whom we call the third person in the Trinity. I do not however admire the expression "second" or "third" person; and for this reason, that it tends to bring in a subordination in the Godhead where scripture does not. You cannot have a secondary God. You may bring human reasonings into the subject, and talk about a son, and his subjection to his father; but therein is the very thing which is

so dangerous, and of which, to my mind, the devil has taken great advantage. The scripture shows that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; that they are one and all equally Jehovah. Subordination in respect of Deity is only a means of undermining the proper Godhead of the Son and the Spirit. The notion of subordination is true only when we look at the place of manhood the Son deigned to take, or at the office the blessed Holy Ghost is now filling to the glory of the Son, just as the Son served and will yet reign to the glory of God the Father. To return, however-the Lord Jesus tells us it was expedient that He should go away;-"For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Any particular notice of this scripture is not the point now, but rather the general truth. This was the twofold purpose of the Holy Ghost in coming here below. He proves that the world was under sin; that there is no righteousness here, but only in the Just One with the Father; and that as to the prince of this world, he is judged-the sentence not executed but he judged. There was hope for the world with the Jew; but now, from the point of view in which the Lord speaks of His own going and the Holy Ghost's coming, the world is evidently lost, and the Spirit here is but its reprover. Next, this same Holy Spirit should lead the disciples into the truth, taking of the things of Christ, and glorifying Him. There is thus a double relation of the Holy Ghost to the world, as a system outside and condemned; to the saints, whom He leads, telling them of things to come, yea, of all things pertaining to Christ and His glory. Such is the plain doctrine of the Apostle John as to the Spirit.

Thence we come to the Acts of the Apostles: is there anything there that, as a matter of fact, answers to our Lord's promises? There need not be a doubt. In chapter i. the disciples are with the Lord, entering but very feebly into that which had filled His heart before He went away. They were still looking for the kingdom with great things for the earth and for Israel They were not, it is true, sunk so low as the unbelieving thoughts of Gentile Christendom-i.e., a millennium without Christ! the shame of those who boast so proudly in our day; but still they were not far raised above the ordinary thoughts of Jews. They did not yet enter into the precious Christian hope, and for this simple reason: the thoughts of the Christian are the thoughts of heaven. They are the communications of the Holy Ghost that suit the Father, because centring in the Son and His heavenly glory. Into that communion we are brought; and truly it is not merely with the prophets and with their blessed visions of coming glory for the earth, but " with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." But as for the disciples in Acts 1:1-26 the power of entrance was not yet there, for the Holy Ghost was not personally come; and yet they had not only life at this time, but life in resurrection. The Lord had actually breathed upon them the very day He rose, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Of course this was not the gift of the -Comforter as such, the promised One that was to take the place of Christ upon earth ; but rather the communication by the Holy Ghost of His own risen life. Therefore, I believe, did He breathe upon them: a clear allusion to the Lord God breathing on Adam. Of old it was the breath of natural life given to Adam. Here was One upon earth who was both Lord and God (as acknowledged by Thomas a little after), and also the risen man or last Adam, the quickening Spirit. Accordingly, He communicates this life. as life must always be communicated, by the Holy Ghost; and therefore it is said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." But for all that, we know from Acts 1:1-26 that the Spirit, the Comforter, was not yet come. Indeed, we ought to gather it from the simple fact, that the Lord was not yet gone. "And if I go not away, the

Comforter will not come.'" He was seen there; and He commands them, when assembled together, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father' Whatever the blessing, then, they had received on the resurrection- day, it was not the accomplishment of the promise of the Father.

Acts 21:1-47 shows us the Holy Ghost acting on earth in the absence of Christ; and this in various ways. It records that extraordinary display of divine grace in the gift of tongues, which, without removing, surmounted the confusion that man's sin and divine judgment had brought into the world in the various nations and tribes and tongues, which have subsisted since Babel to this day. Now the Spirit was going out with the news of God's wonderful works of grace to all, just as they were proving that where sin had abounded, grace much more abounded. At the same time let us not forget that new tongues, although the magnificent fruit of the Spirit's operation, are not the same thing as His presence; they were an effect and characteristic sign of a crucified but now exalted Lord, the witness of gospel grace and its universal testimony in contrast with the law, but not the same thing as the gift of the Holy Ghost Himself This is exceedingly important, because the unbelief of some has gone so far as to think and say that if the tongues exist no more, the Holy Ghost is absent. What blindness to the Saviour's promise! What a lowering of the Spirit's presence! What denial of Christianity and the church! The truth is, that the tongues, and the other powers in which the Spirit of God was pleased then to work, were but the miraculous tokens that befitted His presence, besides inaugurating the gospel and the church. It was all a new and unprecedented state of things. When the Son was on earth, miracles followed His steps and word, as it was only meet, and the accomplishment of prophecy. Another divine person being come, was it not suitable there should be proofs of it, more especially as He took no permanent form, as the Son of God had done, so as to be visible. It was therefore the more needed that there should be palpable effects and tokens arresting the mind, and causing the heart of man to weigh what God is and is doing, not only as displayed in the Son, but as witnessed by the Holy Ghost present upon earth. This is the cardinal truth upon which all. hinges that we find in the great body of the New Testament. There was now before men a fact without precedent, altogether unknown to the world, if it did not surprise even those that had been taught by the Lord Himself to expect it-the wondrous fact that the Holy Ghost bad come down in person, making His presence known by a signature of gracious power, so as to be then known and read of all men. Accordingly throughout the Acts of the Apostles you have ever and anon the testimony not only to His action and its results, but to the glorious truth that He Himself was there. Look at the first outbreak of the world's religious rancour in Acts 4:1-37, and His answer to it in Acts 4:31. Take again the first public sin and scandal, where Ananias and Sapphira were charged on the spot with lying not to man but to God. But how was this proved? They had lied to the Holy Ghost who was there. The standard of judgment was that dishonoured person who was-in their midst. This measure of sin, let me say, is as true individually as it is in the church. Hence, in Ephesians 4:30, it is not merely that you should not violate this or that command, but "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Let us note it well. The more this is reflected upon, the more its immense moment will be felt, by the children of God. Supposing you take the presence of one you most value and delight in, does not his or her coming affect all your ways and words just in proportion as you realize and love their presence? We might be ever so much at ease; but still, if there be one staying with us, who draws out our honour and esteem, the influence is felt deeply and at once except by a stone. Surely one does think of that which will. give pleasure; one rightly fears to

wound; the heart is on the alert and active, and it is a joy to do that which will gratify those we love. And so in virtue of redemption the Holy Ghost is here, because as regards each believer all is gone that was offensive to God; and the saint stands in divine righteousness before God -become this in Christ. How indeed could the Holy Ghost be away? He must have His part when that which was most precious to God and man was wrought. If the Father accomplished His thoughts in and by the Son, could the Holy Ghost be absent or inactive? And now God had done His greatest work-the atoning work of Christ. Where therefore the blood of the accepted sacrifice is, the Holy Ghost not only can work but must dwell. If Christ by His own blood has entered in once for all into the holies, having found an everlasting redemption, the Holy Ghost is come to abide with us for ever. All hangs on and is measured by this. Accordingly the book of the Acts is far more the acts of the Holy Ghost than of the apostles, important vessels of His power as they were, though not they only. We have seen, where it was a question of sin, He judges by His presence and acts upon this ground. We have seen that, when they were in danger of being alarmed by the threats of man, the Spirit gave cheering evidence of His mighty presence. It was not merely Peter and John, or anybody else; but the place was shaken where they were. Whose presence was this, or in whom particularly? It was the presence of the Holy Ghost, not merely in this or in that individual, but in the assembly of God. More than that, the Spirit of God in chapter xiii. of the Acts takes an active place, and sends out Paul and Barnabas. " Separate me," He says, " Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." I am now referring to the case only to show that it is not a question of miracles, tongues, or powers, but of a real divine person, who was the chief agent as present in the church of God; and that this personal presence of the Spirit in man was a new thing, previously unexampled in the plan and ways of God. (Compare also Acts 8:29; Acts 8:39; Acts 15:28; Acts 16:7; Acts 20:23; Acts 21:11)

Now we come to the Epistles, passing by the scriptures which attest the Holy Ghost's presence in the individual. All-important as this is, it is not my subject, but His presence in the church. Hence we must omit the Epistle to the Romans, which takes up our individual relation towards God, and for the simple reason that there we are regarded as His children. We are brought out of the place of wrath and sin, made children of God, and if children, then heirs: the Holy Ghost gives the spirit of adoption, and fills the heart with hopes of the inheritance which is to follow. But in the Epistles to the Corinthians you have not merely the state of man and the revelation of divine righteousness, with their consequences in sinners and saints, as in Romans, but the church of God, in a grievous state of sin, shame, and disorder, but still the church of God. Accordingly the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as there dwelling is shown as in its capital seat. The portion read (1 Corinthians 7:1-13) developes His action in the church. What can be plainer? Here we have the Holy Ghost viewed as a real person present and working in gifts of outward sign, no doubt, as well as in ways of edification. But whatever might be the form of His action, the great truth was that He was there and at work in the many members of God's assembly. The question is, was all this a temporary display, or was His presence for ever the substratum of it all? Was that which we here read confined to a particular local assembly and a special epoch long past, or is there anything for us, for the church of God at large, for this time and all times? The answer cannot be doubtful, if we are subject to the word of God. Certainly our Lord had in John xiv. laid down, in contrast with His own temporary absence, that the Spirit of truth was to abide with His disciples for ever. But next the First Epistle to the Corinthians could not open without the Holy Ghost's giving it the most enlarged application. In the first verse of the first chapter we read, " Unto the church of God which is at

Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." This is not said in the Second Epistle: indeed I am not aware that there is anything exactly like it anywhere else in the New Testament Are we to suppose this was a mistake? Let who will be guilty of such a speech or thought, I trust there is no soul here that would not denounce it as a sin against God. A mistake in the word of God! On the contrary it seems to me to be the special wisdom and goodness of the Spirit who foresaw the unbelief of Christendom; it was the Spirit of God who knew that this Epistle would be treated as if it were of private application, as if it belonged to a bygone time and place, and did not appertain to all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ - both theirs and ours." This He has guarded against at the very threshold, and made such an objection to be plain fighting against the word of God. Thus it ceases to be a question of opinion. God has spoken and has written that we may believe Him; and this epistle has a purposely enlarged scope, so that unbelief as to the perpetuity of the Holy Ghost's action in the assembly, as long as He and it are here, should be treated as a sin, as a positive rejection of God's plain word. Is it not unbelief which makes Dull and void the Holy Ghost's personal presence in the church?

It is not at all contended that the Holy Ghost necessarily works in every way as of old, and still less in the same measure of power. In the latter part of the New Testament we do not read much about miracles -very I little - less and less too as time passes on. We can understand that, in the opening of a new dealing of God, there should be, in His goodness, a wonderful working and display of these mighty answers to awaken the attention even of careless men. But, as the truth of His presence was established, and the new communications of God were gradually written, and there was thus not merely the evidence of outward tokens, but positive scripture committed to human responsibility, we can easily see that external vouchers were no longer so requisite, and that the Spirit of God (grieved, as we know, by much found in those who professed the name of Christ) might gradually withdraw, not Himself, but the manifestation of mighty signs, and refuse to put outward ornaments upon that which dishonoured the Lord Jesus.

It is certain and evident, at least when we come to the churches of the Apocalypse, that we see or hear no more of the powers of the age to- come. Not a doubt have I that there was the wisdom of God in thus ordering in view of the state of things that. was fast coming in. I think we can readily discern by spiritual. considerations why it would not have been suitable to the glory of God to continue those miraculous powers. Supposing, for instance, God were to work now in the way of miracle, is it not evident that in one of two ways it must be? Either He must work wherever the name of Christ is preached and known at all; and what would be the consequence of this? Miracles in Rome, miracles in Canterbury, miracles among Presbyterians, Independents, Wesleyans, Baptists, Paedo-baptists, Calvinists, Arminians, Lutherans: Greek church and all sects and denominations in Christendom would have their miracles! There may be those who would enjoy the sight, but I envy them not. Every one here, I trust, would feel deeply the anomaly of such an outward seal on such a mass of confusion. On the other band, supposing God were pleased to say that He could not give these tokens of His power and glory where the church was thus in disorder and rebellion, but must single out-whom shall I say? It could not be, it ought not to be: God forbid that we ourselves should desire it, as things are. But let us for the moment imagine the Lord looking on any children of God anywhere gathered, and saying, " I see where My people are subject to My word; and where I find two or three here and there gathered unto My name, there I

will work miracles." What would be the consequence? We should not know how to behave ourselves, So weak are we, so foolish, so apt to be full of ourselves, even now in the face of continual weakness, as well as hatred and contempt, that we should not be able to contain ourselves if we had these displays of divine power. Besides, what a slight to those we own to be as truly members A Christ, and as truly indwelt of the Spirit, as any of us!

I am persuaded then there is perfect grace and wisdom as to this in the ways of God. He no longer works thus. But here is the truth on which I take my stand this night: the Holy Ghost was given, not merely as a display of power in the earth, but, if I may so say, as both sign and substance of the divine value for the cross. God the Father gave the Holy Ghost as the seal of that redemption which is always unchangeably perfect and infinitely efficacious. I dare to say it, and yet I say it with all reverence, that if the Holy Ghost were now taken from the poorest and feeblest of His saints upon earth, it would not be a dishonour to him so much as to the Son of God and His atoning work. It would be virtually to say that the ruin of the church has made the blood of Christ less precious; but will God ever confirm a lie? And here is the stronghold of faith in this we can be confident-not only that the Lord Jesus has expressed the mind and intentions of God, but that we through His grace can and ought to enter in measure into its ground, reason, character, and aim, as well as meaning.

All this we may by faith appreciate and enjoy, for He has explained it to us. Wherefore indeed is the word of God given, if it be not that we should understand His mind, feel His love, and be sure of His truth, wisdom and goodness? Hence we are aware that God, in sending the Spirit to abide always whatever may be the sorrowful condition of believers individually and collectively, did not give a mere token of approving them, but rather the only adequate pledge of His delight in the personal work of His beloved Son. The Holy Ghost, we know, descended on Christ when He was upon earth without blood, because He was always sinless, as perfect here morally as He was and is in heaven, no less absolutely holy as man than as God. It is not forgotten, of course, that He had yet to be made perfect in another sense, as becoming captain and author of salvation, and to be consecrated as heavenly priest. It is clear that there was a work to be done, and an official place of glory to be taken; but nothing ever did or could add to His moral perfectness. Hence, I repeat, He could and did receive the Holy Ghost for Himself as man without blood. But when Christ went up on high, He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. What amazing comfort, confidence, and rest should this give us! Had the Holy Ghost been given directly to us, we might well think that, if we did not carry ourselves as we ought, there might be a revocation. We can understand a soul troubled with such a thought; but, thanks be to God, the Father gave the Holy Ghost a second time to Christ. When He went on high, He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and shed forth that which was seen and beard at Pentecost. Thus the gift is entirely in virtue of Christ., after He had blotted out our sins and received it as a consequence. There we have the firmest and surest ground on which the perpetuity of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the saint and in the church rests before God-His love to Christ, and His estimate of Christ’s work for us, not to speak of His immutable word. And now for a few practical words on this before I have done. We shall have other applications and results of it in subsequent lectures, so that the less may be said now. If there be a divine person on earth who is now in each saint individually, and with all as the church of God, I ask, Can this be a secondary consideration? Is this a truth that can be Subordinated to circumstances? Is it something that can be pushed aside

for the sake of not disturbing oneself or others? Can men who so think, and speak and act, believe in the reality, of the Spirit's personal presence and present operation according to scripture? Do they know that the Holy Ghost is really in the church on earth ? I am not now, of course, alluding to His divine glory whereby He fills all things, because it is always true, - as true before Christ came as it has been since, and equally true of all the persons in the Trinity. But as the Son came down from heaven and was here a man for some thirty or more years upon the earth but is actually gone, so now the, Holy Ghost is come down personally to abide with and in us in such sort as was unknown before, save only in Christ. The Holy Spirit, I say, has come now to be in us personally; and just as Christ was God's only true temple, so now the church is the temple of God; for both these truths are taught in the word of God. But if this be believed, if it be received as God's truth, what can compare with it in importance as a present practical fact, as well as privilege, for the saint and for the church? Accordingly the responsibility of Christians, if we apply it to their meeting, is that their assemblies should be governed by the truth that the Holy Ghost is there. But how does the Holy Ghost work when owned as there? This we have answered, if it were only in the scripture already read. He distributes, or divides, to every. one severally as He will. Is His presence then not to be recognized? Is His working not to be respected? What do we find, if we test the present aspect of Christendom by the word of God? It is far from my desire needles-sly to trouble any one, nor is it my wish to provoke controversy; but there are truths which manifestly admit of no compromise: indeed, all divine truth refuses such unworthy dealing. How, then, I would ask, is it with our souls in the feeling, in the faith, in the allegiance that we pay to this truth, so vital to the church, so essential to the right honouring of the Holy Ghost and of the Lord Himself? Do you doubt that the church of God is in disorder? Where is the serious-minded Christian that does not own it more or less? Is there a spiritual man who would maintain that the present, state of the church answers to what we read in the New Testament? Am I not to feel and to humble myself before God for my own and the church's sin in this grave matter? Must I not seek to be where the Holy Ghost's presence is owned? It matters not where I have been ignorantly; I have doubtless been where there was not even the show of owning His presence and action according to the scriptures; I may have joined others in praying God to pour out again the Holy Ghost, as if He were not come and in the church of God. And do you call such prayer as this a scriptural recognition of His presence? What can be conceived a more decided or more evident ignoring of the truth that the Holy Ghost is here? Were it prayed that the Spirit of God might not be grieved, or that the saints might be filled with Him, it were scriptural. What would it have been for a disciple in the presence of Jesus to have asked the Father to send His Son?-to raise up the Messiah when the Messiah was actually there? Is it not the spirit of the world, which cannot receive the Spirit, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him? But we know Him-at least we ought to know Him. Well, if we do know that He is here, is it a light thing whether or not we are subject to His operation in the church ? It is in vain to say, " I acknowledge the truth of His presence;" so much the worse, if I am not subject to the scripture, which leaves no doubt how He acts for Christ's glory. Mere words do not suffice: God looks for faithfulness for subjection to His word, for practical recognition of the presence of the Holy Ghost.

We come together, it may be ever so few: what do we count on? We are weak and ignorant, but we have One in our midst who knows all things, and is the source of all power. Are we content with Him? Can we confide in Him in the face of dangers and difficulties? Why is it that the church is weak? Why is it that there is such want of power and joy and peace and comfort among the

children of God? Can it be wondered at? What I wonder at is rather the mercy and astonishing patience of God, blessing as He does in spite of so much unbelief. Do you really suppose that it can be an indifferent thing to God? Does He not call for my unhesitating adhesion to His will, duly owning His Spirit's presence and free action? What about your bowing down to the great present fact, that in virtue of redemption and in honour of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost is here personally in the church on earth? This puts the soul to the test; indeed, it seems to me the great test for Christians. Christ, of course, abides the practical touchstone for everything and every person; but still if He is known and valued by my soul as the way, the truth, and the life, is it nothing to Him that my ways in the church of God should be on the ground He has given me-faith in the presence of the promised Holy Ghost? Is it not the truth God Himself presupposes as the very soul, the animating spring, of the church? This does not in the slightest degree touch God's working by individuals. He sends out one to preach the gospel to the world, He raises up another to edify the children of God. This is another branch of truth; and I refer to it now only to show that, when we contend for the church's inalienable obligation to own the presence of the Holy Ghost, this does not in the least interfere with the individual action of the Spirit in ministry. Granting this in all its integrity and importance, I would put the question to the con-science of each before me, Where is there an assembly of God's saints coming together, and His Spirit left perfect liberty of action that He may employ whom He will as the vessels of His power? Are there any Christians here present who never thus find themselves in the only assembly which God's word sanctions? If there are, I can only say, Ponder that word with prayer, and ask your soul how comes this? You, a member of God's assembly, yet you never know that assembly gathered according to scripture, or the action of the Spirit proper to it! You, a member of Christ's body, yet the Holy Ghost never allowed to use you, or other members of it, to the glory of Christ and the edification of your brethren! If it be so, how comes it? Why should you go on thus?

It is granted that there are serious questions here, and many obstacles; and I am sure we ought to pray much for those that are thus perplexed and encumbered. Let me not disguise from them what it costs in this world to be true to the Lord and the unerring word of God. It is not for any one (the Lord keep us far from it!) to look lightly or coldly on those who are in this grievous trial: we may have known some of its bitterness ourselves. What do we desire for God's children? Nothing less than their deliverance, yea, of every one. Do not all saints who rest upon the redemption of Christ belong to the body? Has not God set them as it pleased Him in His church? And what are we doing? Are we gathering together to improve on the Spirit's action in the church of God? God forbid: rather is it to honour the Lord in the assurance that He is in our midst. Our only true reason, if we have a divine reason at all, for meeting together in the name of the Lord Jesus, is that it is His own will and way; it is to please Him. And if it has been done at cost, God blesses this greatly, and blesses it too to the softening of the spirit quite as much as to the exercise of faith: if it is not so, there is something wrong with our souls. Am I, then, as the centre of my church - action. cleaving to the presence of the Holy Ghost? If I am not, I have not got God's centre for mine, and am still under the dominion of tradition in some shape or another; carrying on either what my father did, or something else that suits my mind better: but where is God in all this?

You may be taunted, as we all know, with bigotry and exclusiveness. Did these censors ever weigh what either means? I call bigotry an unreasonable attachment, without solid divine warrant, to one's own particular doctrine or practice in defiance of all others. Allow me to ask, Is it bigotry to

give up one’s most cherished associations because of God’s word, in order to do His will? Is it exclusive to abandon sects, one and all, in order to be always and only where I can meet all saints according to the word, and in dependence on the Holy Ghost, gathered unto Christ’s name? I am not’ assuming this for any one who does not own scripture as the unchanging truth of God ; but I ask you who do, are you to allow yourselves to depart from the known ground of God, no matter what may be the trial within or the temptation without you? There are often attachments of other kinds that create difficulty. Friends may ask you to go here or there for once at any rate; and it seems hard to refuse, especially as they understand not the force of a divine conviction, which they lack themselves. You invite them, perhaps, to come with you, and you decline going with them. Does it not look proud and unbrotherly? Well, it may seem singular to them, but it ought to be perfectly plain to you; it may be real humility, and love too, haughty and unkind as rash ignorance counts it.

Let us conceive a godly churchman or dissenter to put this plain question: "How is it that you, who are so free and hearty in receiving Christians in the name of Christ, will not come with me to my church or chapel?" The answer is, " On your own principles, as a Protestant Christian, you can come here with a good conscience, where we are sure the one desire is to be subject to the Lord and His word, in the unity of His body, and in the liberty of His Spirit. You surely acknowledge it is no sin to meet as we do, according to scripture, and therefore you can meet with us. But I, for my part, am clear that it is unscriptural to desert the scriptural ground for that of dissent or Anglicanism, and therefore it is not want of love but fear of sin that keeps me from going with yon, who do not pretend to be meeting on the ground of God’s assembly." Surely he is a bigot or worse who would urge or expect me to join him against my positive conviction, that in so doing I should sin against God. Sin is a man doing his own will, or another’s, which is not God’s. If you ask me to depart from what I know to be the will of God, it would of course be sin in me to comply. It is not only a thing that is sinful in itself, but it would be most especially a sin in me, because I know, if you are ignorant, that it is infidelity to the Spirit’s operation in the church. Be not moved, then, by reproaches, any more than by fair speeches. For there is no real love, save in obeying God. (1 John 5:2-3.) Never swerve from what you believe to be His will. You may have come in at first little acquainted with the truth or with the solemn responsibilities it involves; perhaps it was on that slender reason that you were here converted: but how is it with you now? Have you been searching the word of God to ascertain His mind and will? Do you see the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in the assembly to be the truth of God? Is it not perfectly plain and sure that God has sent down His Spirit, and that this truth has to be owned and acted upon by you and all Christians? That truth*(1) you cannot deny; you know very well it is of God; you may not value it as you ought, (who does?) but this is another thing. The Lord grant that we may all value it more and increasingly.

Search the Scriptures, examine the word of God for your own souls; by this means we obtain true spiritual intelligence, but this only in obedience, and we do not want it otherwise. The intelligence that is gathered in disobedience seems to me perilous and untrustworthy; to learn the truth, step by step acting it out, is a happier and holier path, and of simpler faith too. At the same time that we value intelligence, we must remember that there is another thing yet more important-single-eyed subjection to the will of God, even if we seem to be unintelligent about much. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." That scripture is not out of date; and I believe such is the divine and

therefore the best way, as a beginning. There is blessedness in gradually growing up into the truth of God, above all looking to Him that we walk in that which we know. For the present, I pray the Lord that the great truths of the "one body" and "one Spirit," which have been before us, may be brought home by His own power; so that all of us who know them may be cheered and confirmed, and that those who are ignorant may be taught them of Himself.

*(1) That " the different denominations " present a state of things directly at variance with " one body and one Spirit " is too plain to call for argument with those who are used to bow to scripture, and to judge present facts by it. How painful then it is to read such sentiments as these in the recent words (June, 1869) of one whom I cannot but love and esteem for his work's sake! , I some. times thin that these will continue for ever. They are of no hurt to the church of God (1) but a great blessing (!) ; for some of them take up one point of truth which is neglected, and others take up another; and so between them all the whole of truth is brought out(!); and it seems to me that the church is even more one(!) than if all the various sections were brought together into one grand ecclesiastical corporation [who contends for this but a Papist or Puseyite ?]; for this would probably feed some ambitious personts vanity, and raise up another dynasty of priestcraft like the old Babylon of Rome. Perhaps it is quite as well as it is; but let each body of Christians keep to its own work, and not sneer at the work of others." Alas! the word of God does not occur in all this reasoning of unbelief (though in a believer); but as usual the very publication in which it occurs is a witness that this justification of sin is as hollow as its profession of love and order. For a large portion is devoted to sneering at the only Christians who at this time are seeking to give practical effect to their faith in the " one body and one Spirit." With much, very much, of the paper on Order Heaven's first Law" I go so heartily that I am the more grieved to notice, in however friendly a spirit, such flagrant inconsistency both in principle and in practice. Let us rather humble ourselves for our common sin, seek to walk in obedience and love while waiting for the Lord Jesus, but never abuse the grace of God to deny His truth which condemns our ways.

03.03 The Assembly And Ministry

Lectures on the Church of God by William Kelly

Lecture III THE ASSEMBLY AND MINISTRY.

1 Corinthians 14:1-40. The two subjects which are now to come before us may seem at first sight to be rather widely separated; but in truth, far as they appear to diverge, they equally flow from Christ. They are founded both of them upon His work, as an accomplished fact; they are derived from Him in His present place of exaltation at the right hand of God; they are established for the express object of magnifying the Lord Jesus, even as they are now called in a very direct way to subserve His Lordship. And this last point is one of immense practical importance. For whatever may be the power of the Spirit in ministry, whatever may be the privileges of the assembly, still the Lordship of Christ is a truth of elementary character indeed in the mind of God, but of exceeding moment for the practical working of the Spirit of God, both in the individual members, who are His servants, and in the assembly, the body of which He is the Head. Hence we can at once see that, whatever may be the different lines that either the ministry or the assembly may take, yet they spring from a common source, and they are both intended of God to be subject to, and the means of exalting, the same Lord Jesus Christ. Now it will be my business to-night to direct attention to the testimony we have in the word of God as to both these subjects, in order to show, as far as limits permit, wherein they differ; wherein also a common principle binds them together; and above all their common end, as well as the Christian’s consequent responsibility.

First of all, as to the assembly, we may be the more brief, inasmuch as we have had already the "one body" before us, as well as the "one Spirit." But I may direct you to a few scriptures which prove what I have just advanced, that the assembly of God is founded upon the accomplished work of Christ, and His exaltation to heavenly glory.

Let me premise that the church has the same meaning with the assembly; hence the word "assembly" is often used in order to avoid misunderstanding. There might be many questions raised as to the meaning of "church:" it is hardly possible to create difficulties as to the word "assembly." Now the fact is that the church is the assembly. Assembly is the proper English word, rather than " church," which has become anglicized, no doubt, but it frequently conveys notions not only vague, but even opposite to different minds.

Now in the Acts of the Apostles, as compared ,with Matthew 16:1-28 we find clear light. The Lord at a very critical point in His dealings with the disciples, tells Peter more particularly, but all His followers in fact, that He was going to build His assembly. "Upon this rock," says He, "I will build my church." The reason of this was that the unbelief of the Jewish people was complete, after He had given the fullest divine proof, both in miracles and signs, in accomplished prophecies, and above all in the moral power which ever hung around Him a brighter crown of glory than anything in either miracle or prophecy. But when the Lord had, so to speak, exhausted all the means which even His goodness and wisdom could suggest in acquiescence with the will of God the Father,

and the result of His patient grace was that the unbelief and scorn of the true Messiah became more and more decided, the spirit of hostility becoming more evidently deadly in its character, He brings all to issue by asking who men said that He was. The answer showed the total uncertainty of Israel; nay, rather the only certainty was that men, the best and wisest of them, humanly speaking, those that had seen most of Him, were completely wrong. He appeals then, not to some great one, but to a heart that was true-to Simon the son of Jonas; and from his lips falls that confession for which the Lord Himself pronounced him blessed-blessed because it was not of flesh and blood, with their mere weakness and opposition to God. It was the Father who was in heaven who had revealed to his soul the glorious truth, that underneath that despised form-that outcast, the Nazarene, was not only the Christ, but the Son of the living God. The Lord Jesus immediately lays holds of this confession, and, with especial reference to the latter part of it-His being not merely the Messiah or Christ, but the Son of the living God, He says, Upon this rock I will build my church." The Messiah, in shame and humiliation, was a stumbling-stone to Israel; but the Son of the living God confessed was the rock upon which the church is built. This was a fuller confession, and a deeper one-in all its fulness certainly new, and so treated of the Lord. Not but that, as we know, Christ was the Son of the living God from all eternity; but still for the first time He was so confessed by human lips, and by a heart taught of God the Father. The Lord Jesus, then, also for the first time, intimates that upon this confession His church was to be built; and immediately He forbids them to tell that He was the Christ, showing that it was no question now of being received and reigning as Messiah. He was to be rejected, and to suffer. Hence, on His rejection by the people, but the recognition of the higher glory of His person by the remnant represented by Peter, we have His sufferings and death at once announced. This it is which opened the door for that new work of God-the church that was to be built upon the confession of Jesus Christ, " the Son of the living God."' Accordingly soon follows the Lord dying on the cross, determined to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, then glorified, and in due time sending down the Holy Ghost from heaven. The second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which shows the presence of the Holy Ghost, gives us for the first time the assembly as an existing fact on earth. This is worthy of all note. The Lord in Matthew 16:1-28 had spoken of His assembly as a thing that had yet to be reared up: " Upon this rock I will build my church." But now in Acts ii. we find the church is in process of being built ; as it is said in the end of the chapter, "the Lord added to the. church*(1) (or, together) daily such as should be saved." This is a very important lesson, and full of weighty results. It proves that the church does not mean merely people that are saved, or in process of being saved. Salvation was true before the assembly. The Lord took such as should be saved, and brought them into the church. If there had been no assembly to bring them into, this would not have negatived the fact that they were "such as should be saved."

What is the meaning of " such as should be saved"? It means those in Israel destined to be saved-those Jews whom grace was looking upon and dealing with in their souls. In the approaching dissolution of the Jewish system God reserved to Himself a remnant according to the election of grace. There was always this remnant, which a time of declension and ruin served but to define. Thus, during the Lord’s lifetime the disciples were the remnant, or "such as should be saved." All those that were soon to confess Jesus as Messiah by the Holy Ghost were "such as should be saved;" but there was no such thing yet as the church to add them to. Now, at the time referred to in Acts ii., the assembly or church was there to which they might be added. Coincident

with the Holy Ghost's presence, we have the church; and this agrees with 1 Corinthians 12:13, where it is said that " by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body;" that is to say, the formation of the body depends upon the baptism of the Spirit. Acts 1:1-26 shows that the baptism of the Spirit had not yet taken place; Acts ii. shows that it had; and immediately the fact is apparent that the church was there as a thing actually found upon the earth, to which "such as should be saved" were being added by the Lord. That is, the Lord now had a house upon the earth. The stones were there before-living stones, but they were separate: there was no building of God in this sense here below.

Now the Lord acts upon His words, "Upon this. rock I will build my church." He brings the living stones together; He builds them into one and the same house-the house of God, and this not by faith merely, but by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. We know that, before they thus entered the church, there were at least a hundred and twenty names who are expressly mentioned in Acts 1:1-26. They too were " such as should be saved." And I do not doubt that there were considerably more who really were brethren. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 15:6, we hear of " above five hundred brethren" who saw the Lord after His resurrection. Therefore, it is plain, there were pretty many believers in the land of Israel. The "hundred and twenty" were those who, at or after the crucifixion, lived in Jerusalem. But whatever might be the number of the brethren throughout the land, or of the names in Jerusalem, there was no such thing as "the church," the assembly of God, until the Holy Ghost was sent down to give unity-to form them into one existing corporation, whether you regard it as the house of God, or as the body of Christ. There are very important differences connected with these views of the assembly; but still it is the presence of the Holy Ghost which makes it either Christ's body or the temple of God. In 1 Cor. it is spoken of as constituted by the Holy Ghost, present and operating in it; there also it is called the body of Christ, as we see from the scripture just referred to: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

Obviously this is extremely important, because what people think and talk about as the "invisible church"-though scripture never uses the expression -was substantially in existence before " the church; " and, in fact, this invisible state of things is what the Lord was putting an end to, when He formed the church. In Old Testament times, we all know, there was a nation which God accounted and called His people, in the midst of whom there were isolated believers, as no doubt there were other believers among the Gentiles. Thus, there was Job, for instance, in early days; and every now and then, throughout the scriptures, we have one Gentile and another who evidently manifested divine life in them, and a looking for the Redeemer, outside the limits of Israel. For all that, there was no such thing as "the church"-no gathering together of the scattered believers into one, till the death of Christ. The children of God had been scattered abroad, but then they were gathered together. Henceforth disciples in Israel were not only destined to salvation, but they were gathered into one upon the earth. This is the church. The assembly necessarily supposes a gathering of the saints into one body, separate from the rest of mankind. There was no such body before. Hence, to talk of "the church" in Jewish times, or in earlier days, is altogether a mistake. The mixture of believers with their unbelieving countrymen (i.e., what is called "the invisible church") was the very thing which the Lord was concluding - not beginning-when He "added to the church daily such as should be saved." The common error upon this subject is, that the aggregate of those that are to be saved composes the church. But the contrary appears from this scripture and many others. Up to this time " such as should be saved" were not in the church. Now the Lord

takes and adds them day by day together, making up one assembled body. Thus, it is quite evident that "the assembly" is one thing, and the being saved is another. Of coarse, salvation is true of those that are in and of the church. The Lord does not leave "such as should be saved" in their old associations, bat gradually builds them together into the church. But the two ideas are so totally distinct, that, all through the Old Testament, there were "such as should be saved," and yet there was no "church of God," in the sense we are now deducing from scripture. The assembly of Israel no doubt there was, and it is called the "congregation of Jehovah"-the "assembly," if you will, of Jehovah; but then that was merely the nation, the entire mass of the Jewish people. It was out of this very nation that the first nucleus of "the church" was taken; and the Holy Ghost having just come down to dwell in those that were already there, the Lord takes the others that were converted at Pentecost or afterwards, and adds them to the existing body-the church now in course of formation. Evidently, therefore, the first covenant state that was now ready to vanish away answers to what people mean when they speak of "a visible and invisible church." They would call the Jewish nation the visible church, and "such as should be saved" in their midst, the invisible church. Well, let them so speak, if they will; but all I now affirm, and wish to impress upon every one who is subject to the word of God, is that, as applied to what the New Testament calls "the church of God," this kind of thought and language is condemned by the clear and positive statements of God’s word. I would not speak so strongly if scripture left the smallest shadow of doubt upon the point. But if the word of God is express, it seems to me criminal for a believer to speak doubt. fully. Not only is he not doing all he should do, but he is really helping on the spirit of infidelity in the world. We owe it to our God to be firm where His word is plain; we owe it to Him to be uncompromising as well as obedient. If the word of God be thus explicit, that now for the first time we have "the church," formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost vouchsafed to believers, and that those who were destined to salvation, "such as should be saved," were taken out of Israel and added to that assembly, then I say that the church, in the New Testament sense of the word, never did or could exist before-that it began there and then - that it consists of saved people taken out of the Jews first, and then out of the Gentiles afterwards, as we know, but both brought into one existing body upon the earth. That body is, and is called, "the church," or the assembly of God. In due time the Lord began to extend the work. Thus, in Acts 8:1-40, we find Samaria receiving the gospel, and the Holy Ghost subsequently given to the believers. We have afterwards the Ethiopian eunuch brought to the knowledge of Christ. Then the great apostle of the Gentiles is so converted as to be the fittest witness of grace, as well as of the church -one with Christ in heaven: as indeed in Colossians 1:1-29 he styles himself not only minister of the gospel, but of the church. Only he treats of it as the body of Christ. By the way, in passing, I would remark that Acts 9:31 has its force impaired, to say the least, in the common Greek text and English version. " Then had the churches rest," we read, " throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Now the best copies and most ancient versions give "the church," not "the churches." I admit fully there were churches in all these districts; but there is nothing peculiar in this. But that which, I am persuaded, the Spirit of God wrote here, was "the church." Minds were perplexed very early indeed. The idea of the church as a subsisting united society upon the earth is easily lost sight of, particularly when we look at different districts and countries, such as Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria. The true reading at once leads us back to the substantial unity that belonged to the church, or assembly of God, here below. There might be ever so many assemblies throughout Judea, and Samaria, and

Galilee, but it was the church. I admit that we often hear of the churches of Judea, and of other countries, as Galatia for instance. No one questions the fact of many different assemblies in these different lands. But then there is another truth which has not been seen for a long while by the great mass of God's children -not only that God set up a body which did not exist before, but that wherever assemblies might be, it was all the assembly. Not only did He constitute the church upon earth, susceptible of daily growth, but while He extended the work, while He formed fresh assemblies in this or that district and country, it was nevertheless one and the same church wherever it might be. This scripture, rightly read, furnishes a strong proof of it; and I will now just add that the best authorities leave no doubt on my mind as to this. The word churches supplanted the church at an early day; and probably it is due to the fact that very soon the copyists, like other people, began to lose sight of the unity which God was establishing among His children upon the earth.*(2) It is so much more natural to conceive merely of distinct churches, than to take in the precious truth of the church wherever it is found upon the face of the earth. This may have led to assimilating the true phrase to another and more familiar one, especially when the sense of unity decayed and disappeared. From the historical account in the Acts of the Apostles, let us turn to the instruction which the rest of the New Testament affords as to the assembly. First, the Lord in Matthew 18:1-35 had laid down the spirit in personal matters that was to actuate the assembly, beginning with one of its members. He had shown there, that the legal spirit is quite out of place. He had pointed out in the most beautiful manner how He Himself was the Son of man that came "to seek and to save that which was lost"not merely that He was the Shepherd of Israel, gathering His own people, but that He was come in quest of the lost, in the pure and simple and full grace of God. Take a case which He knew might occur in the assembly He was going to build-the case of one brother trespassing against another: what was to guide? Not law, nor nature, but grace. The righteousness of man would say: "The man that has done the wrong must come and humble himself " "No," says grace, "go you after him." "What I after the man that did me this wrong?" "Yes, it is exactly what the Lord has done." That is, the Lord puts His own grace as the pattern, and spring, and power that is to govern the individual, and of course also to be the life-breath of the assembly. Consequently we find: "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." He that was trespassed against becomes in grace the active party. He goes, and for what purpose? To tell his brother his fault. What a call for the painstaking and self-abnegation of love! And if his brother hear him, he has "gained his brother."' What a requital, even now from the Lord! It would be indeed a sorrow to the heart that he should go farther astray. Thus it is that love, divine love, reproduces itself in those that the Lord is not ashamed to call His brethren. He calls them to be the witnesses, not of the servant by whom the law was given, but of Himself, who was full of grace and truth. Accordingly, then, grace is the energetic influence that works; but truth is not set aside for a moment. Still less can the Christian entertain that pride of heart and indifference that would say, "Well, he has acted wrongly; I am above it, and will take no notice of it " There would be in this a spirit of hard forgetfulness of Christ and His grace, as well as the world's indifference about one's brother. There is no allowance of either in our Saviour's words. Again, the legal principle, right as it is in itself, of dealing with a man as he deserves, is entirely excluded. Divine grace, as seen in the person and mission of the saviour of the lost, works in the soul if we follow His voice. We know well how easily it might be forgotten, and how the heart might reason: "Because he is my brother, he is the less excusable -he ought to know better." There is truth in this: no doubt, he ought to know it; but if he does not, you may at least feel what is

your place and privilege. "Go and tell him," etc. Thus the Lord does not lay down a law for the wrong-doer to find his way back, but calls the man that is in the right to go forth, not in the spirit of right, but of grace, to win him who is wrong; and if the latter hears, the former has gained his brother. If the wrong-doer refuses to hear, the thing is to be laid before others. "If he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." There would be as it were a combined action of grace brought to bear upon the offender's soul, that he may hold out no longer. It was bad enough to refuse one: can he refuse one or two more? Well, but if he does neglect to hear them, what then ? The whole church hear and speak; all the objects and witnesses of divine grace who are in the place are intent and occupied with the trespasser. Can he reject the church ? If he does, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Brethren, what sentence so terrible as the sentence of grace and truth rejected? And thereby is seen the sad mistake that is often made when men talk about love, but I am afraid with little appreciation of it. There must be a love in deed and in truth from Christ Himself, to begin and go on with such a work as this. But observe, the very same delight in and submission to Christ which can carry one after a personal offender thus, not as a bare duty, but with fervent desire to win him back- the self-same spirit of faith regards him, if refractory, "as a heathen man and a publican." He may be really a converted man; but he who rejects the grace of Christ thus flowing out according to the truth, is no longer to be counted as a brother. No matter whether he is really a brother or not before God, he is rejecting the Lord, as it were, in those that represent Him on earth in His assembly. "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

This, then, is the Lord's weighty and standing lesson before the assembly came into existence; but we are not left only to these preliminary preparations of the Lord. In 1 Cor., and more particularly in the chapter that was read, is a very full account of the way in which the Lord orders the assembly. Before calling your attention to this, let me refer first of all to chapter xii., where the subject of spiritual manifestations begins. There you find the Holy Ghost in active operation. He is at work in the various members of the assembly of God. For "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 who worketh all in all But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit" -and so on. But if we have here spiritual acting in the assembly, observe that the subject opens by tests that decide between the spirits that were not of God, and the Holy Ghost. It is not a question of settling who are Christians and who are not, but of discriminating what is of the Holy Spirit from the spirits that are opposed to Him-the instruments of the enemy. And what may these tests be? " No one speaking by the Spirit of God, says Jesus [is] accursed (or anathema); and no one can say Lord Jesus but by the Holy Spirit." Thus the Holy Spirit of God would never treat Christ as in His own person, or relationship to God, under a curse. This is a very simple and solemn test, and ought to be weighed by us-I think I may say, beloved brethren, by us especially. For in our own days a most audacious effort of the devil has been put forth. Have not men dared to assert that the Lord Jesus, in His own relationship to God as a man upon the earth, was under the curse of the broken law?-that He was under the effects, as between His soul and God, of man's distance from God? At once we discern what spirit this is. "No man

speaking by the Holy Ghost calleth Jesus accursed." On the other hand, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." When an evil spirit works, he may utter many fine things; he may appear to exalt Christ and His servants, as we see in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles; but he never owns Jesus as Lord. It is the sure mark of an evil spirit to lower Jesus, by bringing Him in some way or other for Himself, under the curse. I am not speaking of His taking that place upon the cross by grace, but of His own place as man with God, apart from atonement. The pretence may be thereby to increase His sympathy towards us, or to enhance His triumph over the difficulty, and His extrication from it; but no one speaking by the Holy Ghost says Jesus is accursed. Then you have the counter-test, that those who own the Lordship of Jesus, own Him in the power of the Holy Ghost. This is no question of souls being saved, but a means of detecting what manner of spirit is active in the church. It is the scriptural touchstone for discovering those that are under the power of an evil spirit, and those that speak by the Holy Ghost. What is of the Holy Ghost really exalts Christ, and gives Him His due place as Lord. The spirit of error as surely seeks to debase His person and frustrate His work The Holy Spirit invariably maintains two things -the glory of Christ as to His person, and the Lordship of Christ as to His place: the one fitting for, and the other flowing from His work. Now this at once prepares the way for the important and practical truth, that the great object of the assembly of God is the recognition of Christ as Lord. We are, therefore, at once cast upon the question, Has the Lord given regulations for His assembly, or has He left us to ourselves? Have we Do directing principle for the manner in which the assembly of God is to conduct itself in this world? Is the church wholly abandoned, as it were, to its spiritual instincts? Is it to be moulded by the particular age or country in which the saints may be found? I trust there is no person here who would endorse thoughts so evidently of mere nature as these. What! the Christian assembly dependent on age or country! Can those who so speculate or act really believe that the church of God is a creature of the world after all; that God has left it, like a foundling, to be one thing here and another thing there? Institutions such as these might be good or bad churches of man, but certainly one is at a loss to conceive what pretensions they can set up to be the church of God. It is of all consequence that, be it the simplest believer, his heart should understand and keep firm hold of this, so patent in scripture, that if there be one thing that is precious to God upon the earth, it is His church; that if there be one thing God is above all jealous of maintaining therein, it is the glory of Christ; and that it is not in the world yet, but in the children of God, that God Himself is now active by His Spirit, for the purpose of glorifying Christ But, as usual in His ways, whatever is set up on the earth is always first tried here, and then it is put into Christ’s hands, by whom the divine counsels are accomplished infallibly. To-day is the time of trial. When Jesus comes, there will be no farther trial in this respect. The church will then enter into the due place which is reserved for it in the purpose of God. The hour of our responsibility will be over. But now is the time when the children of God are being put to the test.

Remark, moreover, that one object of the First Epistle to the Corinthians is to show that theirs was an infant church, an assembly of persons not long gathered out of the world, and hence in much practical ignorance. You see them assailed by evils that in these days would not be ordinarily a trial among the children of God. There was certainly a very low state of moral thought and feeling, and, in one case at least, such grossness of outward conduct as was not heard of even among the Gentiles. It would seem that the devil had used particular pains to take advantage of the happy liberty of these young Christians. They forgot all about the flesh, being so occupied with the power of the Spirit. They do not seem to have reflected upon their dangers. They did not walk in

self-judgment. You must remember that they had few of the New Testament scriptures as yet, and that the apostle had not been long teaching them. Of course afterwards there was an amazing advantage gained through their very fall by the instruction which the Holy Ghost gave from it to others, and, we may trust, to themselves. Yet the epistle clearly shows that the infant church at Corinth had the responsibility of the church of God. It is the only one that is expressly thus addressed-" the church of God." At that time no apostles were there, nor it would seem elders either; but I shall have an opportunity of adverting to this more fully by-and-by. There was, however, no lack of gifted people; yet remark, spiritual order is not produced by such manifestations of power, but by subjection to Christ as Lord. It is not enough to be enriched in all utterance and knowledge. Few churches had gifts more abundantly than the assembly in Corinth. It was notwithstanding a most disorderly spectacle; and the reason was, that they were exercising those powers without reference to the Lord's will and glory, and so for their own ends. They were pleasing themselves-exalting themselves. In their new-born exuberance, they were giving the loose rein to all the spiritual energy that had been bestowed upon them, and the consequence was that there was the special need of bringing them back into the ways of God.

Whatever may be the power of the Spirit by and in men on the earth, it should always be made subservient to Christ the Lord. The Corinthians did not understand this, and they are reminded of it from the very beginning of chapter i-" Those that call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." So all through the epistle you will find great emphasis laid upon His being Lord. We have it here in reference to the bestowal and character of these gifts. So again in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 we have the exercise of these gifts regulated in the assembly. The church comes together into one place; there the saints meet as the assembly of God. Did they then speak in a tongue? It was in vain to plead that the Spirit of God undoubtedly enabled them so to speak. Again there is no question raised as to the quality of the unknown subject-matter: it might be all true, sound, and good; but the Lord proscribes what does not edify the assembly. As a general rule, in the absence of one who could interpret, the exercise of those tongues is forbidden in the assembly. This is a most momentous matter for practice. No matter how truly a man has a power which comes from the Holy Ghost, he is not always to use it; more than this, he is bound to use it in obedience to Christ. There are certain regulations laid down to which he must submit himself. The apostle takes up prophesying particularly, because it was the highest form of acting on the conscience; as in mentioning the various gifts, he (1 Corinthians 12:28) put diversities of tongues in the lowest place. Thus he rebuked the vanity of the Corinthians; for what they made more of than anything, else, the apostle reduces to the last rank. "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." Then after the most precious unfolding of love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (how needful in these matters!) he comes to the due exercise of gift in the assembly in 1 Corinthians 16:1-24. " If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." Observe the weight of the principle which the apostle here insists upon. God has formed the church, the assembly, as a testimony to Christ upon the, earth-a testimony to His Lordship. The consequence is, whatever would give a false, or even a vainglorious testimony, whatever would prompt men to

say "Ye are mad" is forbidden, no matter how certainly the power, thus misused, itself might be of God. The gift of tongues, for instance, evidently was of the Holy Ghost and not of nature; but its use is subjected to divine regulations, as we see here. And this has a wide scope: indeed, I hold it to be the grand criterion for every Christian man to apply both for his own conduct and for judging that of others. But when we speak of judging what others do or say, need I add that it becomes us to weigh all humbly and in love, seeing well to it that we are not thinking of ourselves but of the glory of the Lord? But I do say that we are always bound to think of the glory of the Lord; and therefore, no matter under what circumstances, no matter where, we are responsible to judge in subjection to Him.

Prophesying here, evidently, does not mean predicting, as some might suppose; nor, as others say, mere preaching. There is a great deal of preaching which is not prophesying. Indeed, it might well be affirmed that the preaching of the gospel is never, rightly considered, prophesying; for this last is that character of teaching which lays the conscience bare in the presence of God, and brings God and man thus close together, if I may venture so to put it, Therefore this is what the apostle contrasts with the exercise of a tongue. The tongue was forbidden, if there were no interpreter; and for the plain reason, that otherwise it would not edify the church. The object of all that is done there must be "unto edifying." Whatever therefore does not edify is not fit for the assembly of God, and ought not to be allowed there. It may be well meant; it may be by the Holy Ghost, as regards power; but whatever is not intelligible, and has not the character of building up the saints of God, is not fit for the assembly. These things might be very well out of the assembly; nay, it was their proper place, as a testimony to unbelievers. But they had no business in the assembly, if their exercise did not tend to the instruction, exhortation, or comfort of the assembly; and edify the assembly they could not, unless there was one who had the gift of the interpretation of tongues, and could, therefore, turn them to present account in the building up the saints of God in the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. This then is the rule by which all is to be governed. "If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." But suppose you are prophets; suppose you can speak to edification in this powerful way, " let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." Here the apostle takes the example of the prophets in contradistinction to the tongues; for everything the prophet said was for the express purpose of edifying. While therefore he admits them to be in the first rank of the gifts of edification, there is this other important guard asserted, that, precious and profitable as prophesying may be, no more than two or three were to speak on the same occasion. Doubtless, they were to speak one after another; they were to speak in order and by course; mutually subject, but not more than two or three. Why so? Because it would not tend to the very edification which was the great object of prophesying; it would be overdoing, being more than the saints could really profit by; and therefore there are these defined limits. Granted that prophets give the highest character of Christian instruction; but only two or three were to speak, and the others were to judge.

"If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." There might be then that which no longer exists, any more than speaking in a tongue; that is, revelation. This must be carefully remembered. The truth of God may be brought, in the most powerful manner, by the Holy Spirit, to bear upon the conscience, so that even now, as then, there may be the firmest conviction

conveyed to an unbeliever who might come in, that God was there. I do not doubt that this is perfectly possible, and may be now at any time; and I would to God it were always! But this is a wholly distinct thing from a revelation. God may use Christian instruction of a powerful character from the written word as a testimony to His own presence among His children on earth. But revelation cannot ought not, to be now looked for. The apostle was instructing these saints before the canon of scripture was closed. All the truth of God was not then written; and therefore it seems to me to be the fact, that, according to the order of God, there might have been a positive revelation then given, while much of the word of God remained to be written. Whereas to pretend to revelation now would be clearly an impeachment of the perfectness of scripture, and I have no doubt would soon prove to be nothing but the fraud or folly of man, and a snare of the devil. Whatever might be the power of the Spirit of God at work now, it must be by means of truth already revealed - truth already in scripture. It is not something added to that which God has given, but the mighty use, in the hand of the Spirit of God, of what is already furnished and permanently given for the church's help in passing through this world. There may be a recovery of what has been hid by unbelief from the saints; but it is there. A new truth, revealed now for the first time, is incompatible with the scripture as the complete book of God.

If we have certain things, even in this chapter, that clearly refer to what was then in existence and not now, the very fair question may be asked by a simple-minded person desirous of understanding the word of God-"Why do you maintain that such a chapter as this is meant to regulate the assembly now? It is clear that you have not these tongues, and that there cannot be any revelation of a new truth. If there are such modifications, why do you contend for this chapter as God's permanent rule for His assembly?" The answer is quite simple. The Spirit of God necessarily regulated what was there before Him; but then the great aim of all the instruction is not miraculous powers nor any other transient actings, which were evidently for the special object of testimony in the early days of Christianity. None of these things forms the Centre of these chapters. What does? THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY Ghost. To this one point all grave consideration and sober arguing of the subject must come. Have we that one and the same Spirit still? Can we count upon His presence? Do we believe that He deigns even now to act in the assembly? How many, day after day, say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost;" but do they prove their faith by their works? I would ask you, and desire to ask every saint of God, Do you believe in the real presence of the Holy Ghost as a Divine person, who is with the church, who is in the saints, who is there expressly for carrying on the assembly according to the word of the Lord, and for maintaining the Lordship of Christ there? If we have the Holy Ghost; if He be in and with the saints still; if this be a certain truth, and not dependent for proof upon a particular part of scripture where miracles and signs are spoken of, but quite as clearly laid down where these have no place whatever; if He be positively promised to abide with us for ever, then I demand, how does He act? Does unbelief dare to make the Spirit no better than a dumb idol? Allow me to put a question or two: Has the Holy Spirit abandoned the word of the Lord as His only standard for our practice as well as faith? Or is it that men bring cunningly devised reasons for avoiding subjection to that word? But is it possible that children of God can content themselves with any reasons for disobedience? Alas! it is no want of charity to speak thus. They can quote continually, " Let all things be done unto edifying;" and, "Let all things be done decently and in order." But do they ever reflect that not even the Corinthians had so violated the order of God's assembly by their unbecoming displays, as they themselves do every day by a routine of their own (fixed or

extempore), which does not resemble the form, any more than it embodies the spirit, of the divine order? There is the very chapter they quote on the one side; there are on the other the plain positive facts of their religious practice habitually.

You have the church of God no longer on the ground of one assembly-no longer holding to such a foundation -principle as liberty for the Spirit therein to edify by whom He pleases. You have different religious associations set up, often peculiar to different countries, and in -no respect answering to either the assembly or the assemblies in the word of God. If a man belonged to the church of God at Jerusalem, he belonged to the church of God at Rome. It was merely a question of locality. He was a member of the church of God, and therefore, wherever it might be, he if there belonged to the church in that place. Scripture does not recognize membership of a church, but of the church. If the church of God was in a given place, the Christian, unless put away, finds his place within it. You never find, I repeat, in scripture, anything about membership of a church; it is always of the church. This is a most significant difference, as indicating the departure of Christendom from God's word. For in our days, if you belong to this church, you do not for that very reason belong to that church. Instead of your membership in the church of God being the ground why you are a member of it everywhere, on the contrary, so great is the change, that now the fact of belonging to one church is the best possible proof that you do not belong to another. If you belong to the church of Scotland, you have no such connection with the church of England; if you are a Baptist, you do not at the same time belong to the Wesleyan society, or to any other of the Dissenting bodies. Scripture knows nothing of the kind.

Thus the revolution of Christendom is complete. A state of things entirely outside the word of God, and contrary to the word of God, has come in. Religious societies, independent of one another, have sprung up. I am not now speaking particularly of what is commonly called the Independent or Congregational system, though there the principle is carried out more antagonistically than in any other to the unity of the assembly of God as scripture presents it. But take any or every one of them; they are al more or less independent. It is so even to a large extent with the national Establishment. On the contrary, in the times of those who laid the foundation of God's assembly, he who belonged to the church at all, of course belonged to it where he lived; but if he moved or journeyed to another place, he was received according to his place in the church everywhere. There might be in some cues a doubt as to his reality ; for subtlety as well as violence assailed the early Christians Hence they carried letters of commendation, or they were visited: that is, just the principle of what is now available can be shown in scripture. Thus, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, when Barnabas heard the news of his remarkable conversion, he did not like other disciples think such a work too hard for the Lord but, being a good man and full of the Holy ghost, he is quite ready to believe what grace could do, and goes and finds Saul, who is thus recognized of the church in Jerusalem. So now, if a stranger comes forward, professing to be a believer in the gospel, persons in whom all can confide visit him; and thus the church upon their representation, conscientiously and heartily accepts the confessor of Christ. But we are not confined to any one rigid canon whatever. There is divine light in the word of God for every possible exigency, and if we have not that light, we had better wait on the Lord, and see whether the precious fulness of scripture will not be rendered without doubt applicable to the difficulty, by the power of the Spirit, without our presuming to add anything like a rule to meet the case. It is not meant that there may never be perplexity, and that we may not feel our weakness and lack of wisdom. Humility,

patience., and faith will ere long prove better solvents than all the appliances of human art. God has undertaken to provide for us in His word; and spiritual power consists in the bringing that word, by the Spirit, to bear practically upon every case that comes before us. The main point on which I insist, however is this-that, according to scripture, he who becomes a member of the church of God at all is a member of it everywhere. He might carry letters of commendation to the assembly where he went. But why? Because all through the world it was the church of God. Now I ask you, ought we to accept as God's assembly anything systematically different from the scriptural account of it? Ought we to allow another and contrary principle to rule its public services? If we do, are we really in this subject to the word of God? You may tell me of the obstacles which exist now, and that you have so many difficulties to contend with. All this is granted: only let us hold fast that here, as elsewhere, the will of God is paramount to all other considerations. If we find ourselves accrediting that which opposes scripture, our business is to cease from doing evil, and to learn to do well.

It is not our duty-far from it-to form a new church, but to cleave to that which is the oldest of all, and the only church that is true--the assembly of God as it is exhibited in scripture. Why do you hesitate? Are you not satisfied with the church of God? Whose church, what church do you prefer? But you allege that times and circumstances entirely differ now; and you ask, with a sort of triumphant air, whether two or three Christians meeting here and there can be God's assembly? Undoubtedly, I reply, there is a sorrowful change; but the true question is, does God's will about His assembly change? Which is right-to accept man's change, or to go back to God's will, even though there be but two or three who meet together in submission to His word? If I am with them gathered to the Lord's name, owning the members of His body, waiting upon God to work by His word and Spirit, is not Jesus in our midst? And what so great comfort for our souls? I hope to prove, another evening, that this is the express provision of the Lord for these last days; but however this be, all I stand to now is, that the free action of the Spirit, among the gathered members of Christ, is the one principle of the assembly of God laid down in His word. There can be no other which He sanctions. Either I am acting upon it, or I am not. If I am seeking -to be faithful thus to the Lord, blessed am I, whatever my sorrow for the state of the church. If I am not, at any rate let me confess my faithlessness. The word of God leaves no doubt what His unchanging mind about His assembly is. The Holy Ghost is come for ever to guide His assembly. All that is wanted is a spirit of repentance and of faith. There are hindrances; there are ties; there must be a high price paid in this evil world for obedience to the Lord Jesus. But am I His? Do I value His love? Is He more precious to me than all else in this world? Is His yoke a burden? Is His will sweet to my soul ? Then, I say, there is but one pathway. It is vain to be loud in our profession of readiness to go with the Lord to prison or to death. This He may not ask of us; but He does in effect demand of every Christian whether he is true to His own glory in the assembly of God. It is not a question of rival institutions pertaining to different countries, or to different leaders; neither is it a question of a special school of doctrine, or of a peculiar n of discipline and government. Is old habit, is tradition, is interest in this life, to keep me back from faithfulness to that which God shows to be His will for His assembly?

If you see the will of the Lord, do not hesitate another day. Do not wait till everything is clear. It is not faith, when God calls one out to say, first show me the land. Put away what you know to be wrong; never go on in what is without doubt contrary to the word of God. "To him that hath shall be

given." Have you renounced what you know does not agree with, but opposes the word of God? Cleave to nothing but the word. Let me ask, for example, what you did last Lord’s-day. Were you found, as a Christian, where you could honestly say, "I was in my place in the assembly of God?" Did the various members of the body come together trusting to the Holy, Ghost to guide them, with an open door for this or that believer, as each had received the gift to minister the same one to another, as good stewards of God’s manifold grace? or were you joining with others where the scriptural plan would have been regarded as disorderly? If the latter, the Lord grant you to see clearly that you are not within the scene of His will, and of His glory in the assembly! I say not that you are strangers to the grace of Christ, or outside the work of the Holy Spirit-far from it. I believe He blesses not only in Protestant associations, but beyond them too. Is this to be uncharitable? I believe that the Spirit of God acts, wherever He sees fit graciously to use the name of Christ, for the good of believer and unbeliever. I for one doubt not for a moment that God has used His word for the conversion and comfort of souls among Roman Catholics-ay, and Romish priests, monks, and nuns. It may have been in a scanty measure, as assuredly the opposition to the truth is enormous, and the opening seems small indeed; but yet has it been really so down to our own days, and still more largely and clearly in the past. But enough of this. The question is not whether the Spirit of God may not cause truth to take effect in this denomination or that. The chief thing before our souls now is, are we honoring Christ according to the word of God? Are we subject to the Lord in the assembly! Are we carrying out His will as far as we know it? We may fail in doing so-surely we all do. When you are thus come together, you may find some restless, some that do not altogether what they should; you may hear individuals that had better be silent, and you may see sometimes those silent whom it would be blessed to hear. It may be that they are yielding to a morbid sense of responsibility, and fear of criticism, and many other things that hinder their utterance of what is in their hearts. All this may readily be. Nobody denies the possibility or the fact of failure. But how does this in the least decree weaken the truth of God, or the bounden duty of His children?

Let me put a case that any believer may understand. The Holy Ghost dwells in you, if you are a Christian; but are you always acting in the Spirit! No. Does not the Spirit always abide? To be sure He does. You are always the temple of God; you never can be anything else, if you are members of Christ; but you may for all that sometimes grieve the Holy Spirit. Your obligation, however, never ceases. It is just so with the Spirit in the church.

Let the assembly come together. We will suppose they are converted, and have received the Spirit of God, and really do, as an assembly, look to Him to guide. I use that expression " as an assembly," because it is not assumed that every member understands the truth about the Spirit of God. Some of them may be very ignorant. It is more or less a shame for them, but there may be such cases, and in point of fact such there are. Some saints have been attracted by spiritual instinct, who may have been trained up in dissent or nationalism, and who settle down with little progress in intelligence. These are apt to bring in the effects of the routine in which they have been brought up spiritually, so to speak; and I need not say that their experience will not help them to be always submissive to the guidance of the Spirit. Nor is this at all confined to these only; for we know what weakness may be found among those that have been inured to the truth from their infancy. Their being where they are costs them but little; they have not known any deep sense of the ruin of Christendom. Their souls have been exercised feebly. I am supposing them to be

converted, but coming into the truth of the church's position rather through parental training than at the loss of all ; and so there is apt to be a taking for granted, without any divine conviction, that things are all right. Need I say how desirable it is that there should be real exercised spiritual intelligence as to the working of the Holy Ghost in God's assembly? But then, allowing these drawbacks, and all the rest that might be added, the great fact holds good, that as certainly as the Holy Ghost dwells in every Christian man, so sure it is that He dwells in the whole assembly-in the church of God. What we have to consider is, whether individually, or as an assembly, we submit to be guided by Him to the glory of Christ. Indeed I cannot but judge it to be really Antinomian in principle, where men deliberately rest in this, that to be Christians is the one great matter-that if the Lord has shown us His grace, we need not make much ado about His will or anything else. Is it, then, come to this, that the great body of God's people not only do not know, bat do not care to know, His will about His assembly? Do you resent this charge? Then search and see what is your desire as to this. Is it to be subject to the Lord and His word? Can there be a more direct test for me as a Christian, or a more evident way of proving my loyalty to my Lord, than in this very thing? If I belong to the assembly of God, ought I not to renounce everything inconsistent with the scriptural account and regulations of that assembly?

Further, let me warn you that have taken this position, that wrong principles, false doctrines, evil ways, may slip in. We know the devices of Satan; but what some of us may have said before they were thus proved, this we may repeat with increasing emphasis now, that as God's Spirit is the Spirit of truth, so is He the Spirit of holiness also. When, therefore, the assembly refuses to bow to God's word, preferring to accept evil publicly rather than judge it for Christ's sake, what is to be done in this case? First of course full testimony is to be given, and warning, private and public perhaps , and patient waiting on honest slowness and fear, in order to bring all right. But suppose all has been rejected, and the assembly in any place deliberately prefers its own ease or will to the word of God, what then? The duty of separation is even more peremptory than from the ordinary ecclesiastical institutions of Christendom; for it is a greater sin in the sight of God for those that have known the truth of God, and seemed to be acting upon it in faith, to abandon it for any reason whatever. Ought not these, then, to be parted from with yet more gravity and horror in the sight of God, than one would turn from the meetings of those who have never known the value of the Lord's name for the assembly of His saints? At the same time, when you find an assembly -let it be small, or let it be great-come together, owning their faith in the Holy Ghost's presence, we should not be quick in laying a sin to their charge. Surely there is to be slowness in judging an assembly yet more than an individual. Are we to assume that our thoughts, our feelings, are necessarily according to God? Hence we find the all-importance of waiting upon the Lord. But still the fact remains, that if the public sin be certain and clear, and all warnings be rejected, the more the assembly takes the position of being God's assembly, the more is its departure from Him to be lamented, and one's back is to be turned upon it, because it is now at least a false profession. God looks for truth in His saints, but He looks for it also in His assembly. It is the place where He expects the manifestation of His character before men, and not only where He makes good the edification of His saints. Everywhere He holds to the glory of His Son. I admit all the difficulties from the rising up of national systems after the great Romish apostasy, from the spread of nonconformist bodies subsequently, and from more recent attempts of all kinds. But let me press upon all who hear me that we do not contend for anything of ours, whether inherited from our fathers, or an invention of our own; we do not contend for anything because it is new, nor even

because it is old-had it the green age of three centuries, or the hoary hairs of fifteen hundred years. We return to the ground which it was our sin- Christendom's sin-to have left; we return to a way which we know to be absolutely good and true, because it is God's way. We take our stand upon the only divine foundation for the church. We have no confidence in ourselves, but are sure we are right and safe in commending ourselves to God and the word of His grace; and therefore we may be of good courage. If the character of our difficulties, dangers, and trials proves how we need the scripture, we learn also how scripture applies ever fresh and mighty; and thus our hearts are encouraged to cleave to God more and more.

I have dwelt so long upon the assembly, that I shall not be able to say much as to ministry tonight. But I may be brief, more particularly as we shall have the subject of Gifts and Offices before us another time. Let me just make a few plain observations as to ministry before closing.

We have seen that the church flows from Christ risen and glorified by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to bind together and form the assembly upon earth. This is the only assembly that God sanctions, and therefore which every member of it ought to sanction, until the Lord takes it out of this world. We have the words and workings of the Spirit of God in the assembly shown us in scripture already referred to. I come now to some general principles. And first of all, just as the church is a divine thing, so is ministry. It flows neither from the believer nor from the church, but from Christ, by the power of the Spirit.

Now this at once clears the way. The Lord calls, not the church; the Lord sends, not the saints; the Lord controls, not the assembly. -I speak now of the ministry of the word. There are certain functionaries whom the church does or may choose: for instance, the assembly may nominate the persons it thinks fit to take care of the funds, and to distribute of its bounty. The church may employ its servants, selecting them according to its best wisdom; and the Lord owns this choice. So it was done of old, as we read in Acts 6:1-15, where the multitude chose, and the Apostles laid their hands upon those chosen to look after the tables. So it was where "the churches" (in 2 Corinthians 8:1-24) chose brethren as their messengers; and so, again, where the Philippian church made Epaphroditus their messenger in ministering to the wants of Paul. (Php 2:1-30) But we never find this kind of selection where the ministry of the word is concerned. Never I On the contrary, the Lord Himself once looked upon His poor disheartened scattered people, pitied them, and told the disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers. (Matt. ix.) The very next chapter shows that He was the Lord of the harvest, who accordingly sends them Himself. Afterwards He prepares His disciples for the full character of the Christian ministry when He should leave them. Thus in Matt. xxv. where there occurs the parable of the Lord departing to a far country, we have the same truth-the Lord giving gifts to His servants. Now this really decides the matter. For the difference between that which the word of God acknowledges, and that which is seen now-a-days, lies in this, that according to scripture the ministry of the word, in its call and in its exercise, is more truly divine than that which is now substituted for it in Christendom. Hence also its proper dignity is impaired, specially the holy independence of man, which is essential to its due exercise. and, above all, to the glory of the Lord Himself. If preachers be sent by men, it is an usurpation of the Lord's prerogative, and the gravest detriment to His servants who submit to it.

What is the effect of ministry exercised according to scripture? The most perfect freedom for all that, is given of God for the blessing of souls. Accordingly you find the universal doctrine of the

Epistles fully confirms that which the history shows in the Acts of the Apostles. But I must refer to both as briefly as may be. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, we have already seen that it is of the essence of the church, as God's assembly, and the aim of the Spirit's presence therein, that He should have full liberty to use whom He pleases for the glory of the Lord and the blessing of all. The exhortation in 1 Peter 4:10-11, and the caution in James 3:1, suppose the same openness and its liability to abuse. This may suffice for ,"those within." As to "those without," the will of the Lord is equally clear. Thus, in Acts viii. we bear of persecution falling upon the church, and they were all scattered (but the twelve), and went everywhere preaching the word. Now, I do not call this necessarily ministerial. Of course some of them were ministers of the word, others not; but all went everywhere evangelizing. But it proves that the Lord recognizes any and every Christian man in going forth and announcing the glad tidings. (Compare Acts 11:19-21.) But when we come to detail, we find Philip in the same chap. viii. preaching freely. "But," some will say, "he was chosen of the church." He was not chosen to minister the word. He was chosen, on the contrary, to leave the apostles, unembarrassed by serving the tables, to the ministry of the word. It was expressly for the purpose of relieving the apostles from the secular work, that the seven men were looked out by the multitude, and duly appointed over this lower task; the call of the church was for this only. It was the Lord that called Philip to preach the gospel; and the Lord blessed the word, which extended to and beyond Samaria. (Compare Acts 21:8 for both.) In Acts 9:1-43, we see a man on the highway to Damascus with a commission from the high priest to persecute the Jewish Christians. That was the only commission Paul received from man-an authority, not to preach the Gospel, but to extinguish it, if it were possible. But the Lord, in sovereign grace not only converted Saul of Tarsus, but sent him out, direct from Himself, a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. Paul thus becomes the standing type of Christian ministry. Apart from miraculous facts, he exemplified livingly the words, "we believe, and therefore speak." (2 Corinthians 4:1-18)

We find the Lord after this introducing others into the work, more particularly Apollos, who was "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures," but so very ignorant at first, that he knew nothing beyond the baptism of John (that is, the testimony which was rendered to Christ when He was living upon the earth). But if he was thus in the dark as to the Church and the full truth of Christianity, he was a converted man. Of course, there were souls converted before the coming of Christ. It is mere ignorance that sees any difficulty in such a statement. Apollos had received by the Spirit the early testimony to the Lord, but he did not know the work of Christ. This he is taught by a good man and his wife, who helped him in the fuller understanding of the Scriptures, and he comes out mightier than ever in the truth, and there is no hint about a human inauguration before he preaches. Yet the apostle Paul writes with all respect of Apollos, putting this unordained man between himself and Peter. (1 Corinthians 3:1-23) Again, he tells them, in the last chapter of this epistle, that he had asked Apollos to come, but "his will was not at all to come at this time." Does not this indicate a very different state of things from what men dream of apostolic rule, as well as from what exists now? What it does truly illustrate is the way the Lord maintained His place. An inspired apostle gives his counsel to Apollos, who does not conform. This Paul himself records without censure; and, in fact, scripture does not say which was right: it may very probably have been the great apostle, but on this point we are left entirely in the dark. In any case, the record brings out the weighty truth that the Lord abides the absolute Master and Director of His servants. Man likes to regulate; but the Lord, to whom we are surely bound above all, exercises the hearts of

His servants, and gives them in this word a guiding principle for all time. Is it true for your soul and for mine ? Are we practically servants of the Lord- of the Lord only! or are we serving a denomination as its ministers? If we are only nationalist or dissenting ministers, I have nothing to say; but if we are really ministers of Christ, let us beware. "No man can serve two masters:" if we have been striving to serve Christ and the sect whose officials we are, which is to be held to? which to be given up?

Thus, along with the assembly of God, there is the ministry of the word, committed sovereignly to some of its members, not to all, yet assuredly for the good of all. Let the assembly respect the servants in their place, and let the servants respect the assembly in its place. None ever confound the two things without the most disastrous consequences: neither must be sacrificed. It is the place of a servant, no doubt, to preach or teach in subjection to Christ; it is the place of a servant, likewise, to counsel, guide, govern, according to his gift from the Lord. But whatever may be the servant's mind, judgment, or counsel, nothing dissolves the direct responsibility of the assembly to Christ. The same Jesus is Lord of the servant, but He is also owned as the Lord by the assembly of God.

Take the instance, again, which is shown in Acts xiii. Barnabas and Saul go forth on a missionary circuit, directed by the Holy Ghost, and taking Mark with them. But Mark turns out an indifferent servant, and speedily returns to his home. They are going out again (Acts 15:1-41), but Paul insists upon going without Mark. Barnabas, who was related to Mark, did not like him set aside, and contends with Paul about it-good man as he was-and this so sharply, that it leads to a severance of these two devoted and tenderly attached servants of Christ. Then Paul chooses Silas, and they were commended by the brethren to the grace of God. The church, or the laborers, were, no doubt, convinced that Paul was in the right. Of Barnabas, nothing of the kind is said; the subject, as far as he is concerned, drops. Paul enters on a large and enlarging sphere, and Silas goes with him, supplying, as it were, the place of Barnabas. Now there we find not only an individual servant at work, but the joint action of two or more in the service of the Lord. Barnabas might be as wrong in taking Mark, as Paul was right in choosing Silas; but the principle is clear. Spiritual judgment is necessary in selecting a fellow-laborer. Forced association with one we do not believe competent or desirable, is clearly not according to the Lord's mind.

Thus, in His service, there is such a thing as association, but no bondage about it. Barnabas was free to preach the word as much as ever. There was no lack of saints, of course, to welcome Barnabas, and no want of sinners to be preached to. But Paul would not have Mark forced upon him, and chooses another; and this is an important example for us. How completely does scripture provide both for co-operation and for refusing it! The Lord Jesus keeps His due place, not only in relation to the assembly, laying down how it is to be ordered, but also in relation to ministry, showing how the work is to be carried out on earth. The word of God meets every need. But there is another thing that is wanted for all of us. What is this? Simple faith in the Lord, in His grace, in His word. Where this is not, souls are apt to be cast down by difficulties. Then, when they see things looking other than what attracted them once, they begin to doubt everything. How different if our mind is made up for having to do with the Lord! Let us look well to it that we are subject to Him. Of course, I am not now denying moral subjection to, chief men" in the fear of the Lord; this may be a part of subjection to Him; but what we need to have settled is, that at all times, and under all circumstances, we must please the Lord. He will be with us; our circumstances may look critical

and be trying enough; but we shall find infinite blessing to our souls-indeed, it is in times of trouble we prove the solidity of the blessing. Be assured that, as the Lord went through the cross to His heavenly glory, so we shall find His cross stamped upon every service; but then, it is the Lord, and it is His cross. Let our hearts, therefore, be of good cheer. The two lines of truth here sketched-the assembly of God, and the ministry of Christ - you will find laid down in the word of God. Both flow from Christ, instead of being mere voluntary associations: as to both we lie under a responsibility which cannot be evaded. The church is bound to receive Christ's ministers, instead of having the right to choose.*(3) From Christ the power comes; to Christ the servant is immediately responsible. If a man is called to serve, let him rejoice in, but bow to, the blessed truth, that he is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. The consequence of carrying it out will be, that the world will drop off; it may be even that many of his Christian friends will look cold. The ministry of Christ was never intended to work in the system of the world, any more than the assembly of God; both were meant to exalt the Lord Jesus, and to be an exercise of faith for His saints and servants. It must be so still. More than that, it was intended that in the church and the world we should feel the difficulties and sorrows, as well as joys of faith. I do not doubt the triumph in Christ; but we can count upon trial and tribulation surely in this world. We may find differences as to the world. Sometimes too in the church of God there may be fluctuations. Every one who has served Christ knows something of this. But as to Him to whom the church belongs, and whom we serve, He remains "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The question is, are we prepared to follow Him?

Footnotes

*(1) It has been objected that some editors, as Lachmann and others, have omitted ta ekklasia here in deference to the Sinai, Vatican, Alexandrian, and Rescript of Paris, and a few juniors, with the Vulgate, Coptic, Aethiopic, and Armenian versions; but all the other uncials and cursives, with the Syriac, Arabic, and Slavonic versions, not to speak of early citations, accept the word; and these were followed by Griesbach, Scholz, etc., as well as Bengel hesitatingly. Tischendorf, who had at first rejected the common reading, replaced it in his later editions, though probably will now incline him once more against it. But it ought to be remembered that even the school of Lachmann, if they reject it, separate epi to auto from Acts 3:1, so that the passage would make the sense substantially the same as if ta ekklasia, "to the church," were read; namely, "The Lord was adding daily together those that should be saved." Hence in Acts 4:23 it is said of Peter and John, that when let go, they went to their own company (pros tous idious). There was now a new association to which they belonged distinct from the old congregation of Israel; and this beyond a question is formally called ha ekklasia in Acts 5:11, not as if it were then called into being, but most evidently as already subsisting and known. It is clear then that independently of the phrase in Acts 2:47, "the assembly," in a New Testament sense, did in fact begin at Pentecost, as is confessed by Pearson, Whitby, and others.

*(2) The external authority stands thus. The Alexandrian, the Vatican, the Palimpsest of Paris, and the Sinai MSS. are documents of the -highest value, which agree in reading " the church," not "the churches." In this they are supported by the most important cursive extant, now in the British Museum, along with a fair number of others. Of the ancient versions, there is not one of first-rate authority which does not confirm the singular-the Peschito Syriac, Coptic, Sahidic, Vulgate, Aethiopic, Armenian, and the Erpenian Arabic. The most ancient Uncial which gives the plural form is that of Laud, in the Bodleian Library, of about the sixth or seventh century, supported by

two others of the ninth century, with the mass of cursives, the Philoxenian Syriac, and an Arabic version. But even here it is to be remarked that the weightiest, or Laudean copy, is unquestionably wrong in reading "all the churches; " and the others may have been influenced by Acts 16:5. It is certainly easier to suppose that the less usual form might have been changed by scribes to a common type, than that the very old authorities joined in an error, which the crowd of juniors escaped. Ordinary the tendency runs in a direction exactly opposite.

*(3) The Congregational Lecture on "the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament,'' by Dr. S. Davidson, may be compared with what we have seen in scripture. "Let us now take a church and trace its various proceedings. A number of believers agree to associate together. In a united capacity they resolve to confess Christ, to observe His precepts, and to follow His will. They choose pastors whom they judge to possess the qualifications described in the New Testament. In this way the believer chosen by them becomes an official person as soon as he accepts their invitation" (p. 269). " The compact entered into between the ruler and the ruled may be dissolved by one or both of the parties. The union formed between pastor and people may be severed " (p. 271). "A minister is either the minister of one church, viz., that by which he has been chosen, or else he is not a minister at all. When he ceases to be pastor of a church he ceases to be a minister of the Gospel, till he be elected by another ..... He is not made a minister by the act of ordination, but by the people's call, and his acceptance of it, by virtue of which a solemn engagement is entered into; and when the engagement terminates, he ceases to be a minister (pp. 252, 263). No principle seems to me more flatly opposed to God's word than religious radicalism.

03.04 Worship, The Breaking Of Bread...

Lectures on the Church of God by William Kelly

Lecture IV WORSHIP, THE BREAKING OF BREAD, AND PRAYER.

John 4:10-24. The first and weightiest part of the subject now before us is worship. It most of all concerns us, because it most nearly touches God himself; and this, I am convinced, is the truest criterion, as well as the safest and most salutary for our souls. No doubt the breaking of bread may be included in worship, but it calls for a separate notice, as being of a complex nature and having a distinct aspect toward the saints themselves; whereas worship as such is essentially God-ward. Again it seemed due to its importance to give it a place of its own, as furnishing most impressively, and in an act which engages all hearts, that which brings before our souls the deepest and most solemn revelation of divine holiness and grace in the Lord's death, in presence of which all find their level, all recognize what they were without His precious blood, what they are now in virtue of it, and above all what He is who so died in atonement for them, that they might remember Him-yea, for ever-in thankful and adoring peace. The scripture read to-night shows not only that worship forms a blessed, lofty, and most fruitful part of Christian life, but that the Lord Himself puts it in contrast with that which God enjoined in times that are past. As on previous occasions a consideration of God's ways of old helped us to see more distinctly the fresh revelations of God in the New Testament, so we shall find in the matter of worship.

First of all let me premise that there is a certain state of soul that is needed for worship. God looks for the worship of His children, and it is a duty in which all of them have a direct and immediate interest; yet there is a basis necessary both on God's part and on theirs, in order that there should be real proper Christian worship. So it was with regard to the one body, the assembly of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If there be one domain more than another where the allowance of man's will is both a sin and a shame, it is in intruding into the worship of God. Yet is there anything more frequently done and with less conscience? Is there an act where man more exalts himself, and does greater despite to the Spirit of grace? Let none suppose that this is speaking with undue severity. Can one speak too strongly of an interference which deludes the world, defiles the Church, and destroys the moral glory of Christ? On a false foundation or rather without foundation man all the while is but actively dishonouring God, and this in the face of the brightest manifestation He has made or can make of Himself ; for it is in His Son. If in truth God has so spoken and acted, then we have God fully revealed; and we must have one superior to the Son of God in order to find a brighter and fuller revelation than what we have in Christ, This then is both the source of all our hopes and blessedness, and the basis on which Christian worship proceeds; nevertheless, though it is absolutely essential to Christian worship that there should be a perfect revelation of God in Christ, this infinite as it is does not suffice. There is a need on man's part which must be met according to divine glory. God has not failed to reveal Himself fully; He has left nothing undone; He has done nothing that is not absolutely perfect; and all this so that there need be no doubt or question about it.

There was doubtless a gradual unfolding of God’s mind and will and glory: indeed I think we might say that He could not have brought out all His mind until He gave His Son. But now that the Son of God if; come, we can as believers say without presumption-" He has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." In fact, we should be deliberately alighting or guilty disbelieving what God has given in order that He should be known, if we did not say boldly "We know." Is it not a great thing in a dark world like this to have God preparing even for His babes, such language as " we know "? Yes, and He would have us prove the truth of these words "we know," not only as to ourselves but Himself. It is much to have a divine book in which we can, as led of the Spirit, look back on the past, forward on the future, down upon the maze of the present, and say as to all "we know." It is infinitely more and better that we can humbly and truly say, "we know Him, that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 5:1-21)

It is not a question of how far there may be intelligence developed in the child of God. There is such a thing as growth in knowledge; but along with it we must also stand up for the great blessing and fundamental truth, that every soul God has brought to Himself has an unction from the Holy One and knows all things. Now the possession of this divine capacity is far beyond any measure of difference there may be in practical development. Of course there are such differences, and there is thus room for the exercise of a spiritual mind, and the Spirit of God no doubt acts through the truth upon us that we may make progress. But then we may rest confident, as we think of the children of God, that, wherever they are, under perhaps the most untoward circumstances, God has given them a new nature, and this a nature capable by the Spirit of understanding and appreciating and enjoying Himself All the time here below is or ought to be just the season for growth. It is the school where we are to learn truth in practice; but then it is the application and deepening in our souls of that which we have already in the grace of God. "I have not written unto you," says the apostle, "because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." (1 John 3:1-24) This is the portion of every child of God. But this very privilege indicates the great essential on man’s side in order to be a worshipper. Man as such, unless born of God, is incapable of worshipping God-no more able to do so than a horse is capable of understanding science or philosophy. I deny entirely and in principle that there is any capacity in man, as he is naturally, to worship God. He needs to be a new creature in Christ; he needs to possess a new nature that is of God, in order to be able to understand or to worship God. Not that the simple fact of eternal life, which every soul receives in believing on the Son of God, alone qualifies for worship; but then God does not give it alone. He has provided other means of the greatest possible moment, and He has vouchsafed them not merely to some, but to all His children. In many cases however, lamentable to say, the appearance and the enjoyment of this great grace may be hindered. It may be hardly possible to discern either the divine capacity or the power of worship. But we are entitled always to reckon on the Lord, the unfailing truth of His word, and the fulness of His grace.

If God has given a new life to His children, and reconciled them to Himself by Him who has borne their sins in His own body on the tree, wherefore has this great work been done? No doubt for His own glory and out of His own love; but it is as a part of that glory and an answer to His love that He calls upon His children to praise as well as serve Him now. And we have before us the consideration of this very subject-Christian worship, which demands the gift of the Pentecostal Spirit quite as much as either the assembly or ministry can do-a part of the homage of the children

of God, and a return of heart which God claims from all that are His. The first great requisite then for man, in order to worship as a Christian, is that he be born of God as the object of His grace in Christ, and receive the Holy Ghost to dwell in him. The Lord teaches the principle of it in the answer He gives to the Samaritan woman-" If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." There we have the kernel, as it were, of worship-, If thou knewest the gift of God." It is not the law, were it of God Himself, though even that she knew not as one that was under it; for the Samaritans were a mongrel people, Gentiles really though partially Jewish in profession and form. But even if the law of God had been known in all its fulness, unimpaired and uncorrupted by man, it certainly would not have fitted for Christian worship. But the word was, "if thou knewest the gift of God" -His free-giving; if she knew God as a giver-that He is acting out of His free bounty and love. This is the first truth. But in the next place, "If thou knewest .... who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

All the time God sanctioned the law as a system, He dwelt in thick darkness; that is, He did not reveal but hide Himself, as it were. But when the only-begotten Son declared the Father, God no longer occupied the position of a claimant on man, which was necessarily the form in which the law presented His character. Of course this character was right and just and good, like the commandment itself; and man ought to have bowed to Him and answered His demand. But man was a sinner; and the effect of pressing the claim was to bring out more plainly the sins of man. Had the law been the image of God, as ignorant and perverse theologians falsely teach, man must have been hopelessly left and lost But this was far from the truth. The law, though of God, is neither God nor a reflection of God, but only the moral measure of what sinful man owes to God. God is light; God is love; and if man is in the depth of need, He gives freely, fully, like Himself. Indeed it is what becomes Him, and what He delights in. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It were strange if God were defrauded of that which is the more blessed of the two. According to the law He should have been a receiver, had not man broken down; in the Gospel He is unequivocally a giver, and what is more, a giver of His very best to those whose only desert is everlasting destruction. But this is only possible through the glory and the humiliation of the Son of God, stooping down and suffering to the uttermost for sinners. How truly and beautifully then the Lord says., "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water:" in other words, had she known God’s grace and the glory of Him who freely talked with her, she would have sought and found all she wanted. Little did she suspect who the lowly One was whom she supposed to be but a Jew, though she did wonder that a Jew could be so tender and so bend down to a Samaritan woman. Little did she think that it was the Lord God of heaven and earth, the only begotten in the bosom of the Father; had she known but a little of this, she would have asked., and He would have given her living water. It is the Holy Ghost that is meant by the living water." Thus in a single verse we have the whole Trinity in one way or another concerned. God’s own grace is the first thought, the source; then we have the glory of the Person of the Son, and His presence in humiliation among men on the earth; finally the Son according to His proper glory gives to needy thirsty souls the living water-the Holy Ghost. Is it necessary to say that none but a person supremely divine could impart such a blessing?

Here then you have testified by our Lord Jesus the necessary basis of Christian worship: first of all, God revealed as He is in the Gospel as contrasted with the law-God in His grace; secondly, the Son coming down in perfect goodness, and willing to be man's debtor in the least things that He might bless him in the greatest by a love which can win the most careless and obdurate; and thirdly, the gift of the Holy Ghost. What must Christian worship be according to its true character and object in the mind of God, if all these things are necessary in order that it should exist! It does in very deed suppose on God's part a full revelation of what He is in His own nature and in His grace to man. does assume that the Son has come amongst men in love to make good that revelation in the thorough putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It also supposes that the heart, awakened to its real wants has asked and received of the Lord living water, the Holy Ghost, not only as the agent of life and renewal, but as a well within of unfailing refreshment springing up into everlasting life.

Accordingly a little lower down in the chapter we have more developed instruction on the subject, although we have had the foundation of it in John 4:10. The woman, when her conscience was touched, and she learned that she stood in the presence of a prophet, though not yet recognizing in Him the Messiah, put her religious difficulties before Him for solution, quite sure that He brought the truth of God-"I perceive that thou art a prophet." Remark in passing that the essential idea of a prophet, both in the Old and the New Testament sense, is one that brings the conscience directly into the presence of God, so as to have His light shed upon the soul. There were many prophets who predicted scarcely anything, but they were not the less prophets. Finding herself then in the presence of one who was able to announce the truth of God, she wants to have the questions of her soul answered. She turned to Him about that which at all times and everywhere has and must have unrivalled interest. The world itself, blind and dead, will fight for nothing faster than its religion. There were differences then as there are now. "Our fathers," she said, "worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The Lord solemnly tells her: "Woman, believe me, the hour- cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." He gives a rebuke too: "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." It is clear that whatever hopes of salvation were held out to the Jews, they were founded on their belief in Christ. But while He vindicates the position (not the condition) of the Jews, He proclaims the dawn of a brighter day: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." He could speak thus plainly and strongly because He was Himself the Son in the bosom of the Father, and was entitled, in virtue of the glory of His Person, to bring in worship suited to His own intimate knowledge and perfect revelation of the Father.

Thereon at once follows the full and distinctive character of Christian worship. God is made known as a Father calling and adopting children; nay, more than this, He is seeking children. In this is the fulness of divine love going out from heaven and for heaven. In Israel men had to seek Jehovah, and this with carefully prescribed rites and rigid ceremonies: thus only could even the chosen people in their worship come and appear before God. Notwithstanding the nicest care, not one could approach into His presence-nay not even the high priest himself; and if it had been possible for him to draw and stay near, it was not to God revealed as a Father. God was no more Father to Aaron, or Phinehas, or Zadok, than He was to the least member of the most obscure tribe in Israel

There was at that time no such manifestation of God. But now the hour was coming, and in principle come, when the Father was seeking worshippers. The Jewish system had been tried and found wanting, and was now doomed. Before God the worldly sanctuary was already fallen, and Christ was the true temple. The Son of God was come, and this could not but change all things-not only teach, but change all. No wonder then that there was, in and through His presence, a new and full display of God, a declaration of the Father's name. Here Christ makes known the new thing in this point of view; how earthly worship must vanish, not merely at the mountain of Gerizim, but even in Jerusalem; that it was a question henceforth of worshipping the Father, and this in spirit and in truth; for, wondrous to say, the Father was seeking such to worship Him!

What a truth! God the Father going out in His own uncaused, creative love in quest of worshippers! Of course, He was accomplishing this task by His Son, and in the energy of the Holy Spirit. Still, this was the principle, in direct contrast with nature and Judaism-the Father seeking worshippers. Not only was it an entirely new character of worship, suited to and demanding the new revelation of God Himself, but it necessarily and completely extinguished the old lamps of the sanctuary hitherto acknowledged in Jewry. Not only was the spurious worship of Samaria more than ever condemned, but the brightness of heaven, now shining freely, eclipsed the feeble rays which in Israel were meant at least to make the darkness visible, and to keep up a testimony to better light that was coming. What had been temporarily owned and used of God was now becoming a nullity and a nuisance; and God, as we might expect, brought in the vast change most righteously. Up to this time man was on his trial. The Jew, as the sample of chosen, favoured man, was being proved; and what was the issue of it? The cross and shame of the Lord Jesus. They rejected and slew their own Messiah, little knowing too that. He was Jehovah. God over all, blessed forever. Justly therefore and after long patience the Jews were put aside. Such was the moral development of the ways of God. There was nothing arbitrary, as every one who believes what God declares in His word as to Israel's rejection of the Messiah must at once see and feel. In the life and ministry of Christ was a manifestation of such grace and long-suffering as had never been witnessed oi even conceived on the earth. But now the end was come before God. The Jews, by their conduct, were cutting the last ties which a people in the flesh could have with God. In rejecting their Messiah they rejected themselves. But when the cross was a fact, and redemption accomplished, when Jesus was risen from the dead, the grace and truth which had come by Him shone out in His work on the cross, and the plenteous redemption, not promised now, but accomplished, was made known by the Holy Ghost. Accordingly those who believed were in a capacity to worship the Father. It is not merely that they had faith in the Messiah, for this they had when He was here. But now that they had in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; now that Christ made God Himself known as His Father and their Father, His God and their God (and this in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven), they could draw near into the holiest, and truly worship the true God; they could say, not only by, but with the Lord Jesus, "Abba, Father." Not merely were spiritual life and redemption needful, but the Holy Ghost also; and accordingly here the Lord adds that " God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Mark the difference of the language. When He speaks of His Father seeking worshippers. it is pure grace flowing freely out; it is He who is seeking. It is not merely that He accepts the worship of His people, but He seeks worshippers Yet let us remember that our Father is God. It is a thing easily forgotten, strange to say; but this is mere fleshliness, and not from our privilege in infinite mercy of nearness to Him, which ought not in the least degree to dull, but to

increase and strengthen our sense of His majesty. "God is a Spirit," He says; "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." There is a certain moral necessity here, which cannot be dispensed with. The truth is, Christ creates, the law never does. The law kills; what else can it do or ought it to do for sinful creatures ? It would be a bad law if it did let us off. If I deserve to die as a guilty man responsible to God, then, I say, the law is just, holy, and good in condemning me. It is the province of the Saviour alone to give me life, and not this merely, but to give me life by His death and resurrection, without sin, fruit or root, that I may stand in Him possessed of a new nature, wholly delivered by grace from the misery, guilt, power, and judgment of the old man. This is the place of every Christian. These are the simple but most blessed elements of his life and standing before God; but then, as they are inseparable from the gift of the Holy Ghost, so is He absolutely needed that we may worship our God and Father; and for this purpose and others He is given. Thus we see what the living water means. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is the Holy Ghost given by Christ to be in the believer; without Him there can be no such thing as the power of worship. But He is given, and the hour of true Christian worship is come in the strictest sense. And you that are here assembled to-night, are you prepared to acknowledge, for any consideration whatever, worship which is not of this character? You, especially, who are young in years, and perhaps, also, little established in the truth of God, hearken. You may be tempted, not only through natural hankering after the world and its worship, but you have relatives, connexions, friends, who think it hard you do not join them. In what? In Christian worship? Join them in it by all means. Whenever, wherever you find worship in spirit and in truth, fear not to join; seek it, yes, earnestly seek it, Rather would I ask, are you disposed to slight such worship for that which does all it can to return to the mountain of Samaria if it cannot reach Jerusalem; for a religious service that is both untrue and formal; and an order that mingles some genuine worshippers in a crowd of false? How many there are now-a-days who, in word boasting of their heavenly liturgy, in reality hurry through it with such evident heedlessness as to show that the sermon is all they care to hear! One might fancy they were men who knew nothing, desired nothing, but to heal the way to be saved, instead of being Gods children, called and capacitated to worship the Father inspirit and in truth. But this is the misery of being in a position which is bound up with what they value in the flesh and in the world; where worshipping the Father according to His word never was nor can be known.

I admit that even this is better than belonging to another class of religionists, nominally in the same sect, who, being ignorant of Christ’s redemption, bear with an evangelical discourse for the sake of services, the darkness of which is to them delightful, because it answers to their own condition. Fleshly worship suits a fleshly state. My charge is not about the slipping in of a hypocrite amongst the true-these no doubt may creep in anywhere. The main point insisted on is the error and sin of embracing the world in divine worship through a false principle, than which there is nothing in the present day more common, and in some eyes more desirable. Clearly this is not Christian worship; but still it is so styled; it is accepted and justified as such; and the refusal of it is branded popularly as the fruit of a harsh unloving censorious spirit, instead of being seen to be, as it is, simple hearted desire to carry out the will of the Lord. Worship there cannot be, unless the ground of grace is taken: there must be life in the Spirit, nothing less than divine life and the power of the Holy Ghost working in the worshipper.

Again, it ought not to be very difficult to discern where there is Christian worship. One can easily say where it is not. How can it be where there is no recognition of the assembly of the faithful in separation from the world? where human formularies largely displace the divine word? where the Holy Ghost is not welcomed to work in the order laid down in scripture? where anybody may be in membership, and the evidently unconverted can join in or lead the most serious services? The invariable effect is that as you cannot raise the world to the height of faith, the believers who mingle all together indiscriminately must descend to the worlds level Hence, fine buildings, imposing ceremonies, exciting music, poetic sentiment, are apt to come in by degrees, where Christian worship is unknown or forgotten. Hence too the need of legal order, for it seems bold to trust the grace of God.

You may have Christian worshippers in such a state of things; for I have no desire to exaggerate; but Christian worship there cannot be. Do you doubt this? Perhaps the doubt is because you have never known what worship really is. So much is this the case at present-the thoughts of Christians are so vague, unformed, and dark-that to many the very meaning of worship is lost. How many call a building where they meet to hear preaching a place of worship; and when they go to hear, they think and say they are going to worship! Does not all this show that the very idea of worship is unknown? Nor is it to be wondered at. The truth is, there is a great deal of preaching of Christ in these days, much calculated to arouse and also to win souls; but where is there a full setting forth of the Gospel of God's grace? That Christ is preached at all is a matter for which we have to thank God. Souls are converted, and learn, as far as the usual orthodox testimony goes, what is most true of their sins and their. danger; but we want the gospel of God fully proclaimed-the gospel as we see it set forth in the epistles-the glad news not only that the work of Christ has put sin away, but that the believer stands in a new life and relationship with God, of which the Holy Ghost is given as the seal. Where this is known, worship is the simple necessary fruit; the heart, thus set free by grace, goes out to God in thanksgiving and praise. So in the chapter we began with, the believer enjoys not only a new life communicated, but a well of water within him., which springs up into everlasting life. Thus, by the energy of the Holy Spirit given to us, we possess, as a conscious thing, perfect, unbroken peace, and we cannot but breathe the joy of our ransomed souls to the praise of our Saviour God. As a fact this may not be found among the children of God, save few comparatively; because in general, where there is a perception of Christ, they put the law in the place of the Holy Ghost, and thus fall into the uncertainty which invariably, where there is conscience, flows from the law thus misused, instead of enjoying the light, and power, and peace in Christ and His redemption, which is the propel fruit of the Holy Ghost's testimony to Christ and of His indwelling in the believer. Here only can you have Christian worship. It is founded upon the full revelation of grace in Christ dead, risen, and ascended; and it is in the power of the Spirit of God that this is enjoyed by the believer. But not this only: for God is a Spirit, and the consequence is, that Christian worship repudiates formality. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." There we have the nature of God revealed, and thence is deduced the moral need of worshipping Him in spirit and truth, not according to earthly form or human will. This then is the source, groundwork, and character of Christian worship. But we have one element more when we pursue the further instructions of the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 we find it connected with the assembly. We learn there on what principle, and by whom, worship is now paid to God. This is an important addition to our knowledge of God's will No one contends for a moment that, the gospel should not be preached, or that believers should not be

instructed in the truth. These are duties confessedly according to scripture. There we have everything provided for, that can be needed for the good of the Church, and for the well-being of souls; we have both the principle and the fact of all Christian service most clearly laid down in the word of God. Among the rest there is no lack of testimony to the manner according to which Christian worship should be conducted. We have seen that none can render acceptable worship to God but Christians: from it the world is plainly shut out, according to the teaching of scripture. It is not a question of closing the door, or of excluding persons from the place where the faithful assemble. It is clear from scripture that unbelievers might be present where the assembly of God may be gathered; but they are incapacitated from rendering proper and acceptable worship unto God, because they have neither the new nature, nor the Holy Spirit, who is the only power of worship; they neither know redemption, which is the basis of worship, nor do they know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who, with the Son, is the object of worship. Thus, in every point of view, the world is necessarily without the pale of Christian worship, and the bringing the world in is a large part of the sin and ruin of Christendom.

Again we gather from 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 the place which the giving of thanks has in the worship of God; and this connected, not with any one individual only, or a separate class, but with the order and operation of God in the assembly. Hence we read (1 Corinthians 14:15), ,,What is it then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Important as singing is, its end is not, of course, the sweet sound: the essential thing, as we are told, is " singing with the spirit and understanding also." What a proof that the Lord is looking for the intelligent service of His people! So in 1 Corinthians 14:16 we read, "Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" If in Christian worship there were the utterance of an unknown tongue in the giving of thanks or in blessing God, it would traverse the rules of edifying the assembly, because it would leave out those that could not intelligently join their "Amen." The passage is cited also to show that thanksgiving and blessing, like singing, and other constituents of Christian worship known to us familiarly, were found from the first in the Christian assembly. But there is just the difficulty. Look right or left-look where you will, where can you find the Christian assembly? Where is there the gathering together of the children of God in the name of the Lord Jesus engaged in thanksgiving and blessing, praising and singing, as we read of here? Yet the assembly of God, meeting as -such, is essential to Christian worship. There might be the best of men chosen to conduct the service, and the order of praise and prayer might be as faultless as existing liturgies are open to severe criticism; but what then,Would it be the worship of the family of God? If not, how could it be of really Christian character? God looks for the worship of His children in the Spirit. Do you say that after all it is only the slight difference of several taking part, in-stead of one? But grave as that might be, such a difference is not the essential thing, but this-that there be perfect openness for the Spirit’s action by whom He is pleased to speak. It is not then a question of one main, or half-a-dozen. On some occasions the Holy Ghost might use one or two; on others, more than six in various ways. What scripture demands is, that there be faith in the Spirit’s presence, proved by leaving Him His due right to employ as may please Him. It is not therefore a mere question of one, or few, or many mouthpieces to give thanks, or bless, or take part in acts of Christian worship. The real and essential feature is, that the Holy Ghost, being present, should be-counted on, and His employment of this Christian or that as He will. In an assembly where there were many spiritual

men, it would have a strange appearance if but one or two took an active part in the worship of the Lord. Still, whether few or many speak at any given time, the only scriptural mode by which acceptable worship is rendered is where the whole assembly unites in the liberty of the Spirit, with heart and mind, in the offering of their praises and thanksgivings to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost, acting in the assembly by its members may think fit to employ one or twelve to speak the praises suitable to His mind, and according to the condition of the assembly. And what can be sweeter to all, whether or not they be thus employed as the audible channels of worship, than to have the consciousness that the Holy Ghost in very deed so deigns to guide in one and all? The one point of value is, that He should be free to direct all for the glory of Christ. There is another remark of a practical kind to be made as to worship. We must guard against bringing into the assembly our own thoughts of the worship to be offered unto God. An individual may give out a hymn to be sung in which he delights, and which may be not only beautiful but true and spiritual in itself; but it may be a mistake in him to give it out a wholly unsuitable hymn for the occasion on which he desires it to be sung. Again, there may be some outside the assembly, known or unknown, who, out of curiosity, are come to see what the worship is like. Now are you, fearing that they might wonder at the silence from time to time, to read a chapter, or give out some sweet hymn? Need I say that such a step is indefensible, and beneath men who believe in the presence of the Holy Ghost? Some may think there is liberty to do this or the like; but who put such thoughts into the mind? Do you think the Holy Spirit is occupied with what those without may say or think of those within, or anything of the kind? Is He not on the contrary filled with His own thoughts of Christ, and communicating them to us? The becoming thing, therefore, for us to do under such circumstances is to look from ourselves, and those within and without, to God, that He, working by the Spirit, may give us communion with the present thoughts of the Spirit of God about the Lord Jesus Christ. When such is the case, how simple is the flow of thanksgiving for His special mercies to us and all saints! how fragrant the sense God gives us of His delight in Christ! what praise of His grace! what anticipations of glory, and of Christ Himself there! All these and more are but ingredients; and they will variously predominate as the Lord sees fit. Even a lower character of worship, if it be but suited to a given state, is, in my judgment, a far more pleasing thing to God than any strain ever so high, which has not the real present energy of the Spirit of God connected with it.

Further, as to criticism: I cannot think the assembly of God is the right place for any man to stand up and show his superior wisdom in; on the contrary, therein, above all occasions, is the place for the greatest to show his littleness before God. There may be seasons and circumstances where a judgment of what is given out may not be amiss, but a duty; but the assembly of God is not the place for such a course. May I not take the liberty of applying to this what the apostle lays down as to another innovation: "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the assemblies of God "? How, where, could any one gather such a practice from the word of God? Nor do I confine myself here, or in these remarks generally, to a bare text, but I am speaking of the whole tenor, and texture, and object of all that is given us in the scripture. Accordingly, as it is unauthorized, so the result cannot but be pernicious. What can the effect of criticism in the assembly of God be but the sowing of discord and distraction where unity and concord should prevail? And yet it may be a thing too often done; against it I would warn my hearers earnestly. All are liable to make mistakes, and all deserve to be corrected occasionally; but, as a general rule, comment upon another is altogether out of place in the Christian assembly. There is a meet time

and place for every real duty; and it never can be right to rectify one wrong by another, however godly the intention

Next, as to the breaking of bread, a few scriptures will suffice. The Lord's Supper, not baptism, was revealed of the Lord, we all know, to the apostle Paul, as it is brought out in the same epistle (1 Corinthians 11:1-34) from which much has been already quoted. It is a holy institution, intimately linked with, and the distinct outward expression of the unity of Christ's body, which it was St. Paul's work especially to develop. We have the Lord accordingly there revealing it afresh to the apostle Paul. He had not sent Paul to baptize, as he says, but to preach the gospel. There is not the least doubt that he did baptize, nor that it was perfectly right in him to baptize. But baptism, so expressly charged on the eleven., after the Lord's resurrection, is not only a single initiatory observance-,' one baptism,"-but it is for each individual the confession of the foundation truth of Christ's death and resurrection. The subject of it stands forth as a believer in Him who died and rose; he is no longer therefore a Jew, or a heathen, but a confessor of Christ. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, belongs to the assembly, and forms an affecting and important object in the worship of the saints of God. It is primarily and strictly the standing sign of our only foundation ; it is the witness of His love unto death, and His work, by virtue of which such as we can worship. No wonder therefore we have the apostle Paul showing the very solemn and blessed place which the Lord's Supper claims in the revelations of the Lord to him. "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. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." It is evident, on the face of the statement, what a large and deep place the Lord's death has in His Supper, No joy, no brightness of the favour of God in heaven, no consequent communion, nor hopes of everlastiug blessedness with Him, can be allowed for a moment to distract from, or overshadow, the death of the Lord. But the reverse is the truth ; for the more the Lord's death has its own central value before the Christian, all these things shine out not only more brightly but also more sweetly and affectingly to the heart. And so the same man who was God's blessed instrument for developing the full extent of the Christian's privileges, is the very one who gathers us around our Lord's death as that which pre-eminently attracts and fills every heart that loves His name. From Acts 20:7, it is plain that the saints should break bread on the first day of the week, not of the month or quarter. But it is the resurrection day, not the day of His death, as if we were summoned to be there in mourning as for the dead. But He is risen, and therefore, with grateful, solemn joy, we take the Supper on the day that speaks of His rising power. I cannot but believe that the Holy Ghost records the day for our instruction, as well as the object that called together the believers primarily. No doubt the apostle, passing through after a short stay, discoursed to those assembled; but they came together on that day to break bread. Have we consented to other thoughts and arrangements? Or do we act as if we believed the Holy Spirit knows and shows us the best and truest, the holiest and happiest way of pleasing God and honouring Christ? The death of the Lord keeps constantly before the soul our utter need as once guilty sinners, proved by the cross; the, complete blotting out of all our sins by His blood; the glorifying of God up to, and above all in, death itself; the manifestation of absolute grace, and withal the righteousness of God in justifying us; the perfect glory of the Saviour;-all these things,

and infinitely more, are brought and kept before us in those simple but wondrous words- "the Lord's death!" To take the Supper in remembrance of the Lord, and thus show forth His death, is what gathers us together as our prime desire. There can be no doubt about the meaning of the word of God which records this for our comfort and edifying; yet how could one infer that such was His will if one looked at the practice of Christians? Compare what they are doing Lord's-day after Lord's-day, with the obvious lessons of scripture, and intention of the Lord in so revealing His mind to us; and say whether for the most part this simple, touching memorial has not been slighted by real saints, and whether its character has not been changed universally in Christendom. I speak not of points of form, but of its principle-of such an interference with its mode of celebration as leaves hardly a single shred according to the Lord's institution.

Beware of thinking anything can be of equal moment with duly showing forth the Lord's death. The Supper of the Lord claims an unequivocal prominence in the worship of the saints. Not that one thinks of the mere fact of celebrating it, as to time, in the middle of the meeting. Indeed, it is remarkable how the Spirit of God avoids laying down laws about the Supper (and the same is true of Christianity in general)-a circumstance which the unfaithful may abuse, but which gives infinitely greater scope to the spirit of Christian affection and obedience. This however we may safely say, that it is not a question of the point of time when the act of breaking the bread occurs. The all-important thing is, that the Lord's Supper should be the governing thought when the saints are gathered for this purpose on the Lord's day; that neither the prayers of many, nor the teaching of any, should put that great object in the shade. In ministry however spiritual, man has his place; in the Supper, if rightly celebrated, the abased Lord alone is exalted. There might be occasions where the evident guidance of the Spirit brings it early before us, or postpones it late in the meeting, and thus any technical rule binding it to the beginning, or middle, or, end, would be human encroachment on Him who alone is competent on each occasion and always to decide. This openness may seem strange to such as are habituated to rigid forms, even where there are no written formularies; but that apparent strangeness is chiefly due to their habitual lack of acquaintance with the real presence and guidance of the Holy Ghost in the assembly. Where however the door is open to the action of the Spirit according to scripture, and where a just sense of what is in hand pervades the assembly, the Spirit of God, somehow or another, according to the truth of things in His sight, knows how to adjust the right moment as well as all else, and to give us the comfort of His guidance, if the Lord be but the confidence of our souls.

Again it may be that you sometimes go to the Lord's table and return disappointed, because there has been no exposition of the word, or no exhortation. Is it possible that you have gone to remember and show forth the death of Christ, and yet have come back with feelings of dissatisfaction? How can this be? Is it not the morbid influence of the present state of Christendom? No doubt there is that in the natural heart which suits and likes what is now the vogue; and the excitement of Egypt's food is readily craved, where the heavenly manna is loathed as light food. Unquestionably we have that within which helps what is found outside; still it is humbling and afflicting to my own mind that a discourse should seem indispensable to garnish the breaking of bread, and that there should be a thought of want in the meeting where the Lord's death has been before the heart; when one has met around the Lord in His own name with those that love Him! Do you suppose that there is any service more acceptable to God Himself than the simple remembrance of Christ in His own Supper?

But, however that may be estimated, all this has been often and plainly forgotten, and the Supper of the Lord has not only been made, in many instances, a much rarer thing than scripture warrants, but its proper character has been tampered with, and the great landmarks that the Lord laid down have been utterly disregarded, so that the celebration is become anything men please to call it, except the Lord's Supper. Say that it is a sacrament, if you will; but one may perhaps doubt that, if so, it is the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians used to take a common meal together on the Lord's day; for in those days Christians strongly felt the social character of Christianity, and one may regret that it has been ever since so much lost sight of. After the meal they celebrated the Lord's Supper. The devil, however, contrived to bring shame and confusion among them at Corinth by license at this feast; some of them got intoxicated. No doubt it was a dreadful dishonour on the Lord's name; but it ill becomes those to speak harshly who are apt to utter the loudest reproaches. We must remember that in those days they had just been brought out of heathenism; and it used to be a part of the worship of false gods to get drunk in their honour. The Gentiles did not feel the immorality of it in the way that everybody knows now. It was thought no improper thing then to be thus excited and worse in their religious rites, and, indeed, at other times. It is probable therefore, that in this infant assembly at Corinth it was not counted such an enormity as we know it to be, that Christians should so far forget the Lord at the agape. What aggravated the sin was the mixing up the Lord's Supper then and there, it seems, with the love-feast. Such conduct was destructive of the character of His Supper. To eat and drink thus was to eat judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29.) What had been begun in the Spirit ended in the flesh. I refer to this merely for the purpose of showing that, by bringing carnal feasting into such a holy assemblage, we lose or destroy its true nature and aim.

Thus, without confining oneself to the notice of any particular body, the practice of appointing Particular officials, whose sole right and title*(1) it is to administer the bread and wine to each communicant, is clean contrary to the teaching of Scripture, and flies in the face of the evident intention of God, quite as much as the distressing conduct of the Corinthians themselves. For what is the Lord's Supper? Is it not the family feast? When you derange the Father's order among the members of His family, or when you bring in those that are not of His family, its character is gone, it is the family feast no more. Let us then assume the least unfavourable supposition of a Christian company, and of none but Christians. Yet supposing that the administration, as men call it, of the Supper of the Lord is committed to a real minister of Christ, or to all who are His ministers, as the exclusive prerogative of such as minister only-I put the most favourable form which can be conceived for the popular notion under any and all circumstances, it is a human invention, not only without the authority of Christ, but decidedly contrary to the doctrine and facts recorded in scripture. I admit ministry most fully; but the Lord's Supper has no connexion with it. Make it a necessary function of those that rule to administer the bread and wine, and it bears not even an outward resemblance to the Lord's Supper. It becomes a sacrament, not His Supper; a manifest innovation, a decided and complete departure from what the Lord has laid down in His word. The very idea of a person standing apart and claiming to administer it as a right alters and ruins the Supper of the Lord. That Supper, according to scripture, leaves no room for the display of human importance in the pretensions of a clergy; least of all when the apostles were on earth. Blessed and honoured of God as these were at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, they were there in His presence as souls that were saved from sin and its judgment by the Lord's death. In the regulation of the churches, in the choice of elders, in the appointment of deacons, they had their own proper

place of apostolic dignity. The word of God clearly and fully proves that the administration of the Supper by an official is a figment and tradition of men, wholly wanting the support of scripture. But there is another point that often troubles souls, and might possibly harass, even where the bread is broken in a holy simple scriptural manner--the danger of eating unworthily, and so of incurring "damnation." Let me meet this at once by the assurance that, though one has to watch against a careless or otherwise unworthy participation, there is no thought of damnation, which would indeed upset for the believer all the comfort of the gospel and the general drift of God’s word. But some may say, "Do not the scriptures assert as much?" I admit the English version does, but not the word of God; and we must not confound them. We have every reason to thank God for the English Bible, which, as far as I am acquainted with the subject, I believe to be as good a version, if not better than any other current in the world; but for all this, it is only a version, and therefore a work in which the weakness of man appears, and in which are found here and there defects which human infirmity has not been able to avoid. One of these errors is on this very subject (in 1 Corinthians 11:29). The apostle is showing how essential it is that we go to the Lord’s table, which invites us freely as every week opens, our hearts filled with grateful remembrance of Christ’s self-sacrificing love, who died in atonement that we through Him might be saved. What is the result of a light heedless state at the Lord’s Supper? If we take the bread and wine at that holy feast as we eat the common food God provides in our own houses, not discerning the Lord’s body-in other words, if we eat and drink unworthily, it is not the Lord’s Supper we are eating, but rather judgment to ourselves. The Lord’s hand will be on such, as the apostle shows by the case of the disorderly Corinthians; but even in that aggravated instance, it was expressly temporal judgment, that they should not be damned or "condemned with the world." On the other hand, there is no excuse for absenting yourself from the Lord’s table. There is no escape from the hand of the Lord, save by humbling ourselves and vindicating Him by self-judgment, and then coming. The Lord’s Supper is no more a sweet privilege than a solemn duty for all His own, save those under discipline ; and when we think of the love He has shown us in the boundless sacrifice He has made for us the deliverance wholly undeserved He has wrought for us in His own deep. abasement and suffering under God’s wrath on the cross, together with all the gracious encouragement He has therein brought before us for our comfort, admonition, and support in our conflict through the world, we cannot but regard the thankful commemoration of the Lord’s death as a paramount obligation which under no circumstances ought to be neglected.

Another person’s fault should not keep me away: if it rightly acts so on one, it ought to hinder all. Is the Lord then to be as it were forgotten because somebody deserves censure? Let the faulty individual be reproved or otherwise dealt with according to scripture; but my place is to "do this in remembrance of Christ." Again, a sense of my own faultiness should not keep me back. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat,"-not stay away. He who abstains from the Lord’s Supper virtually says he is none of His. This will suffice as to the breaking of bread, barely as the subject has been touched. A few words remain to be added in regard to prayer. There is very often a great mistake made as to this. We hear, sometimes about the "gift of prayer;" but where do you find it! Show me a passage of scripture which speaks of a "gift of prayer" in the sense in which people commonly use the term? What is the effect? It largely binders conscientious modest simple souls, who otherwise would join heartily in public prayer. But they cannot give themselves credit for possessing the "gift of prayer." They are frightened by what is a mere bugbear-by what is really, if they but knew it, a blunder. The consequence of this for them is, that they hang back, and are

silent, when the meeting would be greatly benefited by their help. Are there not some now present who know well that they have bad many a time a desire to pray, and thus express the wants of God's assembly to Himself, but who have been deterred because they feared their lack of a "gift of prayer," and that they might not be able to pray long enough, or in a way acceptable to some whom they have heard insisting on the "gift of prayer"? Is it not a fact? I entreat You, beloved friends, to listen to them no more, nor heed your own thoughts and feelings.

Examine the word of God for yourselves, and you will find that the apostle lays down (1 Timothy 2:1-15), and even peremptorily, his desire that the men pray everywhere. Let them then commit themselves to the Lord without doubt, and at the same time remember, that scripture at any rate never even hints about a " gift of prayer." This brings us to another point connected with the one I have Just endeavoured to explain. It is in my opinion a mischievous notion, that those who possess a ministerial gift should be regarded as the only proper persons to let their voices be heard in the assembly of God.

*(1) Let me give a few extracts from the famous work of an able and moderate man, John Calvin:-" It is here also pertinent to observe, that it is improper for private individuals to take upon themselves the administration of baptism, for it, as well as the dispensation of the Supper, is part of the ministerial office; for Christ did not give command to any men or women whatever to baptize, but to those whom He had appointed apostles. And when, in the administration of the Supper, He ordered His disciples to do what they had seen Him do (He having done the part of a legitimate dispenser), He doubtless meant that in this they should imitate His example. The practice which has been in use for many ages, and almost from the very commencement of the church, for laics to baptize in danger of death, when a minister could not be present in time, cannot, it appears to me, be defended on sufficient grounds." (Inst. iv., xv. 20.) " For the words of Christ are plain: 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.' (Matthew 28:19.) Since He appointed the same persons to be preachers of the gospel and dispensers of baptism in the church'No man taketh this honour unto himself ' (Hebrews 5:4), according to the apostle, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron'---any one who baptizes without a lawful call usurps another's office." (Ibid. 22.) Then, in chap. xvii. 43 of the same book iv., after alluding to some ancient ceremonies in order to dismiss them, he proceeds to say, the Supper "might be administered most becomingly, if dispensed to the church very frequently, at least once a week. The commencement should be with public prayer; next, a sermon should be delivered; then the minister, having placed bread and wine on the table, should read the institution of the Supper, then explain the promise therein left us, and at the same time keep back from communion [excommunicaret] all those who are debarred by the Lord's prohibition. He should, after that, pray that the Lord, according to the kindness in which He bed-owed this sacred food on us, would also instruct and form us to receive it with faith and gratitude of mind, and would make us worthy of the feast by His mercy, since we an not so of ourselves. Here. either psalms should be sung, or something read, while the faithful, in due order, communicate at the sacred banquet, the ministers breaking the bread and conveying it to the people. The Supper being ended, an exhortation should be given to sincere faith and confession of faith, to charity and manners worthy of Christians. Lastly, thanks should be offered, and praise of God sung. This done, the Church should be dismissed in peace." How man loves to meddle and legislate! Now, it is instructive to observe that the fullest regulation of the Lord's Supper in scripture occurs in I Corinthians, that is, in an epistle written to an assembly where as

yet elders were not. Such I believe to have been the came; but even if elders did exist there, the fact remains that absolute allence is kept respecting them, where modern thought would have called them in at once to meet the disorder by a proper administration of the Sacrament. This never occurs to the apostle. The whole assembly are admonished on moral grounds. Such is the divine remedy, not an appeal to the elders if they existed, nor a direction to have them appointed in order to correct the abuse if there were none.

03.05. Gifts And Local Charges

Lectures on the Church of God by William Kelly

Lecture V.

GIFTS AND LOCAL CHARGES Ephesians 4:7-11.

I should feel tonight that my subject was dry indeed and promised little profit to souls, if we had only to look at gifts and offices in themselves. It is thus that the subject is often regarded, and is therefore apt to become not only a barren speculative question for some souls, but also a snare to others - barren to such as, looking upon it from outside think that they at least have nothing to do with gifts and offices, and a snare perhaps as often to those who conclude that they themselves are especially, if not exclusively, concerned in them. The truth is, these spiritual functions closely and materially affect both Christ and the church of God. Attached to Christ as their source, they (at any rate gifts) flow down from the same reservoir of rich grace on high, whence all the main characteristic blessings of the church proceed. They proceed from Him in heavenly places, and therein is the true answer to much, the greater part of the aversion some feel to the subject, as if ministerial gifts were only a means of giving importance to their possessors. It would be hard to think that such a turn can be anything but a gross perversion of what comes from Christ or heaven. In truth they are of the deepest moment in God's eyes, as He deigns to use them for the glory of His Son; and surely the consideration of the light that scripture affords should be precious to those whose joy as well as responsibility it is to profit by them; and not least to those who have personally and most jealously to watch how the gift of Christ's grace is used, lest it should be diverted from the object for which the Lord gave it to some selfish or worldly account. It is evident, I think, that simply to state the source is, in the principle of it, to cut off all excuse for the earthly aggrandizement, in various forms, which the Lord's gifts are too commonly made to serve. But then there is another remark to be made. Not only do these gifts of Christ spring from Him in heaven, and therefore must, if anything can, refuse to mingle with the vanity of the world and the pride of man (I speak, of course, of the gift itself, and not of the flesh's perversion of it); but besides there is another feature of these gifts, which is of immense interest to us as believers in the Lord Jesus. They are essentially bound up with Christianity, not on the contemplative side, but in what is equally needful, its active and aggressive character. But whether you look at the source or the character, all is founded on an eternal redemption that is already accomplished. The more these considerations are weighed, the more their importance will appear; the more also, it seems to me, the subject of the gifts of Christ will be seen to be entirely above that earthly and barren domain to which theology at least would consign it.

Further, is there not a wrong done to God and His saints, wherever that which the Lord deigned to make known to us in His word-that which constitutes, rightly applied, so essential a part of the blessing of the church-is viewed as but a secondary matter that can be taken up or laid aside at will? In point of fact, such indifference to His truth is deep dishonor done to Him, and a corresponding loss invariably to the souls of the saints who thus slight His will. It must be evident,

if it were only from the scripture just read, that the Holy Ghost does not in any way banish the subject of gifts into some dark corner, if such there can be in the scriptures -whence we may, if we please, draw it forth from time to time, and wield it to the best account of our party. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the Holy Ghost has shown both heights and depths of blessing in Christ and in the church -in the very centre where He shows us too the Lord Himself in His own glory at the right hand of God-it is there beyond almost any other part of the New Testament, that we find the Spirit launching out into an account of the gifts of the Lord to the church.

But, observe, I say the "gifts of the Lord," because so it is that they are regarded here, rather than gifts of at Spirit. Indeed it would be difficult to find such an expression in scripture. There is a passage which seems to say as much in. Heb. ii; but it is properly "the distributions of the Holy Ghost." You will find also in 1 Cor. xii. that wisdom, knowledge, and the rest are said to be given by "the same Spirit." But still, in these things, the Holy Ghost, properly speaking, is not regarded as the giver, save mediately. The Lord is the real and proper giver; the Spirit of God is rather the intermediate. means of conveying the gift, distributing or making it good,-the energy by which the Lord acts. And I conceive it to be of moment, practically, that we should see that the gifts which are used to call out and build up the church, and which are the only true basis of ministry, take their rise from Christ Himself.

Ministry then may be defined to be the exercise of gift, and therefore it is evident that these gifts of grace are bound up with it in the most intimate manner. There can be no ministry of the word (properly speaking) without gift by the Spirit from Christ. But let us look for a moment at the development which the Holy Ghost gives to the truth that these gifts flow from Christ. " Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." It is not a bare question of qualities possessed; still less is it merely a matter of attainment, let it be ever so well meant to give honour to the Holy Ghost. It is a new thing given, the positive consequence of grace; it is the fruit of the free favour of the Lord, who in these things acts according to His own sovereign will and for the glory of God.

"And unto every one [or each] of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, [taking up Psalms 68:1-35] 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.'"Although the Lord Jesus was in His person, one need hardly say, competent at all times, still He was pleased, in the order of the ways of God, to wait for the great work to be done-and done too, not merely as regarded man in divine mercy towards him, but in view of the enemy who was to be dealt with; the power must be broken that had led captive the children of God. Hence the spiritual enemies were first disposed of, and the Lord is accordingly represented here as ascending up to heaven on the defeat, the total defeat before God, of all the once mighty unseen power of evil. Upon this foundation ministry is built The Lord Jesus goes up into heaven. He has Himself confronted and defeated the powers of darkness. He has led captivity captive; and thereon "He gave gifts to men." How completely the door for man's energy and ambition is closed! How carefully God-alone able to teach us on this subject, and in His revealed word having, in fact, given us the perfect truth - shows us the Lord Jesus, from first to last, the one means of good to us, and glory to God the Father by the Holy Ghost? Do you view Him only as Saviour and Lord? The truth is, there is not a single seed of the Church's blessing, there is not a means of acting upon the souls of ourselves or of others, that is not, every whit of it, connected with Christ. Where we have not apprehended this vital all-embracing connexion with Him, and

where that which assumes to be ministry, for instance, does not flow from Him only, it is clear there is a something not to be held fast, but on the contrary to be got rid of ; an object not to be fought for as if it were a prize, but to be suspected as contraband, brought into the light of God, and judged in His presence. For whose ministry is it if it be not of the Lord Christ? and for what are we contending if it be not for the gifts of Christ? The Lord then is ascended on high, and from that height of bliss and glory He has given gifts to men, and the Spirit of God carefully turns aside for a little, and puts us in the very presence of the mighty work on the ground of which Christ took His seat there. Now that he ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" What grace in Him! What infinite love to us, that He might bless us-eternally bless us! He had, with the Father and the Spirit, a divine co-equal right to that place of supreme majesty. They alone were competent to fill it. But He descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He had the highest place above, if I may say so, naturally and intrinsically. It belonged to Him as the Son of God, who counted it not robbery to be equal with God; but He deigned to be made flesh; for, as a part of the counsels of God, it was needful that He should be man. Without the incarnation there could have been no retrieving of the universal ruin of man, and of the dishonor of God through sin; there could have been neither defeat of Satan, nor an adequate and righteous deliverance for man. But now He descends first into the lower parts of the earth. He takes upon Him the sorrow, the champ, the sin. To have condescended to become man, and to live as He lived rejected and abased on earth, would have been much; but what is this to the cross? He went down to the very uttermost, and in consequence of this humiliation, He is now as man exalted to the highest. In His death He retrieved all that was rained-indeed, I may say, infinitely more. He "restored that which he took not away." He brought a new and better glory to God than had ever been thought or even prophesied of in any respect; for I fear not to say that, as all types and shadows are but the feeble heralds of His glory, so too there is, there could be, no prediction rising up to the height of blessing that was found in Christ, nor fathoming the depth of His moral glory in the sight of God. Himself was needed to come forth Himself needed that the full worth of His sufferings and cross might be known. Before that there could be no sufficient expression of His glory. It was out of this descent into the lower parts of the earth that He went up - out of this thorough coming down by Him who was as truly God as man, in the very nature which before had borne such fruits of shame and disgrace to God. But what a change! Humanity is a nature in which the blessed God could delight, as He looked upon it in the Lord Jesus. Now too He ascends; and this, not as He came down; for, descending simply as the Son of God to become the Son of man, He goes up, not the Son of God only, but also the Son of man. Indeed, it is especially in this very character of man that we find Him seated in heaven now. "He ascended up," as it is said, "far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." On this magnificent ground, whether one looks at the humiliation on the one hand, or at the exaltation on the other-on this twofold ground of a height of glory, consequent on a depth of abasement beyond all thought, is founded that ministry which is according to God, being the simple exercise of the gift of Christ. And yet could it be credited, if one did not know it that there are men, and Christians too, who can look upon such a scene unmoved, if not moved only to spite and sneer and reproach? But it must be so. To work thus belongs to Him whom the world knew not. No wonder therefore that it recognizes not the gifts of His grace. Whatever can be made to merge into the world’s greatness, whatever can be altered to suit the age’s taste, the world can admire. Even Christianity and the name of Christ-perverted, no doubt, and regarded only in some partial way-may be adopted. Why even the heathen were willing to do

it! There was an emperor, as probably many of you know, who would have been glad to put the Lord Jesus as a god in the Pantheon. And so it is now. Has not Christendom something akin for its success? It has taken up piecemeal this institution and that; it has made them the means of adorning the scene into which God "drove out the man," exiled by Him because of sin. But we who believe are assuredly entitled to look above this world, and there to see, higher than all heavens, our Lord and Master. And what is He doing there? What is His present occupation, according to that which the Spirit of God tells us here? He is giving gifts unto men. Let us bless Him for it! He (Himself a man, for so it is that He has taken this place) is giving gifts unto men. From on high He looks round about upon this world, and His grace makes man to be the vessel of these precious gifts, which savour not only of the person who is there, and of the work He has done, but also of the glory from which He gives them. They are heavenly gifts. They will not, if He be consulted, conform to the world's thought or measure; nor were they ever intended to serve the world but the Lord Jesus, though surely for His sake serving any and every body.

Let us take care then that we truly are subject to Him in whom we believe. And let us beware of the evil heart of unbelief, lest we treat a word of His lightly. Let us remember how easy it is pretending to honour His word, to let it slip away from us, counting it something of the past-no doubt to look back on it with reverential awe, but still as a thing gone by. Is this the living word of a God that lives for ever and ever? Are you going to treat the Head of the church as if He were dead? Nay, He never was dead as the church's Head. Indeed! He only took that Headship as One alive again from the grave, and so giving life ; He only took it when both raised from the dead, and gone up to heaven : and yet men act as if the Head of the church were a dead and not a living Lord! And if He is thus living, what is it for? Is it merely as High Priest, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, to bring His people through the wilderness? There is some tendency in Christians to overlook the priesthood of Christ; but there is a far greater danger of their forgetting Christ as the living Head, who still stands at the fountain-head of blessing, ever in faithful love giving His gifts to man. No doubt it is all summed up as if it were a given thing here - "He gave;" and there is a very interesting reason for such a way of presenting His gifts. Assuredly the Lord would not Himself put the gifts of His grace in such a form as to interfere with the church's constant hope of His own return. On the contrary, He would fix the church in the attitude of expecting Himself from heaven. Accordingly not even the supply of ministerial gift is so put as to defer the fulfillment of the " blessed hope " from age to age. On high is the Head of the church, and as Head it is part of His work to vouchsafe all needed gifts for men.

Here then is the whole scene of His grace summed up in one- the Lord gave gifts to men; "and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and -some pastors and teachers." We have not a catalogue of all the gifts. It is not at all in the manner of scripture or of the Lord to furnish a mere formal list; for the truth is not written in the word of God so as to satisfy human curiosity or form a system of divinity. What is done is infinitely better. He has given us exactly what suited His wisdom in each particular part of scripture. Hence if we compare, for instance, what we have here with the first Epistle to the Corinthians, we shall find .striking differences. There are some gifts found here, not there; and some found there which are not here. Now this is not a thing of chance, nor a matter in which the apostle used merely his own judgment and decided things after his own mind. Nobody denies that his heart and mind were deeply exercised. God forbid! But we may bless God that there was an infinitely wise mind directing all

things, and that there was a judgment which knew the end from the beginning. We shall find, accordingly, that the apostle mentions these gifts according to that divine intelligence. Indeed, the reason of it, to some extent, may appear as we proceed.

First of all, the gifts (domata) here enumerated are in view of the perfecting of the saints, which is the great primary object, branching out into the work of the ministry, and the edifying the body of Christ, as connected with it. Now, there, at once, may be discerned the key, or divine reason for presenting here certain gifts and not others. Here we have nothing, for instance, about speaking in a tongue; neither have we any mention of miracles. Why so? What have they to do with the perfecting the saints? The reason seems to me clear and adequate. Those gifts for signs were of all consequence in their place; but how could a tongue or a miracle perfect a saint? We see, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that, instead of perfecting, they on the contrary became a very great snare for the saints. No doubt the Corinthians were carnal, and therefore they were like children amused with a new toy -with that which was, indeed, an engine of power. And we know how great a danger this is, just in proportion to our unspirituality. We have the very solemn lesson, that even the greatest powers and most astounding manifestations of the Holy Ghost in man cannot give spirituality, and do not minister to the edification of the saints necessarily in any way; but, if there be a carnal mind, they become a positive means of the soul exalting itself, turning away from the Lord, losing its balance, and bringing discredit upon that which bears the name of Christ on the earth. In this Epistle, however, God is occupied with His counsels of grace in Christ for the church, beginning primarily with the saints as such. He always takes up the question of individuals before He deals with the church. And how blessed and wise is this! He does not begin with the body of Christ, and then end with the perfection of the saints. This would be, very likely, our thought, but it is very far from His. He first puts forward the perfecting of the saints, and then shows us the work of the ministry, and the edifying the body of Christ Thus, the true explanation of the passage is, that it is the development of Christ’s love to the Church. His eye is fixed upon the blessing of souls. It is Christ not only gathering in, but building up-causing them to grow up to Him in all things. Accordingly, He gives the gifts which are of grace suited to this end. "He gave some apostles and some prophets."

These are the two gifts which the second chapter of this epistle shows to be at the foundation, we may say, of this new building, the church of God. Thus) in Ephesians 2:20, we read, "They were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." Evangelists, evidently, are not the foundation; neither are pastors and teachers; but prophets, as well as apostles, are. And we can easily understand this. We can see that, as God was introducing into the world a wholly new system when He set His Son at His own right hand-a new work of God in the church, so there was a new word which had to accompany this work, whereby He would act upon the saints so as to give them to grow up to the perfecting of His will and the glory of His Son in this unprecedented thing, the church of God. Accordingly then we have the foundation laid, and here not Christ alone. Of course He is, in the greatest and highest sense, the foundation - "Upon this rock I will build my church:" the confession of His own name, His own glory as the Son of the living God, is this unquestionably. But still. as the means not only of revealing the mind of God touching the church, but also particularly of laying down with authority the landmarks of His husbandry in the earth-the church of God, the apostles and prophets were thus used. To distinguish them the former were characterized by an authority in action, the

prophets by giving out according to God His mind and will about this great mystery.

It is hardly worth while to disprove the notion that the prophets here refer to the Old Testament. The phrase "apostles and prophets" is strictly limited to those that followed Christ. Had there been the inverse order-prophets and apostles, there might have been some shadow of reason for this idea; but the Spirit of God, in His wisdom, has taken care to exclude the thought. The work spoken of is altogether new. The apostles and prophets seem to be expressly introduced in this order. But in Ephesians 3:1-21 a decisive reason is furnished by the Holy Ghost. It is written in Ephesians 3:5 that the mystery of Christ, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" so that we have there with the most perfect clearness riot only the same order still preserved, but the positive expression "now revealed." The prophets of the Old Testament, therefore, are necessarily excluded. These prophets are of the New Testament as well as the apostles. But more than this, let me make the remark 'before going farther, that this character of ministry was altogether new. When our Lord was upon earth, no doubt there was more or less preparative action for it. He sent out first twelve apostles; then He sent out seventy to carry a final message to His people. All this was a thing never found in any age previously. It was wholly without precedent. on the earth-an activity of love that went out with a blessing to others. God Himself had not done it; for the solemn word by a prophet, and the secret action of His grace before, are too distinct to be confounded with it. Who had ever seen or heard such a thing as a Man on earth gathering men to Himself first, and sending out from Himself afterwards a message of love. the glad tidings (not yet, of course, in the fulness which was afterwards imparted when the great work of redemption was done, but at any rate the blessed news) of the King on God's part of the kingdom of heaven on the earth? This is what the Lord did on earth: He sent out disciples or apostles with the message of the kingdom. And no doubt it was in man's eyes a strange and to faith a blessed thing, suitable only to Him who had divine grace as well as divine authority, worthy of and reserved for the Lord Jesus here below. But it is remarkable that in Ephesians 4:1-32 the earthly part of our Lord's action is left completely out, and the gifts here spoken of are beyond controversy dated from the ascension of the Lord, and shown to hinge on it. Do I mean to deny that the apostles were included-the twelve, or, strictly speaking, the eleven along with the one supplied to fill the place of him that was cut off ? In no wise; but nevertheless their earthly call and mission are quite passed by. We can all understand that the Lord as Messiah might prepare a mission suited to Israel, as I have no doubt that "the twelve" had this distinctly as its reference; for the twelve apostles naturally answer to the twelve tribes. The sitting on twelve thrones, spoken of in connexion with them also in Matthew 20:1-34, clearly confirms the thought. What hinders these same men afterwards from becoming the vessels of a heavenly gift? Thus we can recognize in the earlier apostles a sort of double relationship. There was a link with Israel which was conferred by the Lord when He was upon earth in the midst of His people, dealing with them; but a new place became theirs when the Lord ascended on high. But besides the Lord took care to break in upon this Israelitish form and order, and the apostleship of St. Paul becomes an event of cardinal importance in the development of the ways of God, because therein all thought of Jerusalem, all reference to the tribes of Israel, is dropped, and that takes its place which is clearly extraordinary in all its circumstances and heavenly in source and character. More particularly this was plain, that the Lord made manifest what was really true with regard to the others, that they on the day of Pentecost received that gift of apostleship which was suited to the heavenly work which they were afterwards to have, in addition to their previous

earthly call and work. Apart from and towering over the twelve stood the apostle Paul, bringing out into the utmost prominence the Principle that his apostolic mission was heavenly thing, entirely and exclusively such as far as he was concerned, Therefore he was the fitted person to say, as it was of course by the Spirit of God that he did say, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The glory of the Messiah on the earth fades away for the time in a deeper and brighter glory, the heavenly glory of Him who is now at the right hand of God. It is the same Christ, the same blessed One, without doubt, but it is not the same glory; and more than this, it is a better and more enduring glory. It is the glory that is suited to the new work of God in His Church, because it is the glory of its Head. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in him self, and shall straightway glorify him"

Thus, the church being a heavenly body, and Christ Himself, its Head, being in the actual and fullest sense a heavenly person, ministry takes a heavenly shape: and these gifts which flow from Him are its first expression. Hence, then, we have the clear intimation from the scripture before us that these gifts from Christ on high axe heavenly in their character and source.

Another thing also may be noticed by the way. If we take the bestowal of these gifts as dating from the ascension of Christ, where is there room left for the hand of man? Where can you insert that preliminary ceremonial on which tradition lays so much stress? Who ordained the apostles for their heavenly work? Who laid hands upon them, as authoritatively installing them in that high office? You will say that unquestionably the Lord called them when He was here "in the days of His flesh." He did call them for their mission to Israel; and when risen, but still on earth, He charged them to disciple the nations. (Matthew 10:28) But what hands of man did He employ in setting them apart to their proper heavenly work? Will any believer breathe the thought that this was an imperfection in their case? Did the new work of God, based on a dead and risen and ascended Saviour, and carried on by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, want anything for its due commencement? If there is no appearance then of that rite of laying on of hands, which some count not merely desirable, but essential for all that minister from the highest to the lowest grade, how comes this strange omission? Who will venture to impeach the regimen of Christ? Will any zealots for "holy orders," as men speak, affirm or insinuate that the Lord did not know better than they what became His own glory in His chief ministers? Let them beware of their theories and their practice, if either lead them to become "judges of evil thoughts." In truth, the Lord took care, now that it was a question of a new and heavenly testimony, not absolutely to abolish that ancient sign of blessing, but to break in upon and leave no excuse for the earthly order so easily abused by man. Hence, as if for the purpose of manifesting yet more distinctly the vast change which was come in the case of him who styles himself emphatically " minister of the church" (Colossians 1:1-29), there is no derivation from the twelve apostles that were before him. On the contrary, from His own place in heavenly glory the Lord calls one who was not going up to Jerusalem but rather from it; one who had no connexion with the apostles-nay, so much their enemy, that most stood in doubt of him, after he was arrested by sovereign grace in the midst of his determined systematic hatred of Christianity and persecution of all who bore the name of Jesus. What a proof that not only the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was of the pure and rich mercy of God, but that his apostolate sprang from the same source and bore the same stamp as the salvation which reached him! Thenceforward he becomes the characteristic symbol, as he was the most distinct and abundant

testimony, of the grace that is now not saving only but choosing vessels and fitting them as instruments for the active blessing of mankind, and especially of the church of God. It was the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God calling and sending an apostle to the church, a chosen vessel unto Himself, to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel; but first taken out from both Jew and Gentile and then sent to them. (Acts 26:17.) The same principle embraced the other apostles no doubt: because they on the day of Pentecost were made gifts of grace in the highest degree to the church from the now ascended Lord, its Head But there is fresh and brighter light in the case of Paul, who was not more truly "as one born out of due time," compared with all those that went before, than he furnishes in the strongest colours the unmistakable intimation of the mind and will of the Lord as to the future. But then it will be objected that after all there was a miracle in Paul's conversion and call, which takes the case out of just application to ordinary ministry. A miracle most striking and significant there was, when the Lord in glory revealed Himself as the Jesus he was persecuting in the members of His body. Notwithstanding it rested mainly on the apostle's testimony; and there were not wanting, even in the church of God and among his own converts, it would seem, those who questioned the apostleship of Paul. His call far from Jerusalem, his isolation from the other apostles, the very fulness of grace manifested toward him, the emphatic heavenly stamp imprinted on his conversion and testimony, all tended to make the case peculiar and irregular and unaccountable, wherever the old earthly order so prevailed as to cast suspicion on any display of the Lord's ways beyond or different from the past. Personally a stranger to the Lord during His manifestation here below, there was no question of his candidateship, like a Joseph or a Matthias, on the ground of his having companied with the twelve from the baptism of John till the ascension. There was no decision by lot in his instance, nor any formal numbering with the twelve. He was a witness of Christ's resurrection no less than the rest, yet it was from no sight of Him after His passion upon earth. He had seen the Lord, but it was in heaven. His was the gospel of the glory of Christ no less than of God's grace. Thus carefully was the great apostle made the witness of non-succession, that is of a ministry direct from the Lord independently of man! No doubt the highest expression of that ministry was in Paul, who thenceforward becomes the most illustrious exemplar of its source and character.

Allow me also to put another question. Who ordained the prophets of the New Testament? when and how and by whom were they appointed! who ever heard of hands being laid upon their heads I Search the New Testament through, if you wish the best proof that the notion is unfounded. Let me come to the point at once, and affirm farther, that neither prophets nor any other of these classes were installed of man after that fashion. Here we have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers: can you show me a single instance among these classes where the individual was called by human authority? Is it denied then that there was such a form of blessing as the laying on of hands in the New Testament? For my part, I accept the fact not only in its apostolic application to the sick and to those who had not yet received the Spirit, but also in its connexion with our subject. The question is as to its scriptural use? Let me ask, When were hands ever laid on any save to confer a gift by the power of the Spirit, or to commend those already gifted to God's grace in a special work, or formally to assign men to the charge of secular work? It is clear, for example, that Philip, along with his six companions, had hands laid upon him; but was it for his work as preaching the gospel? On the contrary, he was one of the seven men chosen "to serve the tables," in order that the apostles might not be distracted from prayer and the ministry of the word. "The seven" thereon were ordained to be employed in the external service of the church.

Apart from this, the Lord was pleased to send him forth in the proclamation of the word here and there; as an evangelist naturally would be a wanderer, not according to the meaning of the word so much as the exigencies of the work.

Hence, when the persecution about Stephen broke out and scattered those in Jerusalem, Philip had a new task which had nothing to do with his local duties as one of the seven. His diaconal service would station him at Jerusalem, to take care of the poor, for this was the purpose for which he was ordained; whereas his preaching Christ flowed from a gift of that character, not from ordination. In fact as far as the New Testament speaks-and it speaks fully and precisely-no one was ever ordained by man to preach the gospel. Hands were laid by the apostles upon Philip like the rest, after he was chosen by the multitude, and thus he was appointed to take charge of the tables; for the scripture, perhaps because of a certain peculiar state of things at Jerusalem, does not positively give the title of "deacon" in this case, though one does not deny its general justice, for there was something akin in their duties.

It is certain therefore that whether we look at an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist, or a pastor and teacher, or either of these last, there was no such ministry instituted for the church, which itself existed not, until after our Lord's ascension; and in none of these cases was there the laying on of hands as the initiatory sign or inauguration of these ministers. All admit the imposition of hands in certain cases, ordinary or exceptional. The exaggeration of clericalism should not hinder the Christian from being perfectly fair in dealing with this and every other question. There is nothing that will dispose of prevalent traditions so readily and conclusively as searching and submitting to scripture. There is full and clear instruction there, the effect of which is to confute all that tends to exalt man and lower Christ, whatever support men may try to extract from the word of God for selfish ends. It is outside the light of inspiration that all these errors live; once let that in, and it will soon be seen that the Holy Ghost is not providing for the worldly honour of man on earth, but for glorifying Christ in heaven.

What, then, is the genuine meaning and scope of Acts 13:1-52? It has long been the well-known stock passage which theological controversialists are wont to cite for ordination in general. Some insist on it as warranting their "three orders" of bishops, priests, and deacons; others allege it as decisive for parity of ministers, whether Presbyterian or Congregational. The Episcopalian points with triumph to Barnabas and Paul in the first rank; to Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen in the second; and to Mark in the third (as, after the dispute with Barnabas, to Paul, Silas, and Timothy respectively).*(1) This is substantially true and sound, far preferable to Calvin's remarks (Inst. Iv., iii. 14): "Why this separation and laying on of hands, after the Holy Spirit had attested their election, unless that ecclesiastical discipline might be preserved in appointing ministers by men? God could not give a more illustrious proof of His approbation of this order, than by causing Paul to be set apart by the Church, after He had previously declared that He had appointed him to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. The same thing we may sea in the election of Matthias. As the apostolic office was of such importance that they did not venture to appoint any one to it of their own judgment, they bring forward two, on one of whom the lot might fall, that thus the election might have a sure testimony from heaven, and at the same time the policy of the Church might not be disregarded." The truth is, an to the case of Matthias, it was before the mission of the Holy Ghost, and there was no question of the Church's policy or election either; but by the lot the choice between the two was cast, in the Jewish form (Proverbs 16:33), into the sole disposal of the Lord.

Only examine the passage, and the more closely you do so, the better will you be enabled to judge how little it countenances, how strongly it condemns, every scheme of ordination which men attempt to base upon it. In the church that was at Antioch there were, it is said, "certain prophets end teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch and Saul." That is, we have these five prophets and teachers, while engaged in serving the Lord with fasting, made the object of an important communication from the Holy Ghost inspecting two of their number. " Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Barnabas had been for years actively engaged in the work of the Lord; and so had Saul of Tarsus ever since his conversion. Not only was he set apart in the providential purpose of God before his birth, as we see in Galatians 1:1-24, but he was called by the grace of God from the time when he was struck down on the way to Damascus. But the Spirit of God now separates him to a special mission. It is clear that this is not an announcement of the ministerial call of either Barnabas or Saul: scripture is arrayed against scripture by all who say so. The previous part of the Acts proves that Barnabas was long blessed in the ministry of the word within and without, and that Saul especially was bold and mighty in the work. The latter, indeed, from the first, brought out the Sonship of Christ in a way which we have no reason to believe any other had done up to that time, as we learn from that very chapter which gives us his conversion. The notion therefore that ordination was the question in Acts xiii. is most manifestly false. But how comes it that the theologians fail to notice that their determination to see ordination here destroys their respective systems, as well as contradicts other scriptures? Who was it ordained Paul and Barnabas, and to what? These are called apostles in the very next chapter (Acts 14:4); and hence evidently the notion of ordaining Paul and Barnabas is quite unfounded, unless those whom God has set second and third in the church can ordain the first. (1 Corinthians 12:28.) Again, the truth is that there is not the smallest reason to call Mark a deacon at that time. He accompanied them as their "minister" (probably to get lodgings, to invite people to come and hear the word, and in general to serve them on their missionary tour); but, as for his being their chaplain, it is mere illusion. John Mark preaching to Paul and Barnabas! The truth is that he then turned out an indifferent help in the work, because he soon tired and went home to his friends. However this only by the way. But it is transparent, that those who turn the account into the ordination of Paul and Barnabas involve the consequence that it is actually the inferior class conferring the highest ministerial rank upon them! If they were not apostles before, they have nothing to allege in support of the dignity but the sandy foundation that the act of laying on of hands upon them at Antioch conferred the apostolate! In this case it was an equal, if not a lower grade, giving a higher rank to those above themselves. Thus, it is evident that the notion is altogether unfounded. Is it insinuated then that there was no meaning or value in this laying on of hands? That would be indeed to treat the word of God unwarrantably. It was a solemn and precious act of fellowship with these honored servants of Christ. It was an act not only valid then but valid now. Bat there was no pretence of conferring anything whatever. The real drift of the transaction is expressed in Acts 14:26. It is said, that they "sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." Such was the aim of the laying on of hands by their companions in labour at Antioch; for it may not have been the brethren generally, but only those engaged in the work, and I wish to make every concession that is fair to those who desire to draw the utmost from the passage. But the meaning of the act is neither more nor less than a sign of blessing, or of fellowship with those going forth on their new

missionary errand. It was probably repeated. (See Acts 15:40.) The laying on of hands was of the most ancient date in the Old Testament. Thus Genesis gives it in the case of a father or grandfather laying his hands on the children; and so in the New Testament we have the frequent use of it where there was no pretence of conferring any ministerial chameter. It was a sign of recommendation to God by one who was conscious of being so near to God that be could count upon His blessing. The Lord takes up little children, lays His hands upon them, and blesses them; and so with the sick too when healing some. It was not at all a question of ecclesiastical order in these instances. No doubt there were cases where hands were laid on for the purpose of inaugurating an office.

It is often thought that the same rite was used in instituting elders, as in Acts 15:22-23, where the apostles Barnabas and Paul were "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." But this is an assumption. It is not exactly said here or anywhere else that hands were laid upon the presbyters. This silence, if the fact were so, is remarkable. It may have been probably the case; but scripture takes care never to say it. We have the statement that hands were laid upon deacons. We know that an elder was a much more important personage in the church than a deacon. People may reason and speculate; but I have no doubt that the Spirit of God, seeing the superstition that was attached to the form of laying on of hands, took care never to connect the two things together in a positive manner The passage which some conceive does so is in the first Epistle to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:22), where Paul tells him to "lay hands suddenly on no man." But the object of this is too vague for a sure conclusion, the connexion being by no means certain. There is no allusion to elders expressly after 1 Timothy 5:17-19. Thus in 1 Timothy 5:21 we read, "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." How can one suppose elders in particular referred to there? I see a general description of his work in 1 Timothy 5:20-21, after which comes the exhortation on which so much has been built--" Lay bands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins." It is possible that there may be included in this an allusion to the danger of haste and carelessness in accrediting an elder, but the language is so comprehensive as to take in, it seems to me, every me which might call for the imposition of hands.*(2) But supposing that it did certainly refer to elders and that hands were laid on these functionaries as well as on deacons, the important and undeniable fact in scripture is, that elders were never ordained except by persons duly authorized, who had a real commission from the Lord for the purpose. Now many may imagine that this is a concession fatal to the free recognition and exercise of gifts. They may think it yet more strange to find that those who contend for the largeness of the action of the Holy Ghost lay the utmost stress upon a divine commission and a definite authority. But be assured that the two things go together, where they are held according to God. None will be found to be more tenacious of godly order than the very persons who plead most for the rights of the Holy Ghost in the church. My assertion is, that in this very matter of ordination Christendom has missed God’s mind and will, and is ignorantly but not without sin fighting for an order of its own, which is mere disorder before God. If scripture is to decide, the common plan of ordination for all who minister to those without and within is a departure from the order of God prescribed in His word.

Undoubtedly in the case of "the seven" (Acts 6:1-15) you do find apostolic appointment. The great point in this case was, that there the congregation elected and the apostles solemnly appointed. But it was no more than the congregation choosing fit persons to take care of their poor, etc. Nothing could be more proper. It shows the condescending goodness of God towards those who gave of their substance and those who received it. If the church contribute, it is according to His will that the Church should have a voice in the selection of those in whom they have just confidence that they will distribute in God's sight not only with good conscience and feeling but wisely. Thus one sees here a conspicuous instance of God's wise and gracious care. The multitude chose such men as they deemed most suited to the exigency. But even here the mere choice of the believers did not give them that place in itself; for if all chose, none but the apostles appointed them over the business, secular as it was. The principle tells in a directly opposite way with regard to the elders, and yet more as to the ministerial gifts of Christ. We have no such thought expressed as a congregation choosing elders--never in any part of scripture. On the contrary we have the fact that the apostles went about; and where assemblies were already formed, in which were persons possessed of certain spiritual and moral qualifications which pointed them out to their spiritual and experienced eyes as suitable for eldership, such they chose. Among these antecedents those who desired the office must be persons of good report, and who, if married, had only one wife. There were many individuals brought to the faith of Christ in those days who had several wives. This was a scandal and sure to be felt the more as Christian truth spread. Such a direction showed what was in the mind of God. One could not rightly refuse the confession of a man who had two or three wives, if he were converted; but he must not expect to become an older or bishop; be could not be a suitable local representative of the church of God.

Again take the case of a man who had children brought up badly. Perhaps this neglect may have been before he was converted; perhaps after conversion he may have entertained the evil notion of leaving the children to themselves on the faithless plea that God, if He saw fit, would convert them some time or other. Such mistakes have been made, and miserable have been the results. Whatever the cause of an unruly house, its head could not be a bishop. No matter what might be his spiritual gifts, they could not countervail ; no such man could be charged with the oversight of God's assembly. For such an office it was not so much a question of gifts as of moral weight. A man might be a prophet, a teacher, an evangelist-his disorderly wife or children would not nullify his gifts; but he ought not to be made an elder, unless he brought up his children with godliness and gravity, and himself walked with a good report among those without.

Thus the Lord stringently required in such an official these moral qualifications as -well as spiritual capacity for his work. Even if one possessed all these things, lie was not an elder because he had them unless duly authorized. He needed to be ordained; be must have a legitimate appointment besides. And in what did this consist? Manifestly the whole value turns upon a valid appointing power. In what consisted that competent authority? Are we to set up or to imagine one? It must be according to the Lord and His word. Now the Scripture allows of no valid appointing power except an apostle or an envoy who had from an apostle a special commission for the purpose. Where is there such a delegate now that can produce an adequate (that is, an apostolic) commission for the work of ordaining? You never saw, neither do I ever expect to see, the like. The fact is, that the word of God nowhere hints at the continuance of an ordaining power. It demonstrates in the most explicit manner that, after the Lord set up churches here and there, when He established local

functionaries in each church, apostolic appointment or choice and this only was what He stamped with His approval. The requisite qualifications are clearly laid down; but the fact is equally clear that none but an apostle or an apostolic delegate was warranted to nominate the elders to their office, and not a word about perpetuating that power of appointment after the apostles left the earth. We have an apostle writing, not to the church or churches to choose elders, but to one who was specially charged to do this task. Yet even to Titus there is not a word about another continuing the task; nay, not a hint that Titus himself was to continue it after the apostle was dead. Neither was Titus authorized to appoint where he pleased, but the apostle assigns him the sphere of his commission. Being a special envoy of the apostle, Titus was doubtless a teacher and preacher. But here there was a definite region where he had the duty Of Ordaining elders in every city. Titus was responsible to do this in Crete; but nothing is said of the establishment of elders elsewhere or at other times nor of his permanent continuance there. On the contrary-and this would be a strange direction for a diocesan-he was to be diligent to come to the apostle at Nicopolis. He was not to be left at Crete.

It is evident that such directions as these from the apostle to Titus afford no warrant for others to appoint elders now. This is pure assumption, whereas all depends on a valid authority. Titus was apostolically commissioned and could produce an inspired letter of instructions to him personally. Who can today do anything analogous? "It must be so" is a poor and vain reason to him who respects due authority. It is easy to settle matters after a sort where this is allowed to pass; but, beloved friends, we want the word of God. Let me ask for a plain answer to the question, Do you believe that the word is perfect? Do you doubt whether the Lord, who cares for His own order in the church, did or did not foresee all the need and difficulty? Do you insinuate that He forgot anything of real value to us now? Do you suppose that He omitted to take into account the death of the apostles? He did nothing of the kind. The apostle speaks distinctly of his death (and more than one apostle too). He speaks of perilous times and the importance of scripture after he was gone; but not a thought about a line of successors to appoint afterwards, not a hint about bequeathing his powers in this case. To you who are commended to God and the word of His grace, to you who tremble at His word, is that silence nothing? To my own mind it is a fact not more surprising at the first blush than increasingly pregnant with meaning the more it is weighed.

Popery, despising this fact, assumes the contrary from human reason and is built upon this contrariety. Not that one cares to denounce any one system in Particular by name, save only to bring out the truth which shows the will of the Lord and proves the evil by the good. In truth every earthly system no matter how opposed it may become to the word of God, begins by adding something of its own to that word. The power of ordination attaches not to bishops but to apostles and their delegates, The moment you allow men the principle of development after the scripture canon closed, the moment you clothe with apostolic authority a body of officials who never were authorized divinely for the work undertaken, you are off the ground of faith in and deference to the word of God. The present practice has not the smallest foundation in scripture.

Indeed one may safely go farther and affirm not only that the ordination, of which people talk so much, before preaching and teaching Christ, is not a thing to be coveted in the present shape in which it is found among men, but that it is now a disorderly institution, a grievous dishonor to the Lord who gives ministerial gifts by the Spirit. In short it is a mere and sorry imitation of what is recorded in the word of God. Examine well, and you will soon find it does not even resemble what

we read of them God's word remains true, sure, and plain: only there once was a positive personal commission, armed with a certain apostolic authority either direct or indirect; and this you ought to have if you pretend to ordain elders as Titus did.

Permit me now to press another question. Which is the most scriptural course-to do what was always becoming in a Christian, or to copy an apostolic delegate? Which commends itself most to your conscience, to your heart, to your faith? We will suppose now in this place an assembly of God's children. They see in the word of God that beside the common privileges and duties of all saints, there were certain gifts for ministry, and that there were also certain offices which needed an apostle or his representative to fill them up. They would like to have them all of course; but what is to be done? Are they to neglect what was written to the assembly at Corinth or to the saints at Ephesus, and to ape what was not written to the church but to Timothy or Titus? Would it not be humbler to consult the word of God and inquire of Him, that they might learn what is His will concerning this matter? What do we see there? That as to the gifts of Christ they never required any sanction here below before their exercise; nay, they never admitted of human intervention. The only exception is where there was a positive power of the Holy Ghost conveyed by the laying on of the apostles hands. Fully do I admit that there was an exception in such circumstances. Timothy was designated by prophecies beforehand for the work to which the Lord called him. (Compare Acts 13:1-2.) Guided by prophecy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), the apostle lays his hands upon Timothy and conveys to him a direct power (charisma) by the Holy Ghost, suited to this special service he had to accomplish. Along with the apostle, the elders who were in the place joined in the laying on of their bands. But there is a difference in the expression the Spirit of God employs, which shows that the communication of the gift depended for effective agency not in any way on the elders but only the apostle. The particle of association (meta) appears where the presbytery are spoken of, that of instrumental means*(3) (dia) where the apostle speaks of himself. It was an apostle that communicated such a gift. Never do we hear of elders thus conferring a gift: it was not an episcopal function but an apostolic prerogative, either to communicate spiritual powers or to clothe men authoritatively with a charge. Hence it is admitted that in the peculiar case of Timothy there was by the laying on of apostolic hands a very special effect produced ; but who can do this now? Were this the claim (however one might desire to view, not indifferently but with the patience of God, the prevalent and superstitious perversion of a sign, admirable in itself when applied and understood scripturally), yet if any man now presumed to convey a spiritual power like an apostle, should one hesitate to call him an impostor? A mistaken course in assuming the rights of an earthly sovereign is or may be treason. What is it to pretend falsely to communicate the Holy Ghost or a distinct power of the Holy Ghost in the name of the Lord?

Beloved friends, it is a grave thing to trifle thus with the Spirit of God. There are those in our day whose ignorant boldness fears not to arrogate the right of conveying the Holy Ghost and ministerial power in this manner; but, thanks be to God, they an otherwise known to be fundamentally unsound, so that their influence over the faithful is inconsiderable. Then we have alas! the Eastern and Western bodies of Christendom, which are hardly less guilty. But among ordinary Protestants and especially among men of average Christian respectability, such pretensions are regarded with pity or horror. Even where the formularies as in the Anglican Communion approach fearfully near the precipice, the excuse is that their godly framers intended

no more than to impart fitting and scriptural solemnity to various offices in the church. I admit however, that the excuse is lame, and that it is hard to decide whether these most suffer in conscience who employ these very serious forms ecclesiastically without believing them, or those are most injured in faith who accept as divine pretensions which are doubtless more respect, ably connected and venerable but not better founded than those of a modem imposture. But the important truth on this subject to be seen is that these ministerial gifts were given by the Lord without any form further than that He warranted and sent them. Beware of disputing His will and wisdom. How is one to judge of the possession of a gift? Undoubtedly by its due exercise which finds an answer in the conscience. Let me ask you again, How do you know a Christian? When people talk theoretically, or discuss polemically, there are always great and numerous difficulties in the way. But if YOU went for practical reasons to a godly clergyman Or dissenting minister, he could give you ample means of judging who are Christians in what he calls his flock. Listen to many a man on his knees and, if he be it Christian, he will speak as a child to his God and Father; but hear him on his legs, and he will perhaps controvert, without knowing it, what he has been just saying in prayer, till on his perverse principle he cannot tell. whether God is his Father or not How happy that there are such seasons of devotion where people speak with simple-hearted truthfulness! Away from their systems let them speak to God, and their true characters and even condition will soon be manifest a general rule. Thus the fact is that in practice Christians have little difficulty in knowing for the most put who are converted and who are not. There may be a certain number of doubtful souls of whom we need not speak now. Let a believer be sent for to a sick man; is he wholly at a loss how to speak! Does he not seek as soon as possible to gather whether the sick man has peace in Christ, or is anxious about his soul, or whether he has ever realized his lost and guilty condition? If the believer finds no sense of sin, he will solemnly warn of judgment and set before that soul the cross, imploring him to receive Christ; or he will exhort him to rest in Christ because he is assured of his faith.

If then so little haze really rests on the question who are and who are not children of God, think you that the possession of a gift is a question so obscure and doubtful? Some may have more gift than others. But the gift of teaching implies the power of bringing out the word of God and applying it aright. Again take the power of ruling-for there is such a thing as rule in the church, and I hope none here present imagine it is gone-he who has the gift of rule seeks to exercise it of course according to the word of God. Scripture knows nothing of a blind obedience. The conscience is awakened, the heart set free and attracted to Christ. To these is the appeal of Christian ministry. It is not the blind leading the blind, nor is it the seeing leading the blind, but rather the seeing leading the seeing. Christ gives liberty as well as life, and this withal responsible to do the will of God. Therefore it is that according to the intention of God His children do not well to contrive systems to escape difficulties; they need faith to go through them with God. Let them prove their gifts, if indeed they have gifts from the Lord, by real power. There may be severe trials and difficulties now and then. Even Paul himself had to do with doubters of his apostleship, and this within the church, and among his own children in the faith. What true-hearted man should be downcast if he is slighted? But the time came when the Lord vindicated His servant, and when the self-will and pride which refused a divine gift was utterly put to shame, if the heart was not brought back to lowly thankfulness. The chief mistake we are apt to make is in the way of impatience; we do not allow time and space for the Lord to work: and that lack of patient waiting only defers the wished-for solution, because it makes the difficulty so much the greater. But as to the discernment of a

ministerial gift for preaching or teaching, it is in general plain and simple. If a brother stand up to speak in the Christian assembly without a gift from God, he will soon and painfully find it out. If self-judging, he will learn much from his own conscience; but he may quite sufficiently soon hear from others that which will make him understand that he has not a gift in the judgment of his brethren. But where there is really a gift is it not possible that prejudice may act, and this be refused? Certainly it may be so for a tin, e. Perhaps the speaker thinks too highly of his gift; perhaps be mistakes the character of it, and the right scene and time for its exercise; perhaps he is too exclusively occupied with his line of things, and too urgent or anxious to assert his gift. All this may be, often is, and always creates difficulty. But the truth remains that what is of God approves itself in the long run. My own experience, as far as my limited range of observation and knowledge goes, inclines me to think that the children of God are prone to make too much rather than too little of gift. In the present state of the church there is but a feeble development of gift, and this is felt the more in proportion to spiritual intelligence and a true position. Do you wish to know your place fairly and fully? Look in confidence to God and search the word of His grace. Many things there are to hinder and to draw away: partly the effect of education, partly the difficulty of finding an honest livelihood, especially if a man has been a professional preacher. If he abandons (not preaching but) that profession as an unscriptural innovation, he for the most part loses everything, even his bread, unless he have private means of his own. Hence it is that the inducements for such an one to remain where he is we enormous; the difficulties of coming out at the word of the Lord are incalculable. The power of God alone can accomplish the change and sustain the. soul in peace and praise, "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

While we may be sure that the word and Spirit of God give us clearly the true position for the individual Christian and for the Christian assembly, we ought not (I think, as things are,) to expect a great variety and strength in the gifts of the Lord’s grace. Of course He can work sovereignly, and assuredly we ought to be most thankful for what is given. No doubt also there are gifts distributed somewhere or other. There an gifts of Christ in members and ministers of the national establishments, I do not question; there are His gifts likewise in the dissenting societies; and are we to suppose there am none of His gifts of grace in Romanism itself? For my part I cannot doubt that there are. Who would, who could, reject the testimony of facts that there have been persons therein-such as Martin Boos, for instance, not very long ago-used for the conversion of -sinners and for the helping on of saints in some degree? And are such men not gifts of Christ to the church-as truly gifts though in the false position as if they were out of it? Their being Romanists - Romish priests-does not destroy His grace, whatever we may feel as to their faithfulness. The fact is that the Lord gives according to His own will by the Holy Ghost, and we ought to acknowledge these gifts wherever they are. If a man be a dissenter, whether a minister or one of the people, in either case I am satisfied he is in a false position. It is not a question of a feeling of dislike to dissent, if one believe its foundations to be unscriptural. I ask the forbearance of any dissenters who may be here in affirming calmly and solemnly my conviction that dissent is unsound in its distinctive principles; a thorough contradiction of the very character of the church as one body; and in the popular call and choice undermining ministry as a divine and permanent institution flowing from the Saviour’s grace. Dissent is religious radicalism, which essentially opposes God’s will as much as and perhaps more than any other principle. The proofs are too plain. Dissent substitutes the election of the people in the place of the sovereign choice of the Lord Jesus Christ whether

immediate or mediate. But how is the truth better secured in the national bodies? By patronage, clerical, lay, or governmental! And the painful apology for this systematic self-will is that the men nominated by the government of the day, or a landlord, or a college, or a corporation, have gone through the usual forms! Is there the faintest resemblance between this worldly machinery and the divine system of spiritual gifts from Christ set forth in Ephesians 4:1-32? I see only One who has ascended up on high. Are you looking to any other person? to any other kind of ascent? to any other heaven for the favours you crave after I appeal to you as Christians. Do you value the word of God? Do you cherish that word only for the salvation of your souls? or do you confide in the same word and Spirit for guidance as to ministry and church office? What subjects more simply belong to the Lord? For what do we need Him more? As a believer I surely feel the want of God's word for my daily walk, no matter what my circumstances or sphere or duties. And do you, can you believe that the word that lives and abides for ever does not concern itself with so grave, delicate, and spiritually needful a thing as the ministry of the word; or that, if it speak thereon, you are not bound to hear and bow? The sum of what has been said is then that these two great principles are revealed in scripture and recognized by the early church: namely, the Lord giving gifts of His own grace which did not require human intervention; next also a system of authority which did require that intervention, as in the appointment of elders by the apostles or persons commissioned to do their work in certain cases. It is clear that we have neither apostles living on the earth, nor representatives, like Titus, charged by an apostle to do quasi-apostolic work. The consequence is, that now, if subject to the word of God, you cannot and do not look for elders in their precise official form. If any man allege these can be, it might be well to hear his grounds from Scripture. What has been produced is in my judgment amply sufficient to disprove it. You cannot have persons formally and duly appointed to this office, unless you have a power formally and duly authorized of the Lord to appoint them. But you have not that indispensably needful power to authenticate elders: this is your fatally weak point. You have neither apostles nor functionaries commissioned by the apostles to act in their stead ; and therefore the entire system of appointment breaks down for want of competent authority. Dare you say of your elders that the Holy Ghost has made them bishops? You have none really, ie., scripturally entitled to appoint.

What then? Are there none suitable to be elders or bishops, if there were apostles to choose them? Thank God there are not a few. You can hardly look into an assembly of His children without hearing of some grave elderly men who go after the wanderers, who warn the unruly, who comfort those that are cast down, who counsel, admonish, and guide souls. Are not these the men who might be elders, if there were a power existing to appoint them? And what is the duty of a Christian man as things now are in the use of what remains I say not to call them elders, but surely to esteem them highly for their work's sake, and to love and acknowledge them as those who are over the rest of their brethren in the Lord. I ask you solemnly, beloved friends, do you acknowledge any to be over you in the Lord?-any living servants of the Lord to take the lead in Him I Do you imagine such a recognition as this an offence against the principles of God? Rather let me warn you against picking out certain favourite texts from God's word to which only you pay obeisance. If we do so, we are as far as in us lies building up a sect no less truly than our neighbours. On the other hand, beware of adopting that human invention-apostolic succession -to escape dilemmas. If tinder the fiction of succession we dare to call men apostles who are not, the Lord in due time will not fail to challenge our word or act, and demand, who entitled us to endorse such an unheard of thing as this? who gave us leave, without His word, virtually to acknowledge

this or that as an apostolic man by accrediting his claim to ordain? It is evident that to ordain elders is, however well-meant, an imitation of what apostles did, and, if unauthorized, not only without validity but an unwitting usurpation of an authority which reverted and now pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Thus in the present state of the church, the difference between a true position and a false one is not at all that one has got a due ordination and the other wants it. In truth no body on earth possesses it now. Do you acknowledge the want? or are you trying to cover the humiliating but evident fact that you have not the only ordaining power which scripture sanctions? And yet you go on ordaining, though you have neither apostle nor apostolic deputy! Which course is most orderly? To do as you do; or to acknowledge oar actual lack, and carry ourselves accordingly before God and man-to confess that we want apostles or their delegates, and therefore that we cannot have presbyters duly chosen and formally appointed? There are, I repeat, men endowed with such qualifications as would render them eligible, so far as we can pretend to say, if there were a competent ordaining power, And the general principle of Scripture (Romans 12:1-21) manifestly is, that he who had the gift of ruling, or of taking the lead among the saints, is bound to we it with diligence (as the teacher, exhorter, and others, are responsible to discharge their respective functions), even if circumstances made legitimate appointment to a charge impracticable. But subjection to the word of God discovers readily that a state of things substantially analogous to our own defective condition is provided for in Scripture. The Lord in His wisdom let such wants be felt in the early church. Thus the apostle was inspired to write epistles to churches where there were no elders; as for instance the epistles to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians. The last was notoriously a dis. orderly church, and elders might have been thought useful there, Nevertheless not the least word or hint about elders there is heard from first to last. Had elders been then in their midst, would not the apostle have called them to account, and blamed their want of godly care and diligence in oversight? Of this there is not a trace. Further, we know it was not the practice of the apostles to constitute elders in an infant church. Where Paul and Barnabas chose elders for the disciples, it was in assemblies that had existed probably for years, and thus there bad been time for spiritual qualifications to be developed. But in a new assembly, where the saints were young comparatively, a certain time had to be allowed, so that those who were competent for such a work should be made evident, Accordingly it is rather a rare thing to read of the apostles choosing or appointing elders. On the other hand, in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, we have in the last chapter very important instruction given to the saints. They, too, are a similar instance of a young church, yet they were told to own those that laboured among them. Hence all this may be where presbyters are. not. Thus in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 the apostle writes, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake." The presence of elders is not requisite in order to have and to own those who are over us in the Lord. There is much of importance for us now in that Scripture, for we have elders no more than they. I think we ought to lay its exhortations to heart, There are within and without, not a few ill-instructed souls who hold the notion that, unless there be official appointment, they cannot have anybody over them in the Lord. This is all a mistake. No doubt, when a man was officially appointed, there was a definite guarantee in the face of the church given by an apostle or an apostolic man; and there was thereby no little weight given to those who were thus appointed. Such a sanction had great and just value in the church, and would be of consequence among the unruly. But none the less did God know how to provide instruction for assemblies where there was

not yet official oversight. How merciful for times when, for want of apostles, there could be no elders! But it will be noticed that the Corinthian assembly abounded in gift, though elders are seen nowhere among them. The Thessalonians do not appear to have possessed the same variety of outward power, while elders or bishops again are never hinted at. Yet at Corinth the household of Stephanas devoted themselves regularly (etaxan) to the service of the saints; and the apostle beseeches the brethren to submit themselves to such, and to every one that helped and laboured. The Thessalonians be prays to know those who laboured among them, and presided in the Lord, and admonished them. Evidently this did not depend upon their being apostolically appointed, which could hardly have been in their circumstances as lately gathered. It is founded upon that which after all is intrinsically better. if we must be content with one blessing out of two. Surely, if it comes to be a question between real spiritual power and outward office, no Christian ought to hesitate between them. To have the power and the office combine is no doubt the best of all, when the Lord is please to give both; but in those early days we see that individuals were often and rightly engaged in the work of the Lord before there could be the seal of an apostle, as it were, affixed; and such the apostle encourages and commends earnestly to the love and esteem of the saints before and independently of that sea. How precious that we can fall back on this principle now!

Even at Corinth and Thessalonica then those were raised up in the midst of the saints who showed spiritual ability in guiding and directing others. That was the work of those to whom one epistle exhorted subjection, and whom the other epistle commended as "over them in the Lord." Such men as these did not labour only; because some might be actively engaged in the Lord's work who might not be over others in the Lord. But these manifested power to meet difficulties in the church, and to battle with that which was ensnaring souls, and so to guide and encourage the weak and baffle the efforts of the enemy. They were not afraid to trust the Lord in times of trial and danger, and therefore the Lord used them, giving them power to discern and courage to act upon what they did discern. This was part of what fitted them to take the lead in the Lord. There were such at Thessalonica as well as at Corinth, and yet there is not the slightest intimation that they were regularly installed as elders, but on the contrary the strongest evidence that elders as yet had not been constituted in either place. The regular practice was to appoint elders after a certain time; indeed it could only be when the apostles came round, or sent an authorized delegate to choose fit persons and clothe them with a title before the church which none but the bad would dispute.

Need I observe how God had been graciously providing for the wants of His children? This subject will come definitely before us on the next occasion on which it will be my lot to address you. I will not therefore do more now than draw attention to His far-reaching wisdom in meeting the difficulties of the day, when a valid authority to ordain as the apostles did is not left on the earth. Not that His children are left without help; they have the same Lord and the same ever-present Spirit. Hence there is no need of some change or new invention to meet the difficulties of the day, but the return in faith to what was and is the will of the Lord; and this with intelligence of the actual state of the church, and the feelings which become it.

We have seen that, as the rule, the Lord alone gave these gifts of ministry: it depends upon His love to His church, His faithfulness to the saints. Is the Lord Jesus one whit less tender and true now than He was on the day of Pentecost? Who would insinuate it? Neither can I sympathize with those who look wistfully back on the earliest times, as if they only afforded scope for faithful souls.

No doubt a bright halo of grace -surrounds the scene where the Holy Ghost was first poured out on men with a simplicity and power which carried all along; but who was the spring and whence the energy which produced fruits so much the more wondrous when we think of the soil once so hard, and stubborn , and cold? Was it not the Lord acting for His own name by the Holy Ghost after He took the place, in risen and ascended glory, of giving gifts to men? Is not His grace as equal to these perilous times as He proved Himself when ushering in the mystery that was hid from ages? Are there saints to be perfected and ministerial work to be done? Does the body of Christ need to be built up? Then assuredly His gifts cannot fail till the work is done and all are brought into the unity of the faith; and the many adversaries and subtle snares and increasing perils will only draw the more upon the faithful love of the Lord of all. There is fulness of blessing in Christ for the church now as truly as then. Would that we but confided in Him more for every exigency! Are we then to disparage the truth or to doubt His grace by setting up some work of our hands, some calf of gold, as if we knew not what is become of Him who is gone on high? Far be it from God's children! Let me suppose you come together as God's assembly; you know not who is to speak, exhort, give thanks, pray. To unbelief this is but confusion. Certainly it looks unwise if I forget who is in the midst; it is unpromising if I do not believe that the Lord is there; but if assured that He, who has all power in heaven and on earth, loves and cherishes the church, and that the Holy Ghost, divine as He is, dwells with and in us, what need I fear? If this position is true for one saint, it is true for all. For my part I would not dare for a moment to stand upon any foundation which did not contemplate the whole length and breadth of the church of God, which did not in its faith and love go out to and embrace all the saints of God. Of course allowance must be made for exceptional states, as for persons guilty of sin that would require their exclusion (immorality, bad doctrine, and such like). But then if I know that this is the ground of the church according to Scripture, and that there was no other from the first taken and acted on by the holy apostles, the question is, Am I upon it? If I am called to labour in the word and doctrine, the Lord points me out the way. He opens the door which none can shut, He shuts and none can open. He finds a path for the feeblest of His pilgrims, and gives them courage, and makes it plain if they have to serve Him. Let us never doubt Him.

Bat may there not be a number of gifts? So much the better. If there are five or twice five gifted men in an assembly, let us thank the Lord: there is room for all. God forbid that we should sanction the novelty of each minister having his own little flock! Is it not a degradation for those who so speak, and for those so spoken of? No one behaves himself-nay, he does not even know how to behave himself-who does not bear the sense in his soul that the saints are "the flock of God." But evidently men do not speak of God's flock, if the divine ground of the church be forgotten: then it is a my flock," or "your flock." There is always room for the exercise of His gifts, whatever and however many they may be. Besides it is a strange time to fear that any could be spared as superfluous. The hour warns me that this subject must now be closed. My endeavour has been to expound and enforce the fundamental distinction between gifts and offices-the one, we saw, flowing from Christ on high, the other requiring appointment here below of men themselves authorized of the Lord for the purpose. As for gifts, they always remain sure as truly as Christ abides the head and source of supply. As for formal authorization, it is no longer possible because you have not a duly authorized power to appoint. All you can do in the direction of appointing, if you will do something, is to set up a paltry and rather arrogant imitation of the apostles and their delegates. But if you really love the Lord and value godly order, is it not your bounden duty in the

name of the Lord to acknowledge all His gifts in them privately and publicly in the work He has assigned them. If the gift be small, acknowledge the Lord in it as heartily as if it were a great one; and if it be a great one, acknowledge it as humbly and unjealously as a small one. On the other hand do not try to imitate what the apostles did; beware of pretending to do what ought not to be thought of unless there were apostolic power. And as to appointing deacons or choosing elders, scripture affords no warrant unless there was direct or indirect apostolic authority which does not now exist.

NOTE ON Acts 14:23.

Two opportunity is taken to furnish clear and conclusive evidence against the notion that the elders were chosen by the votes of the churches. The word cheirotoneo, if etymologically viewed, means to stretch out the hand; hence it was applied to election as we say by show of hands, and, generally, to choice or appointment without reference to the manner. Just so psephizomai starts from mere reckoning with pebbles, and was used for voting thus; then for voting in general, and lastly for the simple resolve or decision of the mind. The context, not the word in itself, shows which is to be understood. Hesychius explains cheirotonein by kathistan (compare Titus 1:5), psephizein; as Suidas for cheirotonhsantes gives eklexamenoi. With all this accords the usage of Aristophanes, as well as of AEschines, Demosthenes, etc., both in the narrow and literal sense, and in the general meaning of choice or designation. Appian, Dio Cassius, Plutarch, Lucian, and Libanius afford many examples where the word conveys no more than choosing. In these therefore the idea of popular suffrage with or without the hands stretched out it; quite excluded. But a few instances must be given from Hellenistic writers familiar with the Old Testament and contemporaneous with those inspired to write the New Testament. Thus Philo, (peri Ioshph) repeatedly uses ch of Pharaoh’s appointing Joseph his prime minister, and of Moses in the place to which he was chosen by God, and in his selection again of Aaron’s sons for the priesthood. go Josephus (ANT. vi. xiii. 9) speaks of Saul as "chosen king by God," upo tou Theou kecheirotonhmenon Basilia, and also (ANT. xiii. ii. 2) represents Alexander as writing to Jonathan in these terms, cheirotonoumen de se shmeron archierea ton Ioudaion. "We constitute thee this day high priest of the Jews." This may suffice to prove what we are to judge of Dr.J. Owen’s statement (Works, vol. xv. pp. 495, 496, Goold’s edition) that "Paul and Barnabas are said to ordain elders in the churches by their election and suffrage; for the word there used will admit of no other sense, however it be ambiguously expressed in our translation." Indeed, Beza, Diodati, Martin, and others had committed themselves to the same thing. Dr. G. Campbell, however, Presbyterian as he was, repudiated this version of the text, and (in his Prelim. Dias. x., Part v. § 7) pronounced per sufragia in the Latin of Beza "a mere interpolation for the sake of answering a particular purpose." If one do not endorse so strong a censure, the only alternative is that the gloss sprang from inadequate research and strong prejudice. The truth is that we need not go beyond the New Testament to demonstrate the error; for here as else. where, even when applied to the most rigid election, ch never means choosing by the votes of others, which it must mean to bear the alleged sense. Wherever the word occurs technically, the person intended does not take the votes of others merely, or preside as moderator of the election, but is the voter himself. Now in this ewe the subject in question is beyond doubt not the disciples but Paul and Barnabas. If any voted by stretching out their hands, it was the apostles only. Hence the authorized version rightly dropped "by election," the sense given in some of the older English and foreign translations which

had been too much influenced by the Genevese school and even Erasmus. The true meaning is that the apostles chose elders for the disciples in each assembly (not the disciples for themselves). And this is entirely confirmed by Acts 10:41 and 2 Corinthians 8:19; in one of which passages God is said to have chosen beforehand; in the other the churches are the choosers precisely as here the apostles. Neither God nor the assemblies gathered the votes of others: no more did Paul and Barnabas. But this is the sole testimony which has ever been imagined directly to favour the popular election of elders; and we have seen that the inference drawn is assuredly fictitious. For the matter in hand the usage of the word in the political or civil affairs of Greece is no evidence.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that ch does not mean the imposition of hands, for which scripture supplies another phrase never confounded with the word in question. But this confusion soon began to show itself in ecclesiastical authors, who not unfrequently employ cheirotonia where we might expect cheirothesia or ha epithesis. This error occurs in the so-called Apostolical Canons, Chrysostom, and subsequent writers; and it may have led the authorized translators to give "ordained" rather than "chose" or "designated." Bishop Bilson, in his "Perpetual Government of Christ's Church," is guilty not of this confusion only but of the strange error that "the elders" included "deacons." (See chaps. vii. and x.) But really the discord of commentators is almost past belief, unless one have read extensively and proved the fact by experience. Thus Hammond tries to extract from this verse the appointment of a single bishop to each church or city; whereas one might have inferred (without appealing to such incontestible proof to the contrary as Acts 20:17, Acts 20:28) that the plurality of the presbyters with the singular distributive was as strongly against him as language could make the cam short of an express contradiction. Had Hammond's idea been meant, nothing could have been easier than to have written presbyteron kat ekklesian or presbyterous kat ekklesias. On the other 'hand, if I may trust Mr. Elsley's report, Whitby opposes this ultra-Episcopaliainism on the equally untenable ground that then elders were such as had miraculous endowments either directly from God (as in Acts 2:1-47. Acts 4:1-37. Acts 9:1-43. Acts 10:1-48. Acts 11:1-30) or through an apostolic medium (as in Acts 8:1-40), and who had the care at first of the churches; not fixed ministers, but nearer to the apostles in rank. Can any statement be conceived more random and unfounded? The last and perhaps the worst specimen of this speculation I take from Calvin's Inst. iv. iii. 15, 16, where, according to the author, "Luke relates that Barnabas and Paul ordained elders throughout the churches; but he at the same time marks the plan or mode when he says it was done by suffrage. The. words are ch pr. k. ekkl. (Acts 14:23.) They therefore selected (creabant) two; but as whole body, as was the custom of the Greeks in elections, declared by a show of hands which of the two they wished to have.'' It has rarely been my lot to meet with a more glaring perversion of the facts and language of inspiration than this Passage exhibits, the refutation of which has been already anticipated. The new translation by H. Beveridge is purposely cited to out off cavil on that "we; and the original is given underneath for verification*(4) It is consolatory however to find that so untoward a construction was destined to no long existence; for its own author Mothers it though with reluctance in his commentary on the passage: - "Presbyterium qui hie collectivum nomen esse putant, pro collegio presbyterorum positum, recta sentiunt meo judicio." (Comment. in loc.) But the close of the chapter is still more full of perplexity and error. "Lastly it is to be observed, that it was not the whole people, but only the pastors who laid hands on ministers, though it is uncertain whether or not several always laid their hands. It is certain that in the case of the deacons it was done by Paul

and Barnabas, and some few others. (Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3) But in another place Paul mentions that he himself Without any others laid hands on Timothy. 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.' (2 Timothy 1:6.) For what is said in the epistle of the laying On Of the hands of the presbytery I do not understand, as if Paul were speaking of the college of elders. By the expression I understand the ordination itself (!); as if he had mid, Act so, that the gift which you received by the laying on of hands, when I made you a presbyter (!), may not be in vain." That apostolic hands appointed the seven men whom the multitude elected for the service of tables is clear. But scripture is silent whether imposition of hands was practised in the establishing of elders; and to me that silence seems admirably wise, even if in fact hands were imposed, as a divine provision against superstitious abuse. But what can be meant by the reference to Acts 13:3, connected with the allegation that Paul and Barnabas, etc., laid their hands on deacons? As for the notion that tou presbyteriou (1 Timothy 4:14) means not the elders as a body but eldership, and so is to be in sense dislocated from its evident and necessary connection with cheiron at the end of the verse and put in apposition with charismatos at the beginning, I maintain that the grammar is not more harsh and unexampled than the resulting doctrine is strange. Eldership in scripture is not a gift but a local charge. The modern defences of this system are of no more weight than those of older date. I have before me now Dr. Crawford's " Presbyterianism Defended," and Mr. Witherow's Inquiry; but they seem to me neither candid nor successful. The insuperable difficulty is that presbyters in scripture were never the ordaining power, though they might be associated with an apostle even in conveying an extraordinary gift as to Timothy, who is never represented as an elder. Further, the minister is as distinct from the elders in Presbyterianism as he is from the deacons in Congregationalism, and is a personage of as high moment in both systems as he is unknown to scripture. Again, to say that elders are not as distinctly laymen as the minister is clerical among Presbyterians is inconsistent with the notorious difference as to style of address, and salary. Both their systems err in maintaining that the office - bearers were chosen by the people; only those were whose duty it was to disburse funds or its equivalent. And if there was a plurality of elders (who were identical with the bishops), there was the fullest opening for all the gifts of the Lord, instead of that invention of men, the minister. Elders never ordained elders, but only apostles or their delegates; and gifted men required no ordination before exercising their ministry. Nor does Acts xv. resemble a church-court, ie. a represantative assembly of ministers and elders from all parts of the sphere of jurisdiction. This scripture shows us the apostles with universal authority from Christ, and the elders of the Church in Jerusalem, with the whole Church joining in the decision. Hence the decrees were delivered to be observed far beyond the cities of Jerusalem and Antioch, in total discord with Presbyterianism.

*(1) So Archbishop Potter, in the well-known text-book, "A Discourse on Church Government" (pp. 73, 74), if one may, without unkindness, specify a single defaulter out of the crowd. Yet the Archbishop evidently gave up the passage as bearing on ordination. "It cannot be proved that Paul and Barnabas were ordained at this time to be ministers. If they were ordained to any office or ministry, it must be that of apostles, not only because they are presently after this called apostles, before they received any farther ordination, but also because they were prophets before that time, as shown in one of the preceding chapters [chap. iii.]. But this is very unlikely, because this rite of imposing hands, whereby other ministers were ordained [an assumption of the archbishop's without and against Scripture], was never used in making apostles. It was a distinguishing part of their character that they were immediately called and ordained by Christ Himself, who gave them

(nay, bat I the disciples' and not apostles only, John 20:1-31] the Holy Ghost by breathing on them; but neither He nor any other is ever said to lay hands on them. When a place became vacant in the apostolic college by the apostasy of Judas, the apostles, with the rest of the disciples, chose two candidates, but left to God to appoint whether of them He pleased, to take part of the ministry and apostleship, from which Judas fell. Neither was St. Paul inferior to the rest of the apostles in this mark of honour; for he often asserts himself to be an apostle not of men, nor by man, but immediately, and without the intervention of men, to have been appointed by Jesus Christ, in opposition to those who denied him to be an apostle as was shown in one of the former chapters. But then it will be asked for what end Paul and Barnabas received imposition of hands? To which it may be answered, that this rite was commonly use both by the Jews and primitive Christians is benedictions. Jacob put his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh when he blessed them; and, to mention only one instance more, little children were brought to Christ, that He should put His hands on them and blew them. Accordingly, it is probable this imposition of hands on Paul and Barnabas was a solemn benediction on their ministry of preaching the Gospel in a particular circuit to which they were sent by the Holy Spirit's direction. Hance it is called in the next chapter a recommendation to the grace of God for the work of ministering the Gospel to certain cities, which they are said to have fulfilled. go that this rite was not their ordination to the apostolic office, because the end for which it was given is here said to be fulfilled, wherea's their apostolic office lasted as long as their lives. And therefore, Paul and Barnabas seem only now to have had a particular mission to preach the Gospel in a certain limited district, in the same manner as Peter and John were sent by the college of apostles to Samaria, to confirm the new converts and settle the Church there." - (or the Seventh) Edition, pp. 201, 202.

*(2) Dr. Ellicott goes so far as to think with Hammond, as well as De Wette, etc., that the words refer to the cheiro thesia on the absolution of penitents and their re-admission to church-fellowship This seems to me too special in another direction.

*(3) Dr. Crawford (" Presbyterianism Defended," pp. 34, 35, note) aye that the distinction is groundless, and that the one preposition no lea than the other often signifies the instrumental cause of a thing! The University of Edinburgh may blush for such a statement from its Professor of Divinity. in Acts 15:4, met auton means "in connexion with them," not "by them," like di auton in Acts 15:12.

*(4) "Refert enim Lucas constitutos esse per ecelesias presbyteros a Paulo at Barnaba: sod rationem vel modum simul notat, quum dicit factum id ewe suffragiis, cheirotonesantes, inquit, presbyterous kat ekklesian. Creabant ergo ipsi duo: Bed tota multitudo, ut mos Graecorum in electionibus erat, manibus sublatis declarabat quem habere vellent." (Geneva, 1618.)

03.06. The Resource Of The Faithful...

Lectures on the Church of God by William Kelly

Lecture VI. The Resource of the Faithful in the Ruins of Christendom 2 Timothy 2:11-22.

How many elements of solemnity are crowded into the subject now before us! It is solemn to look over Christendom and survey its ruins, now too palpable to be denied. It is solemn, on the other side, to think of the faithful goodness of God, who knew all beforehand, spread it out in the unerring word of His grace, and has shown us that, if He felt the evil that was about to cover the scene of the profession of Christ's name on earth, His loving wisdom decried a sure path-a path the vultures eye does not see, which nevertheless He gives His people to discern, and by means of which they can have the happy certainty that they are pleasing God. To those who for the sake of the Lord and the truth deplore and refuse to have fellowship with the current practice of Christendom, there may be a certain necessity to give as strong proofs as may be of those evils which now abound, and of which the word of God forewarned when they were but in the germ. Indeed there may be a kind of temptation to prove the evil, where we fed in anywise the need of a justification for the path of separation to God. But that tendency is corrected promptly, and the heart receives its due tone and its right attitude, when we think who after all is most concerned, and whose honour it is we have to justify. The Lord preserve us from thinking of ourselves! It is unworthy of those who belong to Christ. Be it our boast to justify Him alone.

It will be my business now to show, not that He needs aught from us, not that His words of light require the tapers of man to make them more distinct, but that divine charity seeks the blessing of every one, especially of those who are comparatively young and uninformed in the truth of God. I hope to give enough at least of the evidence to show most plainly what the will of the Lord is; bow faithfully His word deals with us; how worthy of trust both He Himself is and that which He has put into our hands. This may encourage the most diffident of God's children to look up with confidence, seeing that the end was as plain to Him as the beginning, and that for us the only path is that of Christ, for there cannot be two. He is the way, and as there is but one Christ, so there can be therefore but one path that satisfies the heart and mind of Christ for those who love Him.

Am I going to produce strong reasons as if one needed to justify this? It will be enough to explain what He has pointed out. To those who know Him there will be the completed justification and the strongest reason in the fact that it is His path for us, though His goodness has given, alas! too sure and abundant proof how deeply it is needed.

Further I shall have the opportunity to-night of slightly reviewing the ground over which we have passed on previous occasions, and of showing how all that is most precious has been secured to the faithful. Not that the Lord has not been pleased to take away much. Not that we ought to be unfeeling about anything that concerns the Lord's power and glory in the church. But if we rightly claim a higher place for that which concerns God in His moral ways; if we ought to feel that what brings and keeps before us the grace of Christ must be of deeper value than any displays of power

before men; yet on the other hand, beloved brethren, it would be a wrong to the Lord if we looked with cold indifference on the utter weakness of this our day, and the dishonor thus put upon the name of Jesus in Christendom itself. Alas! there is no place among the outside strangers to the Lord Jesus where there is more daring enormity done than in the very scene where men are baptized in His name. When we look back at times long past, at the early days of the church's pilgrimage on the earth, and the power of the Holy Ghost then displayed, I am persuaded we ought to feel for the wounds inflicted in the house of His friends; we ought to be grieved that the bearing of the church was such that the Lord could not outwardly pour honour upon her, but was obliged to strip her as it were, and shame her before the enemies of His name.

Let us own all this, as also the far deeper sorrow that men so little prize the truth, so tamely feel for the honour of the Lord's person in Christendom, not to speak of the well-nigh universal want of feeling even what the church is in its barest and simplest forms, and still more the total forgetfulness of its bright portion as one with the Saviour, and of that which the church hopes for in the day to come. Be assured that if we do not thus feel with the Lord in our little measure, we are not in a moral condition rightly to act upon His word in present things. It is a lesson of no small importance to see that the Lord has not given us in scripture that which admits of bare imitation. It does not suffice to take up the epistles of St. Paul for instance, and set to work as if we were competent to put in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders here or there. It is one thing to fall back upon the word God has given us, and quite another to assume that we can reinstate the church now that it has been broken up and rained. It is right to feel its low estate, but that we should now build up again that which is thus fallen the very thought proves that the heart in this has no communion with Christ; that there is a lack of due holy distrust of self; that there is such insensibility to the true state of things now as unfit not merely for authoritatively restoring the church, but even for the humbleness of faith that confides in the actual resources of Christ. For it is an unvarying principle of God, that when there has been a departure from Himself, it matters not under what circumstances or time or place or people whether before the flood or since--whether in Israel or in the church-God insists upon it that the first step in that which is morally good should be the sense of our real evil in His sight. When this is the case, the presumption will be far from us that we can make good that wonderful display of divine power, grace, and wisdom-the church of GOD! It was the greatest work, so to speak, that God ever wrought upon the earth (next to the Cross, whereby alone such a work became possible).

God forbid that in thinking of what He has done, we should compare that which stands alone-alone throughout all eternity! But if we look at all that has ever been done upon the earth, or even the very making of heaven and earth, I say, that the work of God in His church-the church of God-was greater still. And now, we poor leaky vessels that could not keep the blessing, we that have been through our own weakness and unwatchfulness a prey to Satan's wiles, and let in the thieves and robbers that have spoiled the house of God, are we the men to set it up again? Is this the feeling of lowly faith? If it were bad for man to go away, if it were a grievous thing for Israel to dishonor the law of God, what must it be for the church to slight God the Holy Ghost? It is the epistle of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, the object of His most perfect love, accepted in the Beloved, even in Christ, made the righteousness of God in Him. What is it then for that church practically to forego the glory of God here below-to prefer the work of their own hands to His word and Spirit-once more to bow down to idols graven by art and man's device? Oh! it is more

loathsome than that which scripture or even history records of days and men infinitely less privileged.

Think not that I am exaggerating what Christendom has done or does. Nor do I wish to dilate more than is absolutely needful upon the painful failure of that which bears the name of Christ here below. In truth it is not so. But let us hear what the word of God says upon the subject. Who would allow the thought that He speaks too strongly of that which He saw from the first, and told us was coming as He looked into the future?

Let us begin with the Saviour Himself and see what He intimated to His disciples should be found when He returns again to the earth, when He summons man to give an account of himself. In Luke 17:1-37. He tells us not that the world should become gradually changed from a wilderness to a Paradise, nor that the heathen should lay aside their false gods and the Jews their enmity to the true Messiah. On the contrary He gives the disciples the needed warning, that it was to be as in the days of Noah, and in the days of Lot. These were times of ease and worldliness, when all mankind was rising up against God; and yet they furnished comparisons for the scenes which are to meet the Lord as He appears from heaven to judge the world. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." The self-security and love of ease will be substantially the same when the Lord is revealed as just before the flood. Then as of old men will be engrossed in the ordinary matters of daily life. Spite of the law, spite of the gospel, again is seen and will be continued that state of corruption and violence which brought the Deluge upon the earth no less guilty than utterly unconcerned. And Christ looks onward to the day of His return: no previous millennium of holy bliss awaiting Him; no happy rejoicing hearts characterizing the world generally then; but on the contrary the same moral condition, the same indifference to God’s will and glory which preceded the flood.

After the flood when nations and tongues began there was another scene more appalling and degrading, which the same book of Genesis brings before us; and this also furnishes its sad complement to the picture of the--days just before the Son of man comes again. "Like also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom" (most ominous words!, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

If we take up now the Epistles, we shall find the light shed by the Holy Ghost in no way weakens but confirms in every respect the testimony of the Lord Jesus; only that now we have naturally the Holy Ghost looking rather at professing, Christendom, whereas our Lord made the Jews His starting-point and centre.

Thus in Romans 11:1-36, without dwelling at length upon the chapter, the Spirit of God anticipates the end of Christendom. "Boast not against the branches. Bat if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." Such is the warning given to the Gentile professor. The Jews are meant by the natural branches. They had been the depositaries of promise of old, and had therefore the responsible place of testimony for God upon the earth. Hence they were the original branches of the olive tree, the line of promise and testimony on the earth which began with Abraham. But the

Jews broke the law, went after idols, refused and slew the Messiah. There was a resource in the gospel; but they refused the gospel from heaven, as well as the Lord their King on earth. The consequence is, that the natural branches of the olive tree were broken off, and the wild olive, or Gentile, grafted into the old stock of profession. And this is the warning that is given: "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." Has not this exactly been the feeling of Christendom? Contempt for the Jews, astonishment at their wickedness, utter insensibility as to their own condition. " Well; 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. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness."

Let me ask any man that has the smallest fear of God, or even outward acquaintance with His word, Has Christianity continued in the goodness of God? Is there any Protestant, any Roman Catholic, who thinks so? Is there any person, no matter where, no matter who -a single soul who dares to say that Christendom, the professing Gentile, has continued in the goodness of God? The Romanist cannot think the Protestant schism continues in the goodness of God. The Protestant is assured that the Romish body is the fruit of clean departure from God in superstition; and so we might run through all existing systems. They may each plead for his own association; but who will say that even his own has continued faithful? They may believe that it means well, and would be admirable if carried out; but who would not acknowledge that it has not been carried out? that consequently no sect, no portion, no fragment even, has continued in the goodness of God? All agree that as for the mass of profession outside themselves, it has failed to testify for the goodness of God. Consequently there rises up from men on every side the acknowledgement that the Gentile has not continued in it. Not that the failure is felt as it should be; not that there is adequate confession and renunciation of our common sin before God. Where sin is really spread out to God, it will not be persisted in. But at least there is an outward acknowledgement to a certain extent in the earth now, and quite enough to prove that Christianity has not continued in the goodness of God. What then says the word of the Lord ? " Thou also shalt be out off." The Gentile shall be out off for his faithlessness, as surely as the Jew was.

This, remark, is not in some prophetic portion of God’s word, which some might think ambiguous, though we do not allow the thought for a moment that any part of the word of God is so. But here in an epistle which every Christian allows to be one of the most fundamental and comprehensive, which takes up Christianity from its elements, and through which the Lord has established souls in peace, perhaps more than through any other portion of His word; it is in this epistle to the Romans that we have the solemn announcement of the sure cutting off of the Gentiles. Not merely one part or another but the Gentile profession is doomed of God, because it has not continued in His goodness; as truly as the Jew is now cast out from his heritage, a bye-word and a reproach to all the earth, evidently bearing his doom stamped upon his brow. To examine many of the epistles would more than occupy my time. Suffice it to say, that as we travel down the stream from 2 Thessalonians, which was one of the earliest epistles written by Paul, to the latest, the Epistles of John and Jude, we have only an increasing testimony, growing more distinct and urgent and awful. As the evil grew, so the signs of judgment became more apparent. The Spirit of God sounds the trumpet with no uncertain note, and wakes up the faithful where there is an ear to hear. Christendom was gradually being undermined, and would become, in no long time, the engine of

opposition to God-would be made the theatre of the grossest evil, taking up the abominations not only of the Jews but of the heathen themselves, and consecrating a system of Idolatry under the name of Christ and His mother, saints and angels, even more frightful and guilty than anything ever before found here below. For the very fact of praying to Peter, Paul, or the Virgin, proves that the light of Christianity must in some measure have been known, before it ended in so distressing an apostasy. Does any one think the expression " apostasy" over-strong? Allow me to tell them that the very phrase "the apostasy" is the expression of the Holy Ghost in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, where we are told "there is a mystery of iniquity which now worketh." Only there is now a hindering power. Consequently it would not burst out into its full development all at once; it was kept in check for a certain time by the good hand of the Lord for the purposes of His own grace. But the moment that this restraint was gone, then it would be no mystery any longer, but manifest lawlessness. It is called "a (or rather "the") falling away." or the apostasy. This must become ripe, and "the man of sin" must be revealed. Thus we have too plainly an uninterrupted succession of evil. This is the vista described in the scripture; a succession of evil that goes on always swelling in intensity and volume till at last when the restraint is removed, it bursts out into a yet more fearful issue-not "the apostasy" only, but "the man of sin." What a contrast to the Man of righteousness, when man dares to take the place of God in the temple of God! This then is what Christendom is to the Christian watchman. It has not of course been realized in all its force, though I do not deny that there have been various and also growing manifestations of evil. As the apostle John tells us, "Even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." This is so much the more remarkable because he shows that the Antichrist was coming, the great token of which is that there were many antichrists then. They knew thereby it was the last time. The Spirit would not close the volume of the New Testament until the worst evil was actually there at least in its germ; and this being so and descried by inspiration, there was need of nothing further. The Spirit of God could, as it were, fold up the sacred roll. It was complete. The mystery of lawlessness is shown already at work, "the man of sin" is predicted; the mystery of Christ and the Church no longer hid but disclosed. Scripture had attained its full compass. There remains, not some fresh view of Christ, so to speak, but contrariwise the unfolding of that Christ whom they bad already, the bringing out more intimately and appreciatively the light of the love of God that was in the Lord Jesus Christ from the beginning. This is the antidote of all Satan can bring-to the many antichrists, and at last to the Antichrist. I refer to it in order to give a kind of connexion between the different states-the rise, progress, and final manifestation of lawlessness. Nay more the lawless one is to exalt himself against the Lord of glory. The last book of the New Testament shows the millennial reign over the earth, ushered in by the destruction of the beast and the false prophet with all their company, as Babylon had been previously destroyed.

Thus rapidly have we glanced without entering into all the proofs of the doom of Christendom. They are patent in the general epistles and in particular in the epistle of Jude where a most energetic sketch is given in the compass of a single verse (Jude 1:11). With that power which the Spirit of God only knows how to convey the shadows of Cain are sketched, then of Balaam, and finally of the gainsaying Core. Is there nothing for Christendom there? Is there no sound of sure if slumbering judgment there? "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain" -that unnatural brother, that pretender to religion, who brought his offering to the Lord but slew the guiltless. Is there no presage in him who received the wages of unrighteousness-in the man who, spite of himself, prophesied glorious things of a people that he loved not but would have sold to

destruction? Is there no solemn lesson in the wages received for teaching, it may be, the glorious things of God, without heart for His people, still less any care or jealousy for His word, for His will, for His glory? Finally, in the fearful rebellion of Korah, " the gainsaying of Core," in those who had the ministry of the sanctuary, in the proud Levites who coveted and arrogated to themselves the place of Moses and Aaron (the apostle and the high priest of the Jewish profession), is there no awful warning there? Have you never heard of men professing to be servants of Christ, and yet pretending to be priests strictly, officially, and exclusively-assuming to be authoritative channels of divine pardon empowered on earth to absolve from guilt before- God? I do not speak only of such as claim in their heathenish darkness to offer a sacrifice for the dead as well as the living. Assuredly one thinks not with bitterness about such things as these, but we may -all stand aghast as we survey, the facts realized in Christendom. If it be a prophecy, it is a prophecy fulfilled.

All this may suffice to show how little Christendom has continued in the goodness of God. Details are needless. The godliest members of the various religious societies would be the first to confess the failure of their own. God’s controversy is not with one only but with all, though doubtless the proudest will meet with a peculiar judgment. It is evident also that the word of God leaves it not to human experience or to spiritual judgment to infer His thoughts of Christendom; He has pronounced upon it Himself, Hence it is not presumptuous, but on the contrary the part of humble faith to believe God in this. How good He is thus to cut off the fear of forming a judgment so stern! For now he that does not pronounce after the Lord is ignorant of his Master’s mind, or is false to His will. He that would defend or justify Christendom does not, in effect, fear to give the Lord the lie. From the scriptures enough has been given to show that the man who can look on Christendom and vindicate what is around us ignorantly or wilfully slights all the instruction that the Holy Ghost has given on the subject. Undoubtedly this is strong; but it is the Lord’s goodness which makes the owning of it now to be a matter of sympathy with Him, and not of a proud claim to superior light.

God’s word is open to all. By it we are all bound to see as He sees. The Lord admits of no vain excuses that we cannot judge. The Spirit of God, who judges and discerns all things, dwells in every Christian. He that says he cannot judge Christendom virtually denies himself to be a spiritual man; but if we do judge that Christendom has fallen into these predicted evils one after another, and that what was then but budding is now bearing the most bitter and baneful fruit, I ask, are we to partake of it? Are we to be insensible to our own share of the common sin? If the Lord graciously imparts the strongest warning, are we to satisfy ourselves with that flimsiest and most profane of apologies, that when the Lord comes He will set it all right? Yes, but it will be too late to set right my conscious Christ -dishonouring unfaithfulness; it will be to my shame to live till then indifferent to His word, careless of His glory, regardless of the Holy Ghost, who is grieved by that which I have been allowing practically. Am I, or am I not, to refrain from that which insults Him? If I know these things, am I to content myself without doing them. He who does puts himself in the guiltiest place of all Do I know and feel the despite Christendom does and I have done to the Spirit of grace? Then let me look up in dependence on the Lord, that I may do it no more, nor settle down in a pretext so lame and criminal as that the Lord will set all to rights again. Is He not coming to judge every evil way? No doubt He will bring in good, and this from above! but He will judge all evil, and yet more than in times past. In vain then do I essay to shelter myself under the blessed truth, that the Lord is coming to display the kingdom of God upon earth. Assuredly, He will. From

the heavens He will come, and fill the earth with the peace and blessing He brings with Himself, instead of finding it here below. A few poor broken hearts He will find in the world-a godly remnant, crying out, like the importunate widow in the guilty city where ruled the judge that feared neither God nor man. Such and worse will be. the state of things, and in their midst shall He find faith on the earth? Yes, but crying out in alarm. And so He will clear the world with the avenging sword, before He establishes His throne of righteousness upon it. Of course I speak figuratively now; but the fact will be unsparing divine judgment; and therefore how blind for any to harden themselves in going on with sin under the plea that the Lord is coming to set the world and church to rights!

Allow me to say further, that the Lord has not left us to our own thoughts any more of the good than of the evil. He has given us His path, and this is what the heart desires to come to-the resources of the faithful in the ruins of Christendom. It were strange indeed if the word of God shed no sure light where it is so needed? Can we conceive such a thing as the Lord giving His view of the darkening future, and no provident care for His beloved and feeble and trembling followers? We began with the Lord's testimony about man's evil; let us see how He ensures good for His people in the midst of it. For Matt. xviii. we may bless the Lord. Although He is giving instruction as to the animating spring of the assembly, which is grace, (as law was the governing principle of the synagogue,) the Lord provides what would be deeply needed, if they were reduced to a handful " Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Could one conceive more tender thought, or more evident wisdom than the Lord thus caring for His own in a dark day? To this the goodly flock might come that assembly which once stood out so fair, with its thousands on whom great grace rested. How wise thus to prepare the hearts of His servants! How well He knew and guarded against the anxieties of His saints! We know what numbers are to the worldly spirit, and how apt we are to rest upon that which looks great in the earth. Yet nothing is more destructive of Christianity. He that has not a heart for the two or three must be only a dead weight if he were among ten thousand. It might be no doubt that he would be carried along the stream of happy multitudes; and that which was thus unfaithful to the mind of Christ might pass unnoticed in the strong current and new - born delight in the Saviour, transporting all around, as was no doubt the case on that bright day when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to be the herald of the glory of the Lord, and to make believing men on earth the dwelling place of God. We can understand that at Pentecost the tide of joy rose so high as to cover all such elements, sure as they were to appear later on. And soon it came, too soon, when sounds of discontent were heard even in that blessed habitation of God. Alas! man was there; not God only in His goodness but man; and behind was the adversary ready to dishonor the one through the other. The church, like man and Israel, has to be tried on earth. What is the declared issue? Never was there such blessing entrusted to man; but man is as faithless under the gospel as he was rebellious under the law. The Holy Ghost is slighted as the Son had been; and in the day when eternal realities are revealed man turns back to the shadows of Judaism, preferring them to the substantial truth of God. This is the history of Christendom. And the Lord, with it all -spread out before His prescient eyes, comforts His followers, were they ever so few and weak, with the assurance of His presence where His name has its central place to their faith. In the prospect of coming evil how gracious of the Lord to think, it may be, of some obscure village of some solitary ship that travels across the ocean - some comparatively desert island-yea, or of the vast and crowded city, where the very solitariness of discipleship is more realized sometimes than anywhere else! Wherever, however, whenever it might be, the Lord gives His own

weight of authority to the two or three gathered unto His name. It is not merely His blessing-where could He not bless I Blessing He went on high, and never since-if I may so say - never has He laid down the hands which He then lifted up in blessing. It could not be otherwise till He come in judgment. His work was infinite. Who could limit the preciousness of His blood? Who could say that redemption, like the first covenant, was grown old, and ready to vanish away? Could any difficulty, danger, or need in Christendom turn that grace back, as it were, into its spring, or dry up those rivers of living waters which they that believe should receive? It could not be; but there is more than all that here. Not only is there blessing but there is also the weight of His authority guaranteed to the smallest real representative of His assembly. We know that men shrink back from church discipline; and he need not wonder at this who is aware how it was made under the, fairest pretenses the most abominable scourge of tyranny the earth ever beheld. One cannot, therefore, be surprised that Christians who had escaped from the weight of that iron hand should somewhat shrink back at the bare sound. But we must beware of mistrusting Him to whom we owe our every blessing, because Babylon, the world church, has perverted His words. But if there were only two or three, there ought to be as much jealousy as if there were three thousand to maintain publicly slid privately, collectively and individually, ways consistent with the character of Christ. This cannot be unless there be discipline. The obligation of an united pure walk is bound up with the very integrity and being of God's assembly. It ceases to be the church of God, unless there be the holy earnest solemn carrying oat of that which the Lord has laid down. "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that Ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened." No ruin can touch this responsibility for a moment. On the other hand the Lord takes care in his grace that blessing shall flow spite of failure. But there is more than the sovereign action of divine grace, where responsibility may have been little felt and the will of God misunderstood. The Lord watches over those gathered together to His name, and is there present in their midst were they but two or three. What unfailing and inestimable comfort! Conceive for a moment some Christian awakened to feel that the place of a believer is not to be a member merely of the ecclesiastical system of the country or of particular views, but on the contrary that the only thing which suits and is due to Christ is that we should renounce-we cannot be too lowly, but neither can we be too thorough in renouncing-every tie that is not connected with Christ. Where we can obey Christ in the midst of those that are His-where the Holy Ghost is allowed freedom to work according to the word of God there is Gods church, and nowhere else. The liberty of the Spirit is to exalt Christ and this only. This is a universal principle, true of an individual and true of the assembly. It would be a miserable thing if the assembly were not a scene of true and blessed liberty; but such it is that God may be glorified by Christ Jesus. There will be also the consciousness of that which is offensive just in proportion to the spiritual power that is in the assembly. A great or a small company makes no essential difference. The Holy Ghost is sent down to care for the interests of the name of Christ The two or three weak and ignorant ones gathered to it at least know that they are His; that they ought not therefore to belong to man; that they ought not therefore to be under any other tie; that rules made by one or many or all-if they were the very beat that were ever produced-are not entitled to bind Christians, seeing that God has already furnished the only perfect standard not only of faith but of church fellowship, and that to own another is to dishonor the word of God and the Holy Ghost who is here to make it good in power. The question is not whether we can do better than others : God forbid: that indeed were presumption. But this I ask, whoever you may be (and I trust that, if you are a Christian, you will agree with me), Which is best, your rules or God's word? If

God, and not you, be the wiser, how came you to invent these rules? You thought the word of God insufficient, and you must supply the deficiency! What is the result? Take what is going on at the present moment, and in any society you like. The very newspapers ring with the scandal of what is done under the name of Christ. What do your rules avail? Neither you nor the wisest of men can construct a standard for all time; and why should it be attempted? God has given His own, and His children need no other.

We have already the only sure and divine rule The only want is the faith to value and act upon it. True, the consequences are serious. Faithfulness to Christ costs much now as ever. But is it not a solemn thought that now, in this boasted nineteenth century after the Lord has accomplished redemption, we are only awakening, here and there, to feel that the word of God is better than the word of man? What a discovery! Yet it is great as it is humbling that it should be a new thing-a discovery which many of the children of God have not yet made. All admit that God's word is infinitely wise for the soul's salvation. Who, when it is a question of eternal issues, would trust his soul to the doctrines of men? 'The is felt the value of that word which reveals the Saviour, and of the blessed Spirit who makes the word precious in the revelation of Him. But is it no daring to draw these distinctions in the word of God and to pat aside that which speaks of the church ministry, worship, the breaking of bread, and prayer How comes it that men should behave practically a if God's word had less decision and authority in these matters than the shifting thoughts of man? How comes it that men so seldom think of being guided only by the word of God ? How comes it that believers resort as a matter of course to human ecclesiastical rules? How comes it, for example, that dissenters, the best of them, when they want a minister in the word, proceed at once to elect him without a syllable of scripture for that course? Who gave them licence to do so?

"It must be so; we have our own doctor and our own lawyer, and why not our own minister?" it is exactly this worldly principle that has done the mischief Why is not God consulted in His word? How comes it that in scripture a church never elects a minister? Of course there must have been many who wanted ministerial help in those days as now; and God, who knew all that is good, must have known every want also. How comes it that there was never a man chosen by a Christian congregation to preach the gospel or teach the saints-not a solitary instance in the word of God? They cannot get rid of the difficulty. What are they to do? The fact is, the dissenting principle is broken at the very outset. They cannot step over the threshold. They cannot do without a minister, and they cannot elect a minister according to scripture. Let us look now, not at congregationalism, but at the two or three gathered to the name of Christ. They too want help, these feeble ones; and what are they to do? This is the word of their Lord, " Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them." God forbid that I should disparage the advantages of ministry; but to be simply subject to the Lord, whether or not He sends, is the best of all. The fact is, as we are not authorized, so we have no need to elect any; for all are ours already, "whether Paul, Apollos, or Cephas." It is for God to choose and give. He has bound up and made all His ministers part and parcel of the church. They are members of Christ's body. They are His gifts to the church. It is ignorant and evil meddling for the church to elect. Besides, the moment you elect one to be peculiarly your minister, by that very act you defraud yourselves of all the rest. You are going out of the path of God in order to enrich yourselves in this respect; but that very act of selfish haste, like every other departure from the path of faith, brings, as the necessary result, the surest impoverishment. Suppose then people get their minister; he may be but young, and

they may want to be nourished and fed up in truth. Unless he have all the gifts centred in his single person, they are reduced to his individual measure. Another again may be a pastor, and love the saints; but the congregation for the most part consists of persons needing to be converted, while he is not an evangelist but a pastor and perhaps a teacher. How evident that, if tested thus practically, man's ways always ruin God's work! The parochial system in the established bodies works as much or more evil. It may seem natural and prudent, but human wisdom in divine things is as foolish as it is fatal. What else could be expected by those who know God and man from a departure from the rich provision the Lord has made?

Let us now look on the other side. The Lord is there. The "two or three" do not exactly see their way. They are in presence of a great difficulty. Perhaps they have heard the whisper of some dreadful doctrine, and they do not understand it, not being versed in these matters. What then? They wait upon the Lord-a wholesome thing for any of us - most wholesome to be obliged to feel that the Lord alone can avail. But He does love and care for His saints. He raises up and opportunely sends a servant of His. The latent evil is brought out plainly; and the moment the light of God by whatever means is east upon it, the conscience of the saints answers to the call of the Lord, and they repudiate it heartily for themselves.

Again there is one fallen into what may seem little evil, yet enough to render him indifferent to the Lord, to His word, to His grace. He refuses to listen to the warning of one, then of more, and lastly of the assembly of God. "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man." He is not a heathen, but supposed to be a brother; yet he is treated as if he were a heathen, because he despises Christ in the church. This in fact is the case here supposed. (Matthew 18:1-35) Such decision is trying to the heart, where will works among the saints. But it shows plainly that not their wisdom nor their experience guides aright, but the Lord in their midst; and He promises His presence if it were but two or three gathered to His name. Here then we have a clear and positive provision for the faithful in the worst of times. It is hardly possible to conceive of circumstances where there might not be "two or three."

It is well however to add that the essential point is their gathering to. His name. It is not such a gathering unto Christ, where narrowness is allowed, or sectarianism, any more than in the grosser forms of letting in the world or tolerating evil. If any "two or three" were so happy together, as to look with suspicion on godly men outside them, they would forfeit their place of privilege, and be in a false position. Does the Lord so regard His disciples? Does He scrutinize them as if they were doubtful characters, or put them in quarantine as if the plague might be in them? I speak of saints where there is no suspicion of evil doctrine, direct or indirect, or of unholy walk. The Lord welcomes them, and so should we. His name has not its value where we are not large for His sake. But there may be another case. A person comes of great repute in the world, who has been preaching and is universally respected; but alas! he betrays himself by a lack of heart and conscience where Christ is concerned. Him they refuse. Thus the same name of Christ, which is their warrant for welcoming the weakest that loves Him, is here exactly the same power for refusing the highest who does not love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption. What might is in that name to bring and keep together hearts otherwise alien, and yet withal what a delicate test for detecting and excluding what is not of God! If it be a question of truth, the name of the Lord is the only real touchstone; if it be a question of discipline, that name is strength to the feeblest heart; if it be a question between persons and principle, there only is found all needed wisdom and power

both individually and as regards the assembly. But let us look now at 2 Timothy 2:1-126. We have a picture drawn by the Holy Ghost of the professing body, the house of God. The first epistle duly cares for order and good government in the house of God. The second epistle anticipates the influx of evils to such an extent that the house is merely alluded to as a comparison. Still "the sure foundation of God standeth, having this seal"-on one side, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and on the other, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." There are thus the sovereignty of the Lord on one side, and just responsibility on the other-two great principles which meet us everywhere. Then follows a more detailed application: - "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonor." Some would take the place of knowing the Lord whom He did not own., and who felt not the incongruity of His name with iniquity. Timothy must be prepared for the development of evil among those that confess Christ-not only "some to honour" but "some to dishonor." "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" Separation from evil is the invariable principle of God, modified as to the manner of course by the special character of the dispensation. So Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophets generally. Is Christianity less stringent? It is now on the contrary that it becomes more urgent and absolute. "If a man purge himself from these [the vessels to dishonor], he shall be a vessel to honour." Put away the wicked (1 Corinthians 5:1-13); if this be no longer possible, purge yourself out from them. There is nothing man dreads and feels so. deeply. You may protest you may denounce, and it will be borne by the world as long as you walk with it in the main; but "he that departeth," now as ever, " maketh himself a prey." Ad on your convictions, and the most honeyed courtesy turns sour; your desire to please God at all cost will be branded as pharisaical pride and exclusiveness. It matters not how gently and lovingly you purge yourself from the vessels to dishonor; the pain, the grievance, lies there, and nothing can sweeten it, above all in the eyes of those it condemns. Indeed it is more felt, the more graciously it is done, provided it be done thoroughly; for then evidently your motive is not disappointed feeling but desire to be wholly subject to Christ, with a heart perfectly happy in what they know nothing of and could not enjoy.

All this is an unpardonable affront in the world's eyes. Add to this, that separation is claimed in 2 Tim. from the religious or Christian world. "The Christian world!" what a phrase! what a contradiction! as if there could be the smallest possible alliance between Christianity, which is of heaven and Christ, and that outside world which crucified Him. No wonder that in this epistle we read of perilous times in the last days. What greater peril than, after they have known the truth, going back into substantially the same conditions of evil as were found in the heathen world before Christianity entered it. Compare 2 Timothy 3:1-17 with Romans 1:1-32. How painful the resemblance! The difference is, that some of the grosser characteristics of heathenism have been replaced by subtler evil. The comparison is most instructive In this state of things the Christian profession is indeed a great house; and, as in such a house there is that which is destined to the basest uses, no less than what is for the best purposes, so in that great house which bears the name of Christ - if you please, "the Christian world."

If there, what ought you to do? It is a solemn question for the believer. He has no hesitation about the profane world; but the world bearing the name of Christ is a difficulty to him. Seeing that the Christian profession is there, am I not setting myself up, and virtually condemning the excellent of

the earth? But will you name any evil thing that has not had a good name attached to it? I do not speak now of such fatal poison as Socinianism. or the like; but take Romanism, or the Greek church, or even sects known to be heretical) and yet by the malice of the enemy and the subtlety with which he has concealed his work some children of God have been entangled. It is too plain therefore that, whatever good men may do here or there, the only real inquiry is as to the will of the Lord. It is not a question of making others walk in your light, but you must walk in their darkness. This is the great point, not occupying ourselves with others, prescribing what they must do, bat feeling my own sin, as well as the common sin, yet by grace resolved at all costs to be where I can honour and obey the Lord. Is not this a true plain imperative duty, an undeniable principle of scripture, that commends itself to your conscience? It may be that you do not act accordingly; but you cannot deny that it is a right thing and what you ought to do. But you are tied and have difficulties. Perhaps you have a family and friends you cannot bear to grieve; perhaps you have hopes for your children if not for yourself. Can a heart purified by faith thus set aside the Lord's word? Do you think He does not know your wants and does not feel for your family? You know the Lord loves yourself: cannot you trust Him for a bit of bread! You, who are trusting Him for eternal life and for heaven, cannot you trust Him to take care of you in the face of these trials and obstacles of every day? Perhaps you are too comfortable, too anxious about what is respectable for yourself and your children. Let the Lord deal with you; I am sure He will not harm you, but only do what is most loving and tender towards you and yours. Impossible for any heart to be beyond the Lord's love and wisdom and generous considerate care. If you really believe in Him, why not cleave to His word without compact or condition, and come forth at His bidding? You do not know what the next steps may be. It is enough that you know you are doing contrary to the word of God now. In vain we talk of loving, if we are not prepared to follow His word. Do you say you do not know what next to do! The Lord does not ask you: it is not His way to show all at once. Act on what you see from the word, and trust the Lord for what will follow; He is worthy of your confidence, and will give you more when you have taken the first step. But leave for ever that which is condemned in God's word. "Remember Lot's wife," and look not back, but go forth at His word wherever it points, and you will find that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given." And as regards the way, to the Lord rough or smooth is alike, deep or shallow, great or small; it may make a great difference to you, but the greatest difficulties only become the means of proving what the God is that we have found. But there is more in 2 Timothy 2:1-26. Not only are you to separate, or purge yourself, from these vessels of dishonour, but the word is, "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the, Lord out of a pure heart." Thus there is no excuse for isolation. Turn your back upon what you know is opposed to scripture. Have I to demonstrate to any Christian that what is unscriptural is unholy? Have I to urge that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin?" If then you abandon what has no warrant from scripture, but on the contrary is condemned by it, hear this word of God: "Follow righteousness-, faith, charity, peace." Follow them, not solitarily, but " with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." What consolation, even if there were but two or three! Are you afraid because there are only two or three? God may act on hundreds or thousands: this is a matter for Him. You are to follow the Lord's path through His word, with chastened spirit yet not sadly, but full of joy and thankfulness, if you find ever so few who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. In other words, faith has a divine warrant to expect companions in its path, though it lie now through the ruin of the Christian profession. As it is imperative to turn away from all known evil, and there can be no -valid excuse

for refusing God’s call, so there is enjoined companionship in following after righteousness, faith, charity, and peace, with such as call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. May no hindrances nor dangers alarm, but knowing that it is the Lord who has thus graciously thought of us, may you and I and every one that loves that blessed name have unbroken confidence in Him! He addresses Himself to hearts grieved in the midst of dishonour to His grace and truth, and He has taken care to mark most distinctly the path not of separation only but of association-the path of departure from evil and of pursuing what is good.

How clearly the great moral principles of God remain in spite of disorder. How the operations of His grace survive all ruin! Thus the principle of the assembly of God abides in, it may be, only two or three gathered to the name of the Lord. Thousands of Christians, in a national system or in a dissenting sect, could not redeem their fundamental error; members of Christ may be in them, but the principle of God’s assembly is abandoned in their very constitution. Let "two or three" come out at the word of the Lord, making His name their centre, and owning the Spirit of God as in and with them to guide them according to scripture; these, and these only, are carrying out His mind in the real intelligence of the Holy Ghost. It is no question of numbers, but of being gathered together, few or many, unto the name of the Lord.

All here know what the House of Commons is. A hundred members of that House might belong to the United Service Club or the Athenaeum or anything else you please. These hundred members might discuss the measures actually before the House in their club; but this could never make the club to be the House; whereas in their true position with the Speaker in the midst a much less number would constitute a House. It is exactly the same principle hem What constitutes Gods assembly? "Two or three " gathered unto the Lord’s name. He has been pleased to bring it down to the point described, with the fullest possible stamp of His approval and authority. On the other hand suppose ten thousand Christians meeting simply as Christians-is that enough? I can conceive an assembly of professing, yea, real Christians; and yet there would be no more reason to call them God’s assembly than to consider any number of members at their club the House of Commons. It is not the fact of being Christians that constitutes God’s assembly, but their being gathered unto the name of the Lord. The practical point for us is whether we are gathered to the name of Christians merely, or to the name of Christ. If the former, you must accept of any evil thing into which the enemy succeeds in dragging Christians. For if the man be a Christian, I must receive him, spite of evil he is doing or sanctioning. But no! the question is, Does -he call upon the Lord out of a pure heart? The exclusion of this word of God has widely overrun Christendom to the incalculable injury of souls, and never more than now, when men practically put Christians in lieu of Christ, the consequence of which is confusion and every evil work.

Whereas if the Lord have His place and be the centre to which I come, I have then in His name a ground and rallying point to which I can claim, with the most entire humility, every saint in the world-yea, I could not and ought not to rest in my spirit as long as one that belongs to Him is outside. What I even those under discipline, or avoided for grave causes? Yes, every one; not of course to receive them with known evil upon them, but yet to desire themselves, what is contrary to Christ being judged and removed. The Lord make us steadfast and give us to feel that the lowliest spirit becomes us! How can we boast of ceasing to do evil we ourselves have done? May we look to Him increasingly! He who has brought us out has compelled us to prove by our own difficulties the true state of the church; but He has turned to profit our very mistakes, though in a

humbling way. He has used the storm, as it were, to purge the hazy air, and displayed more clearly than ever the central place of His own name for our gathering together no less than our salvation.

Thus we may leave all fears and anxieties. If the Lord be our helper, why fear? What will man do? Then, as for charges of sectarianism or presumption or disorder, it were easy indeed to show that those axe really guilty who are quick to raise and scatter them We know that scripture condemns every church association that is not based on and governed by the name of Christ. It is not a mere question of wrongs here or there; but are they Christians gathered to the name of Christ? Neither is it a question of the amount of evil? for what did not slip in at Corinth through ignorance and unwatchfulness? The refusal to judge known evil is no doubt fatal. But supposing the absence of everything gross, the true question is, Are we where the Lord would have us be? Then happy are we, if but " two or three" thus: were we ten millions anywhere else, all must be wrong, because Christ is not the acknowledged and exclusive centre ecclesiastically. He who is the only adequate and rightful object for all the saints on earth deigns to be the centre of but "two or three," as He says, that are "gathered together unto his name."

Chapter 24

04.01. Elements of Prophecy

Elements of Prophecy Answer to Historicism The Second Advent

04.02. Table of Contents

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Chapter 26

04.03. Publisher's Note (Present Truth Publishers)

Publisher’s Note (Present Truth Publishers)

Elements of Prophecy, by W. Kelly, appeared in The Bible Treasury, Volume 9, 1873, page 342 etc., and then in book form, with additions. This is a copy of the 1876 Morrish edition of this work.

Items in braces { } have been added. Thus, for example, Scripture references have been inserted so that they may appear in the Scripture Index; and notes in brackets { }, including some footnotes in brackets, have been added.

04.04. Preface

Preface The work now before the reader is the examination of a book which appeared many years ago from the pen of a certain professor of Moral Philosophy and was regarded at the time by not a few as conclusive against Futurism. Even then, as some know, it was my intention publicly to test how far its principles were scriptural, and its reasonings valid; and it seemed to me none the less a duty because of the deliberate and strong conviction, whatever the delinquencies of the Futurists, that its tendency was retrograde, to the dishonour of Christ and the injury of the church of God. The professor however having since then divulged views on the punishment of the wicked which shocked all orthodox men, including of course those of his own party, I have judged it best not to give his name, nor to cite formally from his book. Hence such as have not read it might scarcely gather that my work is controversial; while those who do possess it will see that, however briefly, I have endeavoured to follow up with conscientious care his use of scripture and his argument, as well as his plan, so as to leave nothing unrefuted which seemed worth noticing. The Christian will perceive and I hope learn from God how much larger and more exact and profound is revealed truth than either the Historical scheme or the Futurist. This is the fruit I desire by grace to the praise of the name of the Lord Jesus. London, December, 1876.

04.05. Introduction

Introduction

Prophecy is the revelation of the thoughts of God as regards the future, and His glory in Christ is the one blessed end of the prophetic word, as well as of all the divine actings. Make man, make self, the end, and singleness of eye is gone; darkness ensues by the just judgment of God — a result as sure in the domain of the spiritual understanding as in that of the spiritual conscience. It is true we may say of the prophetic part what the Holy Ghost says about the whole written word, that it is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. Still, the revealed acts are the expression of the principles of God's government of the world, and therefore the accomplishment portrayed in His word is the place where we learn these principles fully. This is surely what we have to ascertain. Otherwise we form our own notions of that which God has given us, prophecy, whereby to know His thoughts. Our business is to gather of what God speaks; and though all scripture is given for our profit, it is in no way necessary that all should be about ourselves. The glory of God in dealing with Jews is, in its place, as much the object of our faith as His dealings with Christians. And the apprehension of the distinctions in His ways, that is, real understanding of His word, depends on our knowing to whom it applies. Is not this taking away scripture from the church? Quite the reverse. There is no instruction in the past or future history of Israel, as revealed in the Bible, which is not for the church, but it is not about the church. That such passages are so written as to bear an analogous application to the Gentile body, now grafted into the olive-tree of earthly testimony {Romans 11:1-36}, I do not deny — an application which calls for the utmost caution, and a right division of the word of truth, because each dispensation has its own peculiarities, and in some cases there may be, and are, points of decided and intended contrast. Still, the church is not the subject treated of under the names of Judah and Israel, Zion and Jerusalem; and the effect of the unrestricted accommodation of such passages, to which we have been all accustomed, has been not only to rob the Jews of their promises, but to lower and obscure incalculably the privileges of the church, so far as present realization is concerned.

There is now, however, a considerable class of persons who admit that the only complete fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy involves the restoration of the literal Israel to their own land, and their national blessing and peace there, according to the new covenant, in the presence and personal reign of the Messiah. Hence, as a whole, they rightly refer the prophecies of future glory to the same people whose sins and judgments are therein detailed. They acknowledge that the reign of Christ over the converted Jewish people in the millennium is a very different thing from the secret counsels of grace which, through faith, have saved souls from the beginning. So far there is a step, and an important step, in the true direction. But here is a stopping short. It is not seen that the rejection of Christ by Jew and Gentile on the cross, and His consequent exaltation at the right hand of God, and the intermediate mission of the Holy Ghost here below till the Lord returns again, have made way for the accomplishment and revelation of an unique work of God, which had been

kept secret from previous ages and generations {Colossians 1:26}. This work is the church, Christ's body.

It is not merely an increase of light as to the counsels of salvation, on which the entire line of the faithful, from Abel downward, had reposed, but there was a hitherto unknown and hidden mystery respecting a body destined to be the consort of Christ in heavenly glory at His coming, and meanwhile called into manifestation and enjoyment of its privileges by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who was to commence, sustain, and guide it here below, while waiting for the Bridegroom. The Holy Ghost had acted, He had given faith, He had quickened, He had wrought efficaciously and savingly from the first; but there was no baptism of the Spirit till Pentecost. He was not (that is, in this new way) till Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). So the Lord teaches us in Acts 1:5 "Ye shall be baptized of the Holy Ghost not many days hence." When just about to ascend He said this to the already believing, regenerate disciples. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost did baptize them. He imparted many miraculous gifts, "the powers of the world to come"; but besides this He baptized them on that day, never before. Now it is certain that the formation of the body, the church, hinges upon the baptism of the Spirit, for "by one Spirit (as we are told in 1 Corinthians 12:13) are we all baptized into one body." You cannot, therefore, have the body of Christ before the baptism of the Spirit; they are simultaneous and inseparable things. Accordingly we there find for the first time "the church" spoken of as an existing corporation (Acts 2:47). The Lord Jesus, it is true (Matthew 16:18), had already said, "Upon this rock I will build my church"; but these words themselves prove that His church did not yet exist, save in the purpose of God. "Upon this rock I WILL build my church. It was not yet building. The foundation had to be laid; in death and resurrection alone could it begin. It was essential, as a condition of the existence of the church, that in the cross the middle wall of partition should be broken down, and Jew and Gentile be made one new man: in the next place Gentile and Jewish believers were builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:14-15; Ephesians 2:22). For the Comforter was now come, the promise of the Father, to be in and with them for ever — that Comforter for whom it was expedient that Christ Himself should go away. The old Judaic order was nothing now before God. There was another and better temple, where God's presence was. There was one body, wherein Jewish and Gentile distinctions were absolutely gone, the church on earth, and one Spirit who resided there. It is not a mere continuation of a believing people who looked to promise, but established on accomplished redemption, an entirely new body appears, brought into union with Christ in His heavenly honours, between the first and second advent, while He is absent above. The latter terminus is admitted now by many who would dispute the former. It is confessed that the church is the bride, the Eve of the second Adam, and that the millennial saved people, though just as much saints, as truly redeemed by the blood of Christ, as we are, nevertheless answers to the type of Adam's children, and not of his wife. That is, it is an acknowledged principle that saintship, as in those who succeed the second advent, does not necessarily constitute membership of Christ's body. But as to the former terminus, even a far plainer proof has been here produced as regards the saints who preceded the first advent. Whatever may have been their many and precious promises, they are never in scripture called the church of God; nay, it has been shown that they could not consistently be so termed, because they were not baptized of the Holy Ghost into the one body, and there is no other introduction therein than by that baptism, which did not then exist. The true, the scriptural, limits of the church are the cross and the coming of the Lord Jesus {at the pretribulation rapture}; founded upon the one, and

waiting for the other, is that body, one with its Head on high, in which God dwells by the Holy Ghost; a new and unearthly body, having a path here below traced out for it, in many and important respects, quite distinct from what characterized the Old Testament saints, or what will characterize the millennial saints.

If these principles be admitted, their bearing on the faith, affections, worship, and service of the children of God, will soon be felt and seen. But of such consequences this is not the place to speak, though I would here advert briefly to the way in which they affect our apprehension of the prophetic word. The disciples, though subsequently forming part of the church when it began, were nevertheless not of it during our Lord's ministry on earth. They believed in Christ, they followed Him in His temptations, they were instructed by Him, but were not yet of the church, nor could they be till Jesus was glorified on high, {Acts 2:33} and the Holy Spirit baptized them here below {1 Corinthians 12:13}. Their position was thus a peculiar one during that transitional order of things which began with John Baptist, and terminated with the cross, the proclamation going out meanwhile that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. If Matthew 10:1-42 be examined, it will be seen that the Lord gave them directions, some of which suited them only in their then state, as in Matthew 10:5-6, some of which might well apply when the Spirit was given, as Matthew 10:16; Matthew 10:20; Matthew 10:24; Matthew 10:42, and others, which evidently look on to a future resumption of the testimony among the cities of Israel before the Son of man comes. Compare especially Matthew 10:23. Throughout this chapter — and it is not the only one of the kind — the disciples are addressed as having a peculiar connection with Israel, and in no way as being the church, or as representing it. No one denies that much of the chapter was fulfilled after the descent of the Holy Ghost to form the church. It was then, and in Judea, that persecution fell upon them. Still the chapter does not contemplate them as the church, but as Jewish disciples carrying out a Jewish mission, and awaiting, in the difficulties and sorrows of their testimony in that land, the coming of the Son of man. In Matthew 17:1-27 we find Peter, James, and John, the evident types of the spared and converted Jews in the millennium, and in the same scene Moses and Elias, the types of the glorified saints.

It is upon similar Jewish ground that our Lord speaks in Matthew 24:1-51. His disciples had heard Him pronounce desolation in the preceding chapter. But it was a judgment mingled with mercy; for He distinctly intimated that if the Jews should not see Him henceforth, it was not unlimited; it was till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Vengeance must fall upon the unbelieving generation, such as the mass then were and are. But the time is coming when the nation, or at least a remnant of it, shall bless and curse not; wise ones who understand shall at length with joy welcome Him whom they crucified on the tree. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]? (Matthew 24:1-3). Now it is not doubted that the church may have used, and may still use, the general principles of this chapter. All belongs to the church, for profit, instruction, reproof, or comfort; but most decidedly Matthew 24:1-51 is occupied not with the church, as such, but with Jerusalem and the temple, the consummation of the age, the clash of nations and kingdoms, famines, pestilences, earthquakes,

persecutions, and trials, similar to Matthew 10:1-42, and a preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to all the Gentiles throughout the habitable world. Such is the general picture to Matthew 10:14. After that, the scene becomes more specific, both as to time, place, and circumstances. Precise interpretation must confine Matthew 10:15-31 to a period still future, though Jerusalem is still the foreground. "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand); then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains" (Matthew 24:15-16). Now what has this to do with the church as the church? What has she to do with that holy place? (Compare Acts 6:13; Acts 21:28). And how could the setting up of the abomination in the Jewish temple be a sign to the church to flee? But no! the passage refutes the idea. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Accordingly they are directed to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath-day, nor in the winter, for either might impede their flight and expose them to imminent peril. It is to be a brief though terrible trial: "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" {Matthew 24:22}. That these elect are Jewish elect (see Isaiah 65:9; Isaiah 65:15; Isaiah 65:22) is confirmed by the Lord's warning the disciples about false Christs who shall arise. Could the church, who knows that she is to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air — could she, I say, be in danger from the cries, Lo! here is Christ, or there; behold, He is in the desert, or in the secret chambers? But a perplexed Jewish remnant, whose hope is a Messiah on earth, might well need such monitions as the Lord here supplies. The coming of the Son of man (for it is Christ coming judicially which the chapter contemplates) shall not be secret, but as the lightning shining from east to west. They were not to be enticed by a "Lo, here or there." Other unmistakable signs should be granted. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matthew 24:29). Here again it is manifest that the Lord is not describing the translation of the elect church, but the gathering of His elect Israel, and for a plain reason: "When Christ our life shall appear," says the apostle addressing the heavenly saints, "then shall ye also appear with him in glory" {Colossians 3:4}. Christ will not be manifested first, and the church be caught up subsequently; both are to appear together and at the same time in glory. But with the elect Jews the case widely differs. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30-31). They are delivered and gathered after the Son of man has already appeared. The church had not only been caught up before, but had come out of heaven along with Christ preparatory to His appearing (Revelation 19:11-14). This prophecy, then, in any full sense, for I do not deny a partial historic accomplishment, looks to a future state of things, and directly concerns a believing Jewish remnant, quite distinct from the church. Is it in Matthew, and other Gospels only, where we read of such a converted remnant? By no means. Matthew 24:15; Matthew 24:21 evidently refers us to Daniel for other particulars of the same scenes and times. If therefore it be clear that Matthew 24:15-31 concerns a future converted body of Jews, and not the church, have we not here also a divine help for interpreting Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:1; Daniel 12:7; Daniel 12:11, and the connected parts of the same? That is, the saints spoken of in Daniel are Jewish, saints, and not the church, properly so called. Daniel's people, or at least the understanding ones (compare Matthew 24:15) of that prophet, are those whom the Lord further

instructs in the prophetic discourse of our evangelist. Again, it is admitted very generally that Daniel and the Revelation are so linked that, when you have determined the bearing of the one, you necessarily therein involve the general interpretation of the other. The beast of Daniel 7:1-28 is the beast of Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18; and the time, times and a half, in that same chapter answer to the same period in Revelation 12:1-17, Compare the image in Revelation 13:1-18 with the abomination of desolation in the Gospel. Plainly therefore, while the Apocalypse has many subjects besides those treated of in Daniel or Matthew 24:1-51, while it admits of a far closer application than either to the providential history of the empire, etc., since the days of John, the grand final accomplishment of the book cannot be dissociated from the prophecies of Daniel and of the Lord Jesus Himself, which, we have seen, specially regard Jerusalem and the Jews at the end of the age.

Turning to the Psalms we find this truth confirmed. Let us first take Psalms 79:1-13, and assume what to many readers appears self-evident, that in its full import it tells of a day not yet come. The Holy Ghost there provides an utterance for a suffering people. But for what people? Clearly they are, and speak of themselves to God as His servants, His saints (Psalms 79:2). Now is there a single sentiment which is characteristic of the church of God? Or is there one which does not breathe of Jewish affections and hopes? If the heathen invade Judea, if they defile God’s holy temple in Jerusalem and lay the city in heaps, we can understand how these things may, and will deeply affect the heart of an Israelite. If the Gentiles shed the blood of God’s saints like water round about Jerusalem, and give their flesh to the beasts of the earth, rightly may he pray, "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place." But is this the language of the heavenly bride? Is it suitable to her standing to say, "We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Jehovah, wilt thou be angry? for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed" (Psalms 79:4-5; Psalms 79:10). Is it for us to pray that God may be known among the heathen in our sight, by revenging the shed blood of His servants? "O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low" (Psalms 79:8). Is there not another body of saints of whom these words will be far more emphatically true? Not that the church may not blessedly use such a psalm; not that she may not discern what is essentially applicable to herself: but plainly the circumstances, the experience, the cries, are all characteristic of Jewish saints passing through the fire, and not of the church of God. That they are owned servants of God, who suffer in and near Jerusalem before the Lord appears for their deliverance; that in the next psalm they call on Him that dwells between the cherubim to shine forth; that they acknowledge their sins, and the righteous retributive dealings of Jehovah therein; that they deprecate His anger and jealousy, crying, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved; O Jehovah God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" that they appeal in faith to the God of hosts, cleaving to the link which binds Him to His people, howsoever failing, and entreat His hand to be upon the man of His right hand, "the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself"; that they are saints is plain, but it is equally evident that the whole current of their prayers, sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, and answered by the Lord in person, is quite inconsistent with the calling of the church. Forgiven all trespasses (Colossians 2:13), I admit that it becomes

us, individually conscious of sins, to confess them, in the assurance that God is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9}. But this goes upon the ground that we are forgiven (1 John 2:12), that we are already accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6), and that as He is, so are we in this world (1 John 4:7); whereas in the Psalms it is plain that the believing remnant have still to cry, "Show us thy mercy, O Jehovah, and grant us thy salvation," etc. Full known acceptance is evidently not enjoyed until Jesus appears (compare Zechariah 12:10-14; Zechariah 13:1; Joel 2:1-32; Joel 3:1-21, etc.). As to Psalms 81:1-16, it needs little proof that a joyful noise to the God of Jacob, the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery, the blowing up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on the solemn feast-day, that all this is no statute for the church, though it is for Israel; nor are we ever told to look for the finest of the wheat and honey out of the rock. Again, what relation to Christianity have the earthly tabernacles and glory in the land, beautiful as Psalms 84:1-12; Psalms 85:1-13 may be? So also the fitting supplication for those who hate us is certainly not the language of Psalms 83:9-18; but it is the right utterance of faith in Jewish saints, who are looking to God to arise and judge the earth. "Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison; which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. O my God, make them like a wheel: as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, Jehovah. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."

While the church is being called, God is interfering in no such way. He is proclaiming salvation to the world that rejected and murdered His Son, who is still, so far as man is concerned, the outcast One, though crowned with glory and honour upon the throne of His Father. Hence the church's calling is governed by the present patience of God toward an ungodly world. Suffering, therefore, is her portion meanwhile, and grace, not judgment, her cry to God about her enemies. But the time is fast coming when God's dispensational displays will change, and, instead of making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust alike, "it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come out, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, wherewith Jehovah will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:17-19). When that time comes, there will be another and a suited witness here below; not the church, (whose calling was during the time when the riches of His grace knew no measure, namely, between the cross and the return of the Lord Jesus), but His people Israel, the righteous remnant become a strong nation on earth. "Jehovah said, I will bring again from Bashan: I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea; that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same" (Psalms 68:6. See all Psalms 94:1-23). "Remember, Jehovah, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones

against the stones" (Psalms 137:7-9). "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye Jehovah" (Psalms 149:5-9). I might thus comment on all the Psalms, save the few which describe the atoning sufferings of Christ personally. In all of them it is the Spirit of Christ in special sympathy with Israel, though the Holy Ghost applies to the church in the New Testament many truths which are equally true of us and of them (cp. Psalms 44:22, with Romans 8:36). But this in no way sets aside their proper and prophetic bearings, any more than Hosea 11:1 is denied to contemplate specifically the literal Israel, because in Matthew 2:15 it is referred to Christ.

If then the Psalms are the outpouring of the souls of Jewish saints, if the Spirit of prophecy breathes in them from one end to the other, is it wonderful that the prophet, who especially presents us with the times of the Gentiles, should speak of the trials of the same Saints in the last terrible crisis of suffering? Other prophets dwell much upon their ultimate triumphs, in a state totally different from that in which the Jews are now, namely, under Messiah at His coming, and the new covenant. Daniel describes the four great beasts, and more particularly the last with its little horn, before whom three of the first ten horns, or kings, were subdued. "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the high places, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the high places, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Daniel 7:25-27). If Daniel in Daniel 7:1-28 is occupied with these future Jewish saints and not with the church of God, who does not see that this goes far to decide the just and complete realization of Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18, and of the prophetic portion generally? For it is confessed by most that the Apocalypse is, to a great extent, an expansion of those parts of Daniel’s visions which were still unfulfilled; and those who trace as the grand lesson of the former, the corruptions, persecutions, and judgment of the papacy, are sure to bend a considerable portion of the latter to the same point. On the other hand, if it be clear that Daniel bears decidedly, in the most literal and important aspect of the book, upon the Jewish remnant during "the time of the end" or closing scenes of Gentile supremacy, the Apocalypse is necessarily fixed as having (I do not say its exclusive, but) its main application in the same eventful epoch.

It is in the final results that God proves His judgment. Morally, I admit, we should say that even now there are many antichrists. One might think to hear some reason, that this showed that the Antichrist should not come. But this is not what we have heard in scripture. Neither is it that we deny local events to which many Old Testament prophecies apply. Only it is quite certain if the word of God is to be listened to, that the vast body of the results of prophecy in Old and New Testaments will have their accomplishment in a state altogether different from that which exists at present; when the church will be no longer represented as seven candlesticks on earth, but under the symbol of twenty-four enthroned elders in heaven, and God begins to resume His old associations with the Jews, chastening them in a special way, and judging their proud and

blaspheming Gentile oppressors. To leave the Jewish part out, to slight it, as is commonly done, is folly and presumption. It is presumption, for God will finally prove by judgment what He really is, and the truth of all He has said of man, His hatred of sin, and His faithful mercy enduring for ever. He will demonstrate publicly and irrefragably that there is a reward for the righteous, and a God that judges in the earth. To prefer the protracted period {historicism} is to prefer the moral judgment of man to the perfect manifestation of the almighty judgment of God. It is folly, because the peace and rest which follow God's judgment in power cannot follow our detection of the moral character of what leads to it. The consequences are spiritual vagueness — a condition of soul, in this respect, hardly beyond that of many a pious Israelite who fully acknowledged God's providence, foreknowledge, and wisdom in controlling earthly events. Nay, the judgment and full manifestation of God therein are even less seen in this scheme than a godly Jew might have known before the first advent of Christ.

Daniel 9:1-27 may briefly illustrate what I have been seeking to explain. It is clear that this prophecy directly contemplates the Jews and Jerusalem only. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people (Daniel's people, the Jews), and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy" (Daniel 9:24). I do not doubt that this entire period brings us up to the end of the age {up to the appearing of the Lord in glory}. The terminus a quo {starting point} is equally clear, and, in my opinion, furnished by Nehemiah 2:1-20. From the command to build the city "unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks," the briefer period being occupied probably with the building of the street and wall, and the longer period, added to it, carrying us on to the cutting off of Messiah: "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah (not be born, or enter on His ministry merely, but) be cut off, but not for Himself." He is rejected; His own received Him not. He died for that nation, though not for that nation only {John 11:51-52}. Now this is most important to note. The death of the Messiah is after the sixty-nine weeks expire, and has nothing whatever to do, so far as the text informs us, with the seventieth week. Between that death and the last week an evident gap appears, not measured by dates, but simply filled up by the revelation of disasters upon the city, sanctuary, etc. In this interval we hear of another prince, not the prince who had already come to bless the city, and who was Himself cut off, but "the prince that shall come." It was not foretold that this coming prince was to destroy the city and sanctuary, but that his people should. What people are they? Unquestionably, the Romans; and they did thus destroy. Then follows a general picture of woe to the last. "And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." But what of the last week? It remains entirely apart, and the particulars are given in the closing verse. "And he shall confirm covenant (not the covenant) with many (or the mass) for one week." It is the history of the seventieth week. We have seen Messiah already out off after the sixty-nine weeks; we have heard of another prince coming, whose people, not himself, destroyed the city and the sanctuary {AD 70}. It is of this future Roman prince we are now to learn. He covenants {confirms} for one week, for seven years, with the mass of the Jews (cp. Isaiah 28:14-15; Isaiah 28:18; Isaiah 28:22). The covenant of Christ is an everlasting covenant, and never marred. But this is an evil covenant, and it is by-and-by broken. "In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that, determined, shall be poured upon the desolate." This seventieth week again is taken up, though

perhaps not this period only, in the Apocalypse viewed in its future application; the last half of {the seventieth} which are specified in the period of 1260 days, during which {time} are the witnesses (Revelation 11:1-19), as well as in the time of vengeance, during which the beast has power given which he uses in warring with the saints and overcoming them (Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Daniel 7:1-28). These saints, as we have seen before, are not the church, which is nowhere found on earth from the end of Revelation 3:1-22. Its earthly pilgrimage and testimony had closed before the [seventieth] week began: from Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24; Revelation 19:1-21 the church is seen symbolically in heaven, and in heaven only.

Thus is shown the peculiarity of our position, upon whom the ends of the ages are met. It is a novel, unprecedented and heavenly place, in no way interfering with the vast scheme of God's earthly government: on the contrary, in this latter, room is purposely left for another field, which was entirely hidden of old, namely, for the development of the glory of Christ as the exalted Man. It is with a Christ on high the church is associated. Of course I do not speak of His incommunicable divinity, as the Son, but of a peculiar heavenly glory shared with His bride, and unknown to the Old Testament writers, who dwell so largely upon His Messianic rights. The church then began after the cutting off of Messiah, and goes up to meet the Lord in the air before the seventieth week commences with the Roman prince and his covenant. With the cross the earthly people fell under judgment, how long soever it might linger, while God was gathering a remnant to the Saviour. That same cross becomes the foundation of Christ's heavenly body, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. When this work is concluded, the church will be borne away to join the Lord in the air, and renewed dealings will begin with the earthly people once more. The church has, no doubt, committed to her the more complete revelation of these judgments on the Gentiles which precede the good things in store for Israel, but the strictly prophetic part of the Apocalypse is not therefore about herself. On the contrary it reveals, throughout the chief contents of it, the glorified worshipping in heaven, and the blows of divine judgment falling with a deepening intensity, till Christ and the saints come out of heaven and appear together for the destruction of the beast and the false prophet with their armies.

04.06. Chapter 1 The True Principle Compared with Current Maxims

Chapter 1 The True Principle Compared with Current Maxims

Christ is the centre of the counsels of God, and hence of prophecy, which treats of the earth and of His government of it for His own glory. Hence the importance of Israel, of whom, as according to the flesh, came Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever. They are His people by a choice and calling which cannot fail in the end, though there may be and has been a fall and a long continued disowning of them in God's righteous judgment of their apostasy. But mercy will restore them ere long, humbly, joyfully welcoming the Messiah they have so long rejected. This had been feebly seen, nay, generally denied, throughout Christendom for ages. Scarcely any error is more patent throughout the Fathers than the substitution of the church for Israel in all their system of thought. Every Father, whose remains have come down to us, is a witness of the same allegorizing interpretations; not only the Alexandrian school of Clement and Origen, but Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and the Pseudo-Barnabas. The Latins followed in the same wake, not Augustine and Ruffinus and Jerome only, but Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius. Not one held the restoration of Israel to their land, converted nationally; the millenarian portion expected that the risen saints would reign with Christ in Jerusalem rebuilt, adorned, and enlarged, not that the Jews would be restored and blessed in the land. The medieval writers naturally adopted the same view: so did the Reformers, as far as I am aware, without an exception. All fell into the error of putting the church into the place of Christ, and so of leaving no room for His earthly people, besides His heavenly saints and glorified bride. They neglected the warning of the Apostle Paul, and assumed that the Jewish branches were broken off that the Gentiles might be grafted in, and take their place gloriously and for ever. They did not pay heed to the prophetic word, as Peter exhorts, but applied systematically the predictions of Israel's blessing in the last days to the Christian church: still less did they appreciate the day dawning or the daystar arising in the heart. Catholics, papists, Protestants, had no real light, no spiritual intelligence, as to the hopes of Israel as distinct from those of Christians. Is it not as solemn as it is startling to see thus beyond just question the immediate, universal, and lasting departure of the Christian profession from prophetic truth? But so it is and must be. For the divine glory in Christ as the center for all things in heaven and on earth being the revealed purpose of God (Ephesians 1:10), when this is forgotten, false hopes spring up. Man, self, becomes the end, instead of Christ; the true light is lost, and darkness ensues in the just retribution of God. The effort to make the church all, instead of preserving the real dignity of the church as the heavenly spouse of Christ, lowers her to the position of Israel, a people reigned over, not reigning with Him, His inheritance, not heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The future actings of God as revealed in prophecy are the expression of the principles on which He will govern the world; and so His word is the means by which alone we learn these principles fully. If we fail to ascertain them thus, we form our own thoughts of that which God gave us prophecy whereby to know His mind. Our business is to gather of what and whom God speaks; and no greater delusion can befall us than to imagine that, because all scripture is for our profit, all must be about ourselves. The purpose of God as to the Jews is in its place as truly the object of

faith as His counsels respecting the church. Thus, the apprehension of His various ways for glorifying Christ is essential to real understanding of His word. Here, as everywhere, a single eye is needed. With Christ before us the whole body will not fail to be full of light. Is not this to take away scripture from the Christian? Quite the reverse. To understand it according to God is the truest and richest gain; to misapply it to ourselves in Gentile conceit is ruinous. Yet there is no instruction in the past or future history of Israel as revealed in the Bible which is not for, though not about, the church. That such scriptures concerning the Jew may have been written so as to bear an analogous application to the Gentiles is not denied; but the application calls for the utmost caution and a right dividing of the word of truth, because each economy has its own peculiarities, and in not a few things there are confessedly decided and intended contrasts. It is an error therefore to read the church in Judah and Israel, Zion and Jerusalem; and the effect of this alchemy, which the Fathers originated and handed down to popery and Protestantism alike, has been both to rob Israel of their proper hope and to lower that of the church incalculably.

Yet no maxim of interpretation can compare with this most misleading identification for importance, antiquity, or widespread reception. Since the apostles, perhaps beyond every other tradition, has this been accepted always, everywhere, and by all. Fathers, Romanists, Reformed, have alike applied it habitually in their comments, as well as in practice.

Few sober minds doubt that the visions in Daniel 12:1-13; Daniel 7:1-28 start from the times of the prophet; that the Revelation applied in some sense from John's day; that the fourth beast sets forth the Roman empire; that the little horn in Daniel 7:1-28 denotes its last ruler; that Babylon in Revelation 17:1-18 represents Rome; that the prophecy in 1 Timothy 4:1-16 was fulfilled long ago; that the man of sin relates to the Antichrist, and is rather the ecclesiastical or false prophet power of Revelation 13:1-18 than the imperial chief or first beast; that the two woes in Revelation 9:1-21 are strikingly illustrated in the Saracens and Turks, and that the days, times, etc., may have had a symbolic force. But these are points of detail, all of which together are a trifle compared with the one grave principle which effaces Israel from prophecy and installs the church in their stead. What then can be thought of the judgment that could overlook an error so transcendent, vitiating all sound exposition of both Old Testament and New from Genesis to Revelation? One can account for it by two considerations: first, a quite superficial estimate of the evil involved in this old and general error; secondly, a very exaggerated feeling against those who looked for a personal Antichrist among the Jews and a future revival of the Roman empire before the age ends, lest it should weaken Protestantism in the face of the popish re-awakening in our day. There is no adequate sense of the wrong which has been already done the truth for nearly eighteen centuries, and the darkening influence which Judaizing the church has wrought far and wide in Christendom, among the Orientals, Greeks, and Latins, as well as Protestants more recently, throughout all its history save the first century. The feverish doubts caused by a few fanciful essayists like Drs. Maitland, Todd, and Burgh, Messrs. Tyso, Dodsworth, and the like, were slight indeed compared with the original paralysis which destroyed all true power in the body of Christian profession, whether in the distinct perception of the Christian's heavenly privileges in union with Christ on high, or in the just recognition of God's fidelity to Israel. To my mind the way in which Protestant compromise has played into the hands of Romanism is very serious (and this in many ways more than the prophetic speculations which palliated popery); but I speak of an error far older, deeper, more withering, and less suspected, which seems not to cross the vision of him who would defend

the Protestant interpretation of prophecy against the futurist assailant. The fact is too that it has been the common view of Protestants as well as futurists to take for granted the natural if not necessary clearness of fulfilled prophecy; to make much of general consent among interpreters; and to decry that view which could not plead antiquity or what was held by alleged heretics. Protestantism has ever made much of history, as if time were the interpreter rather than the Spirit of God leading souls into the truth. Hence Protestantism has sought to maintain that prophecy extends in nearly equal proportion over all ages down to the future advent of our Lord. This naturally excites the desire to find what answers to it up to and in our own day. And it is vain to deny that the ablest of Protestant interpreters have themselves laid down that the main use of prophecy is to convict, if not convince, unbelievers. Futurists have in this simply turned Protestant batteries against the Protestant system of interpretation. The Christian, if wise, will eschew party spirit and narrowness here as elsewhere. He need not be a mere futurist because he cannot be a mere Protestant; and if anything ought to deter him from such systematizing, the contractedness of the one, and the virulence of the other, ought to serve as an effectual beacon against both. That half-a-dozen men in their zeal for what they saw to be unfulfilled pushed matters to extremes against the Protestant school which had misled them is clear; but to say that the system of the futurists in its very foundations directly contradicts the early writers is the last degree of controversial blindness if not asperity.

I am sure that it is a poor thing to court or reckon up the suffrages of the more ancient Fathers who wrote on prophecy; but it is absurd to deny that, right or wrong, they stand in the main with the futurists against the historicalists. They held that the end was nigh; they held that the Antichrist was an individual, not a succession; they held that he would take Christ's place, not His vicar's; they held that he would set up to be God in the temple of Jerusalem, not as the Pope in Rome; they held that the days are days, not years, so that the times of Daniel and of the Apocalypse would be but a brief crisis. Now these are the capital points of futurism, as opposed to Protestantism; and how the earlier Fathers thought is beyond controversy. Their foundations are those of the futurists. What has been alleged by special pleading consists of mere individual eccentricities, exaggerated into its very foundations, in order to ensure (or at least yield the semblance of) an easy victory.

Thus the great mass of futurists have ever held that the visions in Daniel start from his own time, if not from a defined point not far distant as the seventy weeks {Daniel 9:1-27}. But then they suppose a gap in the fourth or Roman empire, which, after extinction, is to revive for the time of the end; and of this they have unquestionable proof from scripture. A few persons attacked were excessive in their sentiments. It was apparently from not knowing how much there is common to intelligent minds both futurist and Protestant, as well as to Christians who have larger views than either. It was ignorance probably; if not, it was worse. Such strokes of strategy may suit polemical objects; but they retard the truth, and injure those most who deign to use them or are misled by them. Not the least hurtful of influences in the Protestant system is the assumption that history is the interpreter of prophecy, and the undue place thus given to it. Prophecy explains history, never the converse. No matter how the facts answer to the prediction, they are but the least and lowest part: God's mind in the revealed facts is the lesson, and of this the Spirit is the only teacher, not history. Now He can and does lead the believer into the divine mind as well as the outward facts before, no less than after, fulfilment: so utterly do I reject the alleged futurist principle that fulfilled

prophecy is plain as distinguished from the obscurity of what is unaccomplished. Not so: scripture is only understood aright by the Spirit, who is independent of time or history, and gives divine certainty by and to faith, whether the word of God be about the past or the present or the future. On the face of it the theory is false; for we must understand the prophecy before we can apply it truly, and when we do understand it (which is quite independent of its being fulfilled or not) we have what God meant. The proof of its application to events (that is, of its accomplishment) may be interesting to believers, and useful to meet (or stop the mouths of) unbelievers; but this is not the primary and ordinary intention, for it is in general given to instruct, cheer, and warn the believer, not merely to prove that God knows and speaks the truth beforehand as in some few exceptional instances. And just think of the state of mind which could cite Deuteronomy 4:32, and Psalms 28:5, in proof of the duty of studying history for the interpretation of prophecy! The first passage reminds Israel of the great and terrible fact that God spoke to them out of the fire. Moses appeals to them if ever man had heard the like. What is this to the purpose? Still less, if possible, is the second: the works of Jehovah and the operations of His hands are anything but man's account of man's doings. Nobody doubts that history, as far as it is true, must confirm a prophecy which really speaks of the same events: the question is its use in interpreting. Nor are notorious facts justly to be styled history. In facts of the kind God acts in known public judgment, of which all the world can take cognizance. The fatal flaw here again is the leaving aside His public government for providence secret in its ways, which is not really the subject of prophecy as the general rule. In short then the use of fulfillment in reasoning with infidels is one thing; quite another is interpretation, which is our question.

It is in vain to deny that prophecy in general, even the visions of Daniel which take in the rise and progress of empire very cursorily, converges on the close of the age. Nor is there the least inconsistency in one who sees this, which it is utter prejudice or dishonesty to evade, complaining of that exaggeration of past or passing events to which the historicalists are notoriously prone. Take Daniel 7:1-28 for instance: is it not plain that the early verses as to the first three beasts are only introductory to the object of the Spirit? and that His object was meant to act as a present thing on the conscience, as well as to guide the feet of the saints when the circumstances appear? The confusion arises from the supposition that God's moral government as such has its results now, which it never can have till Christ be manifested, in view of whom all has been carried on. To the historicalist, Christ or His glory is not the key of God's government; he is occupied with the past or present, which is but a parenthesis of secret providence between God's immediate government of old on earth and His resumption of it in the midst of Israel when the beasts and the Gentiles at large are judged. He makes a Ptolemaic theory, instead of seeing facts as they are with Copernicus; he views Christendom meanwhile as the central object, instead of Christ the true centre of the divine system. Hence, during that period of which history ancient or modern is so boastful, the great actors are regarded but as "beasts"; and all is passed over lightly till the conclusion of their history when judgments crowd into a brief space, and the Lord Jesus closes them all by His own personal appearing to judge and reign. Of these "times of the Gentiles" God has not lost sight; and hence they are noticed in Daniel, Zechariah, and the Revelation; but it is mainly to show how Christ will displace all and take the reins of God's kingdom.

Now that God has brought in fuller light, the historicalists are those who oppose it most keenly, because it corrects a vast deal of their visionary interpretations, and they are not prepared for that

which makes little of man as he is in order to exalt the second Man. Like the masses in Christendom, they had lost sight of the proper hope of the Christian. Neither did the so-called futurists deliver minds from the prevalent confusion, being occupied themselves with the solemn events of the last crisis of the age or with the reign of Christ manifested in glory that succeeds. They had, none of them, any adequate hold of the heavenly hope as a distinct thing from prophecy. They might be thought to heed the prophetic word, but enjoyed little, if at all, the day dawning and the day-star arising in their hearts. All was confounded for both.

04.07. Chapter 2 Alleged Presumptions for Historicalism

Chapter 2 Alleged Presumptions for Historicalism The historical school allege in favour of their view certain presumptions, such as these:

1. That it is the nature of scripture prophecy to occupy a continuous range of divine providence, and that this must be especially true of such detailed and symbolic visions as those of Daniel and St. John;

2. that the writers of the primitive church almost unanimously contradict the theory of a future crisis, and agree with the Protestant interpreters on the most material points; and

3. that the discordance of those who contend for a convergence on the end of the age is fatal to the alleged superiority of their interpretation in point of simplicity, harmony and clearness.

I. The following scriptures have been produced to prove, not only that the inference is unsound, but that the allegation is entirely false. The test chosen is to take the leading prophecies in order from the first and to observe the length of the continuous period over which each of them extends.

1. Genesis 3:15 is supposed to denote a continuous period of seven thousand years from the death of Abel to the judgment. But surely this is an arbitrary view, and though in the scripture there may be included the enmity between Satan and man, no spiritual mind can fail to discern that according to God's word the grand bearing of it is found in the two great crises of the cross and the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

2. Genesis 6:3. No one doubts the striving of God's Spirit (or, at least, the days of man) an hundred and twenty years; but, again the interest is concentrated on the judgment which closes all rather than spreads over that interval.

3. Genesis 9:25-27. The curse on Canaan B. C. 1451 (Zechariah 14:21), a period of three thousand three hundred years; but here too one looks onward to the future intervention of Jehovah rather than to any partial dealings meanwhile. And so with the blessing on Shem, and the enlargement of Japheth. To treat John 4:22 as the fulfillment of the former, and Acts 9:18 (? 15), Acts 28:28 as the fulfilment of the latter, seems most inadequate. It confounds the earnest, which may be more or less continuous, with the fulfilment, which is yet future, and far from an unbroken line.

4. Genesis 13:14-17. The possession of Canaan BC 145-AD 70 for 1500 years would be a poor answer to the rich words of the God who gave promises to Abraham. The true accomplishment is still future, and will only be under Messiah and the new covenant.

5. Genesis 15:13-16. No doubt the Israelites were afflicted 400 years by the stranger; but the point of hope was the judgment of that nation, and Abraham's seed coming out with great substance.

6. Genesis 22:16-18. Galatians 3:1-29 shows us that no long period is the point meant, but Christ the risen Seed of Abraham through whom blessing comes to all the nations. The Jewish promise

of supremacy for the countless seed of Abraham is as yet unfulfilled. There is no question here of a space of 4000 years, but of the consequences of Christ's first coming and of His second.

7. Genesis 49:3-27. Here too, in the scattering of Levi, we think not so much of a space as of a fact. There is more ground to speak of continuance in the case of Judah; but it is to me clear and certain that the gathering or obedience of the nations to Shiloh is yet future. It is the kingdom, not the gospel, which is before us here, and a future crisis, not past or present history.

8. Exodus 3:7-12. The sign is not the space of 40 years, but the final token of bringing Israel to Horeb.

9. Leviticus 26:1-46. No doubt the chapter speaks of past sorrow and desolation; but the remembrance of Jehovah's covenant and of the land, when Israel repent, is absolutely future.

10. Numbers 24:17-24. Here also I cannot doubt that the Star's smiting Moab and Edom refers to the great future epoch, not to any bygone period, though there may be a past application of "the ships from Chittim" etc.

11. Deuteronomy 32:7-43. I see nothing properly to be styled a history of Israel in their own land in Deuteronomy 32:7-20 extending over a long period, but rather Jehovah's blessing, Israel's rebellion, and then His judgment, morally pronounced, followed by its execution; then the day when Jehovah's hand will take hold on judgment to render vengeance to His enemies. Is not this crisis rather than the continuous range of events regulated by providence?

12. Deuteronomy 33:5-11. Past discipline appears here and there, but the prophecy points to the known and final crisis. What we see in the Pentateuch is abundantly confirmed in the rest of the Old Testament. Hence we may conclude that, with few exceptions, the nature of prophecy is to deal in crisis rather than to occupy a continuous range of providence. At another season we may look into the symbolical and detailed visions of Daniel and John in detail.

II.

It is supposed that a full induction of facts proves that the writers of the primitive church agree with the Protestant interpreters on the following points:

1. That the head of gold denotes the Babylonian empire, not the person of Nebuchadnezzar, or Babylon and Persia in one.

2. That the silver denotes the Medo-Persian empire.

3. That the brass denotes the Greek empire.

4. That the iron denotes the Roman empire.

5. That the clay mingled with the iron denotes the intermixture of barbarous nations in the Roman empire.

6. That the mingling with the seed of men relates to intermarriages among the kings of the divided empire.

7. That the lion denotes the Babylonian empire.

8. That the eagle wings relate to Nebuchadnezzar's ambition.

9. That the bear denotes the Medo-Persian empire.

10. That the rising on one side signifies the later supremacy of the Persians.

11. That the leopard relates to the Macedonian empire.

12. That the four wings denote the rapidity of Alexander's conquests.

13. That the fourth beast is the Roman empire.

14. That the ten horns denote a tenfold division of that empire, which was then future.

15. That the division began in the fourth and fifth centuries.

16. That the rise of the ten horns is later than the rise of the beast.

17. That the vision of the ram and he-goat begins from the time of the prophecy.

18. That the higher horn of the ram denotes the Persian dynasty beginning with Cyrus.

19. That the first horn of the he-goat is Alexander the Great.

20. That the breaking of the horn, when strong, relates to the sudden death of Alexander in the height of his power.

21. That the four horns denote four main kingdoms into which the Macedonian empire was divided.

22. That the three kings (Daniel 11:2) are Cambyses, Smerdis and Darius.

23. That the expedition against Greece is that of Xerxes, BC 485.

24. That the mighty king (Daniel 11:3) is Alexander the Great.

25. That the king's daughter of the south is Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus.

26. That the one from the branch of her roots is Ptolemy Euergetes.

27. That the sons of the king of the north are Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great.

28. That the battle (Daniel 11:11) is that of Raphia.

29. That the battle (Daniel 11:15) is that of Panium.

30. That the daughter of women (Daniel 11:17) is Cleopatra, daughter of Antiochus the Great.

31. That the expedition (Daniel 11:18) is that of Antiochus against Greece.

32. That the prince (Daniel 11:18) denotes the Roman power.

33. That the death of Antiochus is predicted in verse Daniel 11:19.

34. That the raiser of taxes is Seleucus Philopator.

35. That the letting person or thing (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17) is the imperial power of Rome.

36. That the Apocalypse begins from the time of St. John.

37. That the first seal (Revelation 6:1-17) relates to the early triumphs of the gospel. On the other hand it is allowed that the early Christian writers are opposed to the Protestant school as to the following weighty points:

1. That the ten toes denote individual persons.

2. That the ten horns denote the same.

3. That the little horn (Daniel 7:1-28) is an individual king.

4. That the times, time, and a half of Daniel are three and a half years.

5. That the period of Daniel 8:1-27. consists of literal days.

6. That the 1290 days, and 1335 days in Daniel 12:1-13 are to be taken literally.

7. That the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17) is an individual.

8*. That the 42 months are three and a half years literally.

9*. That the 1260 days are literal.

10*. That the two witnesses are individuals.

11. That the beast and the false prophet are two individuals.

12. That the ten kings (Revelation 17:1-18) are individuals. The points are marked with asterisks where concurrence is but partial. Thus some at least of the ancients apply the toes of iron and clay, or divisions of the empire, not to the barbarian kingdoms which sprang up in the 4th and 5th centuries, but to the kings of it at the very end, whom the Lord will find and crush at His second advent; as they also interpreted the little horn in Daniel 8:1-27 of Antiochus rather than of Antichrist, and some of the periods indefinitely. But it is a total mistake that any, save a few extreme futurists who never exercised influence on serious souls in general, differ from the former list, save as to 35 and 36 in part. Thus the letting {restraining} power {2 Thessalonians 2:1-17} is, I believe, the Spirit of God, and this not merely as dwelling in the church, but yet more distinctly as acting governmentally in divine providence. Hence the ancient reference was imperfect rather than false. Corrupt as Babylon is, it is not yet the apostasy nor the man of sin revealed. He who letteth acts still, though imperial Rome is long gone. The Holy Spirit is that power and person who hinders as yet the display and working of the lawless one, whatever governmental means He is pleased to employ for the world’s good order. Again, I do not doubt a general application of the Revelation since the time of St. John, viewing the seven churches as past, instead of as "the things which are" followed by the rest of the book as converging on the great future crisis. Of 37 the less may be said, as almost every person of intelligence has now abandoned the old fancy of early gospel triumph and among them (if I mistake not) the very person who first drew up this list. But it must also be repeated, that among sober Christian inquirers the long first list is accepted on all sides; so that the second tells against the historical interpreters with unbroken force. This demonstrates how far any are justified in affirming that the Protestants have the warrant from antiquity tenfold on their side. The truth is that in all their distinctive features they stand wholly unsupported, yea opposed.

Yet one must frankly allow that no importance whatever should be attached to early tradition. Scripture, and scripture alone, is the only sure arbiter, the sole reliable source of the pure truth of God; and the children of God should be the more jealous on this score, as we see around us the unmistakable results of recurrence to tradition in the revived Judaism of our day. It is ridiculously ignorant however to suppose that the mass of Christians who look for the brief future crisis of a personal Antichrist in Jerusalem and a revived Roman empire to be destroyed by Christ in person have ever questioned these thirty and more points any more than the dozen which follow. The representation to the contrary is a mere sleight of hand trick of controversy, unless indeed those who made it knew very little of the real thoughts of those who have most studied prophecy in our day.

III. The last head remains to be noticed, the discordance of such men as Drs. Maitland, Todd, and Burgh, of Messrs. Tyso, etc. The believer is in no way concerned in defending the discrepancies of all, any more than the desire on the part of some to palliate Romanism. They were none of them men who took their stand in simple faith on the word and Spirit of God. Nevertheless, faulty and rash as their interpretations may be, and in points of detail often at variance with one another, they did service in recalling attention to the neglected and imminent end of the age, "the time of harvest," as in other senses, so for prophecy also. There would be little edification in occupying the reader with a collation of their mutual contradictions or with those of the Protestant school, which simply show how far both are from deserving confidence. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (no morning)in them." The Christian has no interest save in God's communications, which are very sure, and make wise the simple. In keeping them there is great reward.

Here too appears the importance of seeing that the manifestation of God's glory in Christ is the proper object of prophecy. Had this been seen and held firmly, men could not have lost themselves in vain efforts to find in the past or the present what answers not to it save in scanty measure. Before Christ God was proving in every form the first man: since His rejection and the accomplishment of redemption on the cross, the Holy Spirit is revealing the mystery hidden from ages to the church, as well as publishing the gospel to every creature. It is of the scenes called the consummation of the age, συντ■λεια το■ α■■νος, as well as of the subsequent kingdom when the Son of man is manifested in power and glory, that prophecy treats, whether in the Old Testament or in the New. Rarely does the Spirit touch on any circumstance of guilt on man's part or of judgment on God's, without going on to these solemn times which introduce the days of heaven on the earth; and this is just as true of the symbolic visions of Daniel and St. John as of the rest, although there is no doubt expressed in the last a more systematized series. But other dealings of God at the time of the prophet were but inchoative and germinant: the crisis is, as the rule and with very few and slight and evident exceptions, the plane of incidence where prophetic words and visions and types meet in Christ, then revealed and no longer hidden as now, the centre of all things in heaven and on earth. To stop short of this, and arrest the mind meanwhile on analogies supposed or even occasionally real, is not only an error fatal to the true understanding of prophecy but bears evidence of a heart not in accord with the mind and purpose of God in glorifying His Son. For special reasons there might be revealed a chain of comparatively ordinary events in providence, as for instance from the first and through the greater part of Daniel 11:1-45, where in scripture historical account fails. But even there it is but introductory, as invariably, to the

great principle of crisis. For we are only brought down continuously on the one hand to Antiochus Epiphanes and his iniquitous efforts against the Jews, the temple and the law, with the disastrous issue for himself, his instruments, or his victims, and the Maccabean stand on the other hand. Then follows a vast break, and we are abruptly landed in presence of the last wilful king in the land of Judea, and the final conflicts of the kings of the north and the south, terminated by divine intervention and the deliverance of the chosen people. It is plain to any upright and intelligent mind that, whatever be the importance of every word (and this it is not for me to deny or weaken), the grand point of the Spirit is to direct all hearts to the tremendous catastrophe of the close, which follows, not the merely introductory thread of continuous facts, 2000 years past, but the vast gap, after Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees, till the personal Antichrist reigns in the land, the old jealousies of the north and the south reproduce themselves round devoted Palestine and the Jews, and the power of God interferes to put down all rebels within or without, and establish the wise and holy in peace under the reign of Him who is Ancient of days no less than Son of man, and who must yet be honoured on earth as well as in heaven to the glory of God the Father. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." The risen saints will reign along with Him over the earth, but from their own proper heavenly sphere: He is head to the church over all things.

04.08. Chapter 3 The Four Empires

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It has been already shown that the clearness or the obscurity of prophecy is independent of its fulfilment, and that Protestants and futurists have been almost equally guilty of mistake as to this. For many among both have assumed its necessary obscurity when unaccomplished and its clearness when fulfilled. Both also have been eager to avoid the objection of novelty against their own system, and anxious to claim the consent of antiquity, not knowing that the Fathers were serious offenders against the truth and particularly ignorant on the subject of prophecy.

Nevertheless it ought to be not a matter of litigation but certain that the Protestant exposition in all its peculiarities is at direct issue with the early ecclesiastical writers who stood on the main foundations of futurism, except indeed as regards the restoration of Israel to their own land, which many Protestants allow no less than futurists. In this at least no instructed mind can agree with the Fathers; and the difference enlarges according to knowledge. Of the other presumptions for or against their respective systems, enough has been said already. As to such a protracted application as Protestant writers conceive, the Fathers knew nothing, expected nothing, of it. Some of the earliest held with the futurists that the prophecies of scripture are mainly occupied with the grand crisis at the end of the age; but the fact is however that very few appear to have known anything worth notice about these subjects, even in principle, not to speak of details.

We may now enter on a direct examination of prophecy, at least of that portion which is most in debate. And here it may be well to bear in mind its distinctive character. Prophecy is not, like Christianity, the revelation of God’s counsels but rather of His kingdom or of His ways in bringing it in. It is occupied, not with heaven and the sovereign grace that gathers to Christ there, but with the earth, and hence with the judgments of God which put down evil in order to the reign of righteousness. No mistake can be more profound than the notion that its main subject is the outline of secret providence during the last two thousand years and more. Daniel in the Old Testament shows us the rise and fall of the four great Gentile empires, the Revelation in the New Testament adding much light on the last phase of the fourth; but this is an episode rather than the direct subject of prophecy, which necessarily has Israel in view as the central people in the plans of God for the government of the world. Only their history branches into two divisions: Israel under the first covenant, failing at every point to the uttermost; by and by Israel under the new covenant met, delivered and blessed in divine mercy, and then used for His glory among all nations here below. All turns on Christ. There was idolatrous apostasy of old, which was judged in the Babylonish captivity; but when He was rejected by them as a nation, what could there be but misery and ruin? When He is by grace received, there will be abundant fruits of mercy and goodness. The interval between His rejection and His reception by the Jew is filled by "the times of the Gentiles," under the fourth empire the gospel also going out and the church of God coming in. After this last empire in its last condition is judged at the Lord’s appearing from heaven, the regular order of prophecy resumes its course, and Israel becomes the head and centre of all nations, the

Gentiles the tail. The Jews, no doubt, were blindly ignorant, and did perversely distort the word of prophecy; but it was a worse error which brought on their final catastrophe and dispersion. It was their insubjection to God, their self-righteous refusal to repent, their rejection of the Messiah and of the gospel. All through their history they only who looked for the Messiah served God according to His law; and, when the Messiah came, those who received Him not were alien from all His will and ways, no less than from the object of faith that grace then presented to them. So now it is evil to slight prophecy, but it is not wise to exaggerate that evil; for there is one still deeper underneath, the evil that slights Christ and consequently resists the Holy Ghost as well as the authority of the word of God in general. Faith in God is the great want of souls. How solemnly the Lord has the lack of it before His Spirit when anticipating His return to the earth! I see no room for boasting in Protestants against futurists, or in futurists against Protestants. Mede, Vitringa, and Bengel were men of piety, seriousness, and learning; but it is impossible to have the requisite spiritual intelligence for apprehending prophecy, or the word of God generally, till the Christian calling on high is discriminated from the earthly calling of Israel, and this intelligence is equally and conspicuously absent from both schools. It is a mistaken thought that any but a very few futurists ever doubted the ordinary meaning of the four Gentile empires, or of the other prophecies in Daniel 8:1-27; Daniel 9:1-27; Daniel 11:1-45. The mass of futurists agree with the mass of Protestants as to these elementary outlines. They may differ a little as to Matthew 24:1-51, and still more as to the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse. On the other hand there is no doubt that, as to an alleged succession of the horns and the little horn of the fourth beast, the abomination of desolation, the man of sin, Babylon, etc., the historical school departs widely from the ancients.

But, as to the four empires in general, there is no real discrepancy among grave and thoughtful Christians. When we come to the details of the fourth or Roman empire, the divergence is considerable. A few eccentric individuals in modern as in ancient times have indulged in doubts and broached strange theories; but all sober persons apply the visions of the great image (Daniel 2:1-49) and of the four beasts (Daniel 7:1-28) to the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The broad truth of this is indisputable. They were successive kingdoms, to which God allowed universal supremacy from the ruin of the Jewish state by Nebuchadnezzar till the Messiah. But this advent, as it was a perplexity to the Jews who looked for His glory and not His sufferings, seems scarcely less enigmatic to Christendom, which looks at His sufferings, not at His glory as returning to judge it — one knows not how soon. It is particularly in view of this last point that difficulties are felt and found among interpreters. The soul that does not judge the present state of Christendom will no more understand prophecy than the Jew who failed to judge according to God the Jewish condition when Messiah first presented Himself. Without faith it is impossible to understand the word, any more than to please God in our ways. Accurate statement, sound reasoning, gravity and reverence are excellent; but, without the faith which applies the truth with a single eye to judge oneself and all things else in relation to God, they are wholly unavailing.

Further, not only are the four empires acknowledged to be successive in their rule, but they correspond respectively in each vision. The head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream answers to the lion, the breast of silver to the bear, the middle of brass to the winged leopard, the lower extremities of iron and clay to the unnamed ravening beast of the prophet's vision. Only the great image was the more comprehensive of the two, that of the four beasts much the more detailed. The Son of Man's kingdom is evidently that which answers to the vision of the little stone which

becomes a great mountain. The doubts of the late Drs. Maitland and Todd, as of Grotius and others before, are mere incredulity. They never exercised the slightest influence among spiritual men. It is as to the course and conclusion of the last of the beasts or empires that we find the greatest disagreement. But there ought to have been no hesitation that, as the third means the rapidly acquired Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great, so the next is the Roman. Its place as the fourth (recognized in the New Testament as then in power), its strength, its subsequent division, its mingling with the seed of men, its sudden and utter destruction at the Lord's second advent, point unanswerably to the same conclusion.

Here the Revelation supplies the most weighty intimations to help us out of difficulties; for it tells us of the fourth beast that "it was, and is not, and shall be present"; and, further, that its future re-appearance is to be "from the pit or abyss." One can understand the ruin of that empire which played its part in the crucifixion of the Lord, and which will revive by diabolical energy in the last days to oppose Him when He returns from heaven to restore the kingdom to Israel.

Here is the statement of the man who did most to lay the foundation of the Protestant school {J. Mede}:

Nebuchadnezzar's image points out two states of the kingdom of Christ, the first to be while those times of the kingdoms of the Gentiles yet lasted, typified by a stone hewn out of a mountain without hands, the monarchical statue yet standing upon his feet, the second not to be until the utter destruction and dissipation of the image, when the stone, having smote it upon the feet, should grow into a great mountain which should fill the whole earth. The first may be called, for distinction's sake, regnum lapidis, the kingdom of the stone, which is the state of Christ's kingdom which hitherto hath been; the other, regnum montis, (that is of the stone grown to a mountain, etc.) which is the state of His kingdom which hereafter shall be. The intervallum between these two, from the time the stone was first hewn out (that is, the kingdom of Christ was first advanced) until the time it becomes a mountain (that is, when the mystery of God shall be finished), is the subject of the Apocalyptical visions.

Note here, first, that the stone is expounded by Daniel to be that lasting kingdom which the God of heaven should set up; secondly, that the stone was hewn out of the mountain before it smote the image on the feet and consequently before the image was dissipated; and therefore that the kingdom, typified by the stone while it remained a stone, must needs be within the times of those monarchies, that is, before the last of them (namely the Roman) should expire. Wherefore Daniel interprets that in the days of these kingdoms (not after them, but while some of them were yet in being) the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor left (as they were) to another people; but should break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and itself should stand forever. And all this he speaks as the interpretation of the stone. "Forasmuch" (saith he) "that a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold." Here make the full point; for these words belong not to that which follows (as our Bibles by mis-distinguishing seem to refer them) but to that which went before of their interpretation. But the stone becoming a mountain he expounds not, but leaves to be gathered by what he had already expounded." (Mede's Works, pp. 743, 744, 4th edition, London, 1677). But the little stone is plainly the kingdom of God in Christ, which was only seen to come after the image was fully out, even to the toes; and its first action was to smite the

feet and toes, reducing the whole statue to powder, after which it grows into a mountain and fills the whole earth. That is, the gospel, or the kingdom of God now known to faith, is wholly excluded from the prophet. The vision looks at nothing but the second advent in power and glory, beginning with the judgment of the imperial system in its last form, and then the kingdom of God diffused to the blessing of all the earth and to His own glory for ever. The Protestant idea of a "regnum lapidis" going on from the incarnation of Christ through the whole course of ancient and modern history is a mere interpolation. Even Theodoret had better light. One can have no sympathy with the unbelief which overlooks the solemn place of the Roman empire, past or future; but why should one countenance the fable of a "regnum lapidis" meanwhile? It is possible and the fact that more than one untoward futurist denied the fourth kingdom to be the Roman empire, and this to relieve the papacy as well as to shake confidence in Protestant views. The truth is that there is no vitality, nor sanctifying power, save in the word received in the Holy Ghost. To slip away from this into the study of the elder commentators, especially of the Fathers, does pave the way for a relapse into the idolatrous embraces of the mystic Babylon, which might well turn to her own account the fable of the "regnum lapidis." For she at least desires to reign now as a queen without sorrow, instead of being content with the apostles and saints to wait, apart from the world and in present rejection, for the Bridegroom, that we may reign together with Him at His coming.

I am not disposed to deny an application of prophecy, especially of the Apocalypse, throughout the middle ages; but it must be owned by fair minds that the resemblance between the prophetic visions and the historical facts is slight and vague. Who can wonder then that the injudicious efforts of most commentators known as Protestants, who sought to prove the most punctual fulfilment in the past, led to that reaction which is commonly called futurism? The Christian will do well to study the written word in peace, undistracted by controversy, profiting by every real help God vouchsafes him, but holding firmly to dependence on the Lord to open His word to him, whether prophetic or any other. It is the Holy Spirit who alone can, who will do so only where grace makes one true to the glory of Christ. For this He is sent down; and He at least is true to the divine purpose. But on the other hand one may ask of those zealous for the past application of Daniel 2:1-49; Daniel 7:1-28, where is the complete and exhaustive likeness they profess to find between hordes of barbarians breaking up a long sick and expiring empire into some (say ten) portions in which they establish themselves, in the course of a century and a half, and a power of extraordinary vigour with ten kingdoms as the expression of its strength, swayed by one mind, which gives all unity, whether first to wreak God’s vengeance in idolatrous corruption, or finally to conspire against the Lamb to their own destruction? In fact, even when one looks into the prophecies which deal with the times of the Gentiles, it is not true that their object is to enter into the details of succession (Daniel 11:1-45 being only in part an exception for peculiar reasons), but the Spirit is content to give the broad general facts with distinct light converging on the solemn crisis when God displays and establishes His kingdom on the rebellious ruin of man’s. The reason why people prefer to apply it historically is, because this transfers the mind’s attention to what the world has written and gives a certain scope to human ingenuity as well as research. But it weakens the impressive lesson of divine judgment on that which is highly esteemed among men. The true view recalls the conscience to God and His word, concentrating our attention on the evil and ruin of the first man, and on the sure coming and reign of the Second.

04.09. Chapter 4 The Vision of the Ram and He-Goat

Chapter 4 The Vision of the Ram and He-Goat The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as the vision of the prophet in the first year of Belshazzar (Daniel 7:1), embraced the entire circle of the four world-powers. The vision of Daniel 8:1-27 stands strikingly contra-distinguished in this that here we have only to do with the second and third of these empires, though (as it will be shown) we are brought down to the time of the end in an off-shoot of the third empire. No grave Christian doubts what every dispassionate reader of the prophet must see, that the ancient Medo-Persian and Macedonian powers are set before us.

It seems surprising that any one should make more than their worth of the singular speculations of the late Dr. Todd. For who can fail to see the unusual distinctness in the interpretation supplied by the Holy Spirit Himself? One need not reason on the date or the scene of the vision: Daniel 8:20-21 are decisive to any simple mind. On the one hand the final superiority of the Persian over the Median is evident when we compare Daniel 8:3 with Daniel 8:20; the eastern source of it on its course of conquest westward, northward, and southward, being marked in Daniel 8:4. On the other hand the Macedonian conqueror and his overthrow of the great king appears most graphically in Daniel 8:5-7 as compared with Daniel 8:21. History may and does illustrate; but no believer needs more than is here given to have a clear intelligent certainty of conviction as to the prophecy and its application. Daniel 8:8, Daniel 8:22 plainly point to a fourfold division after the death of Alexander the Great (not by defeat or when internal discord dissolved the kingdom, but contrariwise "when he was strong, the great horn was broken"), "four notable horns"; and so there were as is commonly known. It was absurd therefore to argue from Daniel 8:17 in Gabriel's explanation that all the vision related to "the time of the end," or that the powers represented by the ram and he-goat are future. But it is a characteristic and an all but universal error of the historical school that they enfeeble and lose sight of the truth that the main object and interest of the vision hinges on "the time of the end," the end of the indignation which rests on the Jewish people. There ought to be no need of proof that the end of the divine displeasure with the ancient people is certainly yet future. It is in vain to refer to Daniel 9:26, or 1 Corinthians 10:11, to turn aside the phrase from its bearing on the end of the age. For the prophet in the one expressly limits the end to the city and the sanctuary, and brings in a definite subsequent period before the way is open for blessing; and the apostle means in the other that the ends of the ages are come, or met, on us, Christians. Matthew 24:14, which is also appealed to, really confirms the future view; for "the end" there spoken of is assuredly not yet come.

It may be added that there is no great difficulty in the way of applying the host of heaven and the stars to the Jewish system and its rulers, though at this time supposed to be subject to the Gentile beasts politically. The people may be Lo-Ammi; but such a designation, though it be not a figure from the day of Jehovah but rather from the night during which they feebly shone, was at any rate a testimony to their hopes whilst it acknowledged their true estate meanwhile. The last king of the north finds himself in collision with Christ, the Prince of princes, and perishes by divine judgment. But this king of the north is as distinct from the wilful king who will reign in Palestine as from the

last head of the Roman empire, though all of them daring enemies of the Lord at the same epoch, as will be shown presently at greater length. Ancients and moderns have generally confounded all three.

Observe again the fact that the very language is changed, which from Daniel 2:1-49 was Chaldee. Now from Daniel 7:1-28, as bearing on that which, while connected with the Gentile powers, specially touched the ancient people of God, Hebrew is employed. Were it the design to draw particular attention to Cyrus and the details of that victorious career in which he had just entered when the vision was given, the propriety of this would be by no means apparent. Nor is it at all convincing that the reason for representing the second and third empires by the ram and goat (that is, not beasts of prey, but animals of sacrifice) is their favouring Israel, when both had been represented in the chapter before to the same prophet under the symbol of the bear and the winged leopard; yea, when in this very chapter the grand point is a king mighty, but not by his own power, who shall destroy the Jews, but himself be broken without hand — a vision which affected the seer yet more deeply than that of Daniel 7:1-28. No one denies the admirable symbols employed to depict the comparatively slow and heavy aggressiveness of the Medo-Persian, and the amazing rapidity and impetuous force of the spirited Greek; also the subsequent division of the Syro-Greek kingdom of the north. But all this, however full of interest, is preparatory to the main design for the latter day when a mysterious king shall meddle with the Jews to the hurt of many among them, but to his own destruction. That Antiochus Epiphanes answers in part to the little horn in the vision (Daniel 8:10) I do not for a moment doubt.

Only it is well to remark three points: first, the parenthesis consisting of Daniel 7:11 and the first half of Daniel 7:12, in which "he" takes the place of "it," apparently looking onward to the great personage of the close rather than to the horn of the goat that typified him; secondly, that Daniel 7:13-14 do not necessarily go beyond the defilement which has already taken place; thirdly, that the interpretation concerns itself with the crisis at the end, only linking on the proximate Medo-Persian and Greek empires with that tremendous issue, but with an enormous gap manifestly between the circumstances then at hand and the last end of the indignation of God against Israel. To deny the all-importance of the crisis in order to eke out a case of continuity here would be mere infatuation, the effect of a blinding system.

04.10. Chapter 5 Supplementary Observations

Chapter 5 Supplementary Observations

There are two matters which it seems desirable briefly to meet before passing on to fresh matter, as the true solution may confirm what has been already urged, and clear the way for what is to come. One is the question as to the identity of the two little horns of Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 8:1-27; the other the use of the word "kings" as equivalent to kingdoms. These are handled in this order. The Two Little Horns The tendency of ancient as of modern times has been in prophecy, as everywhere else in scripture, to confound things that differ. Thus, on a large scale, the trials and hopes of Israel have been merged in those of the church, to the enormous loss of intelligence in the mind of God as revealed in His word; on a lesser {scale}, we see a similar confusion as to the great actors of the latter day, which inevitably narrows the scope of prophecy and spreads a haze over the solemn issues of the final conflicts of good and evil. From this the futurists have never fully emerged, for they in general make the Antichrist of the end to be the last enemy of the church instead of being the head of the Jews and Christendom apostate, and they leave no room for the other foes of the Lord, making all the prophecies of evil powers at the end concentrate in that great adversary. Now though it is natural for us to feel a special interest in the West, we ought not to lose sight of the East if we would have an adequate view of the field. The truth is also that obvious uncertainty surrounds every school of interpretation as to the little horn of Daniel 8:1-27. Thus, while the ancients with almost one voice conceived that it presents the character and persecutions and end of Antiochus Epiphanes (some also maintaining a future reference to the wicked or lawless one, the Antichrist of St. John), Sir I. Newton (followed by his Episcopal namesake) and not a few others applied it to the Gracoe-Roman empire; but far more since view in it the Mahometan power, some of them interpreting it of the Turk. Others refer it, like Daniel 7:1-28, to the Papacy. No reader will be surprised to hear that the latter theories were not held of old, but that men, Jews and Christians, held then that Antiochus Epiphanes was meant, though many felt that more was included in the prophecy and regarded that enemy of the Jews as typical of their final adversary. Sir I. N. reasons thus against the view so long prevalent: This horn was at first a little one, and waxed exceeding great; but so did not Antiochus. His kingdom on the contrary was weak and tributary to the Romans, and he did not enlarge it. The horn was a king of fierce countenance, destroyed wonderfully, prospered and practiced (that is, he prospered in his practices against the holy people); but Antiochus was frightened out of Egypt by a mere message of the Romans, and afterwards routed and baffled by the Jews. The horn was mighty by another’s power, Antiochus by his own. The horn stood up against the prince of heaven, the prince of princes; and this is the character not of Antiochus but of Antichrist. The horn cast down the sanctuary to the ground, and so did not Antiochus: he left it standing. The sanctuary and the host were to be trampled under foot until two thousand three hundred days, and in Daniel’s prophecies days are put for years. But the profanation in the reign of Antiochus did not last so many natural days. They were to last until the time of the end, till the last end of the indignation against the Jews; and this indignation is not yet at an end. They were to last until the sanctuary which had been cast down should be cleansed;

and the sanctuary is not yet cleansed. The utmost then which can be allowed is that the prophecy had only a precursive and partial accomplishment in Antiochus. Its proper fulfillment is future. On the other hand, they are wholly mistaken who, futurist or historical, identify the little horns of the two prophecies (Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 8:1-27). No doubt there are points of resemblance between them, as there are between all men; but how absurd to deny their distinctness!

It has been well shown that there are at least ten particulars predicted of the first horn:

þ its rise from the fourth beast;

þ its co-existence with ten kings, þ and its subjugation of three;

þ its eyes as of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, þ and its judgment by the Ancient of days;

þ diverseness from the other kings;

þ blasphemy against God;

þ persecution of the saints;

þ changing of times and laws;

þ and continuance for a time, times, and the dividing of time.

Again, at least twelve points are given as to the second horn:

þ its rise from the he-goat or Grecian empire in one of its five divisions;

þ its great increase of size and power, þ and the three directions of its conquests;

þ its trampling on the stars of heaven;

þ opposition to the prince of the host;

þ removal of the sacrifice and casting down of the sanctuary;

þ the time (two thousand three hundred days) of continuance or of some related events;

þ its might not by its own power;

þ its fierceness of countenance;

þ its understanding of dark sentences;

þ its triumph by policy;

þ and destruction without hand. The truth is that the marks of likeness between these two powers are of the most shadowy character, those of difference sharply defined and numerous. They agree in being enemies of the Lord and of His people, well as in their awful end under His judgment when He appears and reigns; but even here the form, circumstances, and precise epoch differ widely. The question is in no way one between the historical school and futurists, for a few of both see aright, the mass of both indistinctly, and some who reject both see at least not less clearly than any of either party. The Prophetic Significance of Kings On this one may be brief, as scripture

shows that while "horn" means a kingly person or power, it may according to the context mean a succession and not merely an individual. It cannot be assumed that a succession is always meant, for it more frequently refers to a single person. But in Daniel 7:17-23 we have the decisive proof that a king may mean morally a kingdom. To treat this however as a license for so interpreting it universally in these prophecies is unwarrantable.

04.11. Chapter 6 The Seventy Weeks of Dan_9:1-27

Chapter 6 The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:1-27 The main defect in the historical school here is one which vitiates almost every writer pertaining to it — the assumption that the seventieth week terminates, either with the death of the Messiah and its immediate results, or at most with the destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman power. There are not a few varieties of exposition among moderns as among older writers; but the error named has been and is an insuperable hindrance to a real understanding of the vision as a whole.

They all shut out the future from the last seventieth week, which nevertheless can be demonstrated to be its true force unfulfilled. Most of them deny a break or interval in the chain which nevertheless can be proved to be required on any right view of the prophecy. They thus destroy the analogy between this and all the other visions of Daniel, which from first to last bring us down to the point when the guilty Gentiles vanish under the judgment of God and give place to Him whose is the kingdom, and whose reign shall not pass away.

Further, those who regard every vision in the book of Daniel as going on to the future, that is, to the end of the age (though for this very reason not continuously, but with a broad and in general a well-defined gap) in no way deny truths common to almost all who have studied the prophecy. For instance, it is maintained by all, save three or four pseudo-literalists of no spiritual weight, that the first advent and death of Christ is foretold here, as well as the overthrow of the Jewish polity; secondly, that the weeks or sevens are to be reckoned as of years and not of days; and, thirdly, that 7 + 62 (= 69) such weeks were to elapse from the Persian decree to build Jerusalem before the cutting off of the Messiah. Rightly understood this, like all the visions in Daniel, goes on to the end of the age.

It is interesting by the way to note that the oldest extant exposition of the book approaches more closely to the truth than most of the works written on the prophecy since. For Hippolytus of Rome is distinct in this at least that the last week is occupied exclusively with the future immediately before the appearing of our Lord in judgment of the quick {the living on earth}. There is not only mistake as to the starting point but the ordinary confusion of the Antichrist with the two little horns of Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 8:1-27, the first beast of the sea, and the Assyrian or king of the north. This however need not surprise any one acquainted with the views which have prevailed and still prevail. It is the common state of all, whether historical or futurist. The good bishop's chronology seems defective enough in thinking that sixty-two hebdomads {sevens} of years (even adding the previous seven) would cover the space since the return from Babylon to Christ's coming; but there can be no doubt that he interpreted the last hebdomad {seven} of the future, as indeed Primatius was disposed to do. Compare Hippol. R. Opp. ed, De Lagarde, pp. 23, 104, 108, 114, 166, 187.

There is the manifest and striking difference in this prophecy from the previous ones, that it is occupied mainly not with the Gentile conquerors so much as with Jerusalem, its sanctuary, and Messiah, with its glory and spiritual blessedness at least at the close, but with disasters and ruin to the last degree, not only during the last week, but for a term unmeasured before it. From the

beginning of the chapter {Daniel 9:2} we learn how unfounded it is to wait till a prophecy is fulfilled before profiting by it. This did not Daniel, who understood, not by a special intimation to himself but "by books," the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet. Himself a prophet too, he shows us the importance of weighing the prophetic word already given. Babylon was taken punctually: were not the same seventy years to issue in the return of the Jews from captivity? No sign of this favor of God had yet been given, save so far as the fall of the captor city might be its earnest. Daniel, not doubting but believing, sets his face to the Lord Jehovah to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. Such was the effect on one who judged the present in the light of the word and of prophecy among the rest: not occupation with political speculation, but confession and humiliation and intercession before God. Daniel identifies himself with all Israel. "And I prayed unto Jehovah my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him; and to them that keep his commandments, we have sinned and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets which spoke in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land." There is thorough vindication of the Lord and condemnation of all Israel (Daniel 9:7-8). There is a pleading of His mercy and forgiveness (Daniel 9:9), but a renewed acknowledgment of disobedience and transgression on the part of all Israel, to which the curse written in Moses, under which they were groaning, is imputed (Daniel 9:10-12). It is owned that, though the Lord had smitten them, they had not entreated His face that they might turn from their iniquities and understand His truth (impossible otherwise); and therefore the Lord could but watch to inflict more and more (Daniel 9:13-14). Reminding the Lord of His mighty dealings for Israel from the beginning, the prophet renews his confession but beseeches that His anger and fury be turned away from Jerusalem, and this to the removal of the burden and reproach of their sins (Daniel 9:15-16), and begs in answer to his own prayer that His face may shine on that long desolate sanctuary, and His eyes may behold their desolations and the city called by His name for His great mercies' sake (Daniel 9:17-18), winding all up with a succession of most brief and earnest appeals. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (Daniel 9:19). Nor did the answer tarry. But it was strictly and exclusively in reference to what the holy prophet had besought the Lord — Jerusalem and the Jews. "And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Jehovah my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision" (Daniel 9:20-23).

Then follows the prophecy, "Seventy weeks have been set [divided] upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish {or close} the transgression, and to make an end of [or seal up] sins, and to atone for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies." This is the consummation of grace — the establishment of Israel at the end of the seventy hebdomads {sevens} specified; for it will be observed that it is not simply

the accomplishment of the efficacious work of propitiation and its consequences, but its application to the Jewish people, which alone can meet the prophet's desires and God's message in reply. Chiefly then to provide for the steps in the fulfillment of the prediction, and to mark where the interruption comes in, and to warn of the awful trouble which precedes the final blessing, we have the seventy weeks, not only summarized or viewed in their completion in {Daniel 9:1-27} Daniel 9:24, but next also broken into portions in the verses following.

Know therefore and understand: from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks: the street and wall shall be again built, and in times of pressure. And after the sixty and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing; and the city and the sanctuary shall the people of the coming prince destroy; but the end thereof shall be with the flood; and until the end war [and] desolations [{are] decreed. If interpreters had looked into scripture for the decree which exactly answers to that which the prophecy describes, it is hard to see how there could have been hesitation or even delay. At least it is plain enough that it was neither Cyrus nor Darius, but Artaxerxes who issued such a command first in his seventh year, and then later in his twentieth year {Nehemiah 2:1-20}. But of the two a close comparison will soon show that the first, like the decrees of Cyrus and Darius, had regard to the temple, theirs for its rebuilding, his for providing its due order and service; and this was naturally entrusted to Ezra the priest (Ezra 7:1-28). But the later one was just as characteristically entrusted to Nehemiah the Thirshatha, and it is patent that his commission, as it grew out of his complaint that the city of his fathers' sepulchres lay ruined and its gates consumed by fire, so was the decree, {Nehemiah 2:1-20} distinctly for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and its restoration in general.

It would seem that most have been turned aside through their adopting the vulgar reckoning (B. C. 445) of the date of Artaxerxes' accession, and consequently of the twentieth year of his reign. But the fact is, that Bishop Lloyd here departed from Archbishop Ussher's correction, who very deliberately records it as his judgment that the common reckoning places the first year of Artaxerxes nine years too late. The grounds of this the reader may see in his Ann. Vet. Test. A. M. 3531 (Whole Works, 8: 292). People could not reconcile the dates of the prophecy with those ordinarily current, and hence have been disposed to adopt the seventh year instead of the twentieth. But I shall presently show that this view does violence to the sacred text and therefore must be discarded, for it brings in the last week wholly, or in part, to eke out the reckoning, whereas it is certain that the last week remains to be fulfilled.

It is plain on the face of Gabriel's message that the division into seven weeks and sixty-two weeks had a special meaning: as otherwise such an arrangement would never be made, especially where the style is so singularly concise and pointed. The seven weeks or forty-nine years, then, embrace the restoration of Jerusalem; and the book of Nehemiah shows us in what times of trouble the work was begun and continued. To these add the sixty-two weeks of years already named, and the next announcement after that term is one of the strangest sound and most solemn import, not the birth, nor the reign, but the cutting off of Messiah. No wonder that Jews wince, and avoid or wrest such a prophecy. Yet was it no Christian who wrote the startling prediction but their own prophet Daniel, a man greatly beloved. Why should the Talmudists or others slight the writings of one so singularly honoured by his inspired contemporary Ezekiel? If it be the fruit of an evil conscience, it is intelligible. For nothing can be plainer than that he who predicted without a

date the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, when it is a question of His kingdom in power and glory, predicts here, after a chain of sixty-nine weeks of years the Messiah cut off and having nothing (that is, of the kingdom that should have been His among the Jews). It is just as in Isaiah 49:1-26. Christ had spent His strength for nought and labored in vain, as far as His ancient people were concerned. Only the earlier prophet shows His confidence that His cause was with Jehovah and the recompense of His work with His God; and the answer is, that it is a light thing to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel: Jehovah appoints His rejected but accepted Messiah for a light to the Gentiles that His salvation may reach to the end of the earth, as the gospel now testifies. Whereas the later prophet abides the herald of captivity and of sorrow for the returned captives, who should know a flood of desolations after Messiah was to be cut off. The Vulgate understands the clause following to mean, "and shall not have his people who should deny him." This is not only an intolerable paraphrase rather than a version, but it narrows the sense unduly of to His people as no more His; whereas it means very simply "there is not (or shall not be) to him." Its object is to show that, as the consequence of excision, He was to have nothing of all that might have been looked for according to promise. Every Jew would naturally anticipate all blessing to themselves, all glory to Messiah, at His coming. Who could have foreseen that He should be cut off and have nothing? Yet the spiritual man feels that it could not be otherwise; for sin was there as everywhere, and not even adequately confessed, still less judged according to God. Here (Daniel 9:26) it is not the efficacy of His death for others that is taught, as our English translators seem to have conceived, but the guilt of it on those who cut Him off out of the land of the living.

Hence follows a flood of sorrow and overwhelming desolation, at first and precisely under the Roman people who should destroy the city and the sanctuary. But this was not the end; for a vista opens of war and desolations to the end, and that by God’s determinate decree (compare Isaiah 10:1-34). The indignation of Jehovah against His people is not yet complete. How amazing that men, pious men too, should have overlooked the broad and plain signification of a timeless interruption after this, including the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and all the long line of humiliating trouble on the Jew since, especially on Jerusalem and its temple! For beyond controversy the chain of weeks is here broken, as (to be exact as well as just) it ought to be. The series was unbroken from the Persian decree to restore Jerusalem till the sixty-ninth ran out, after which Messiah was cut off. How could this bring aught from God righteously but a breach and woes on those who by lawless hands had slain such a prince?

It is in vain to drag out of {Daniel 9:1-27} Daniel 9:27 the cessation of sacrifice in order to put it into Daniel 9:26. The true connection is thus destroyed, and a meaning is given by such a transposition to that suppression of Jewish worship which differs wholly as we shall see from that which is really attached to it where God has put it. And this also disturbs the true chronology by bringing in the last week, wholly or in part, and tacking it on to the sixty-nine weeks. Not that the cutting off of Messiah is said to be at but after the sixty-ninth week. This leaves the date somewhat open; it could not be before, it might be a little after. But with the seventieth week, as far as the prophecy teaches, it has absolutely no connection. On the contrary, events are named as posterior and evidently judicial consequences, although different in character, at the hand of Gentile oppressors, which are by no fair means within the course of the seventy weeks, but rather when the gap came following the cutting off of Messiah.

How long that interruption was to last, Gabriel had not come to declare. But the picture disclosed in the latter part of {Daniel 9:1-27} Daniel 9:26 naturally includes all the woes of Jerusalem since the Romans took away their place and nation. The disastrous end is not yet come. For it is remarkable in more respects than one that the destruction here is attributed not to the coming prince but to his people, the Roman people; and so it was beyond controversy. They came and destroyed {in AD 70}. But their prince {a Roman} did not yet come — I add, is not even yet come. We shall hear of him in the verse following when the seventieth week begins. For on all just principles of exposition the last week remains till the Jews are once more back in Jerusalem and their sanctuary rebuilt. This is implied in what follows, however it may grate on those who slight the prophetic word through their confidence in present appearances. Alas! the Jews will be again there, the mass, not many only, of them (for this too the last verse teaches, as in many another word of the prophet elsewhere) in unbelief and ready to apostatize. And herein is found the true bearing of him who strengthens a covenant with the many for the one week (Daniel 9:27). It is the coming prince, a prince of that people which after the death of Messiah destroyed the city and the sanctuary. It is the Roman chief, the little horn of the revived fourth empire {Daniel 7:8}, who is to confirm a covenant with the multitude of the Jews at the end of this age. This is the simplest reference grammatically, as none can deny, not to the cut-off Messiah, who in no sense ever did or will make a covenant with any for one week, still less with "the many" or mass of the Jews, in this book bearing no good character (compare with this Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:33; Daniel 11:39; Daniel 12:3 : the more strikingly because of a different sense in Daniel 11:34; Daniel 11:44; Daniel 12:2; Daniel 12:4; Daniel 12:10, where the article is not used). It is in no way the covenant, still less the everlasting covenant, but a covenant. It is mere assumption to say (what the context explodes) that it must be a covenant with God. Have men never read Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 28:18, that they so pertinaciously cling to the violent perversion of this verse to Messiah, overlooking the explicit teaching that Messiah had long before come and been cut off, and that we were told afterwards of a coming foreign prince, whose people destroyed Jerusalem? It is a future Roman prince who is to confirm a covenant for seven years, not with the godly remnant {of the Jews} but with the mass of the Jews, before the new age arrives when Messiah, even Jehovah of hosts, shall reign gloriously in Zion. But the strongest hopes of man are weakness itself if God sanctions not. And how could He sustain what put His people into alliance with death and hell (Sheol) {Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 28:18}? The confirmation of the Roman empire no more stands for the Jews than its seal of old could hinder the resurrection of the buried Messiah. Hence we read that in the half or midst of the week he will cause sacrifice and offering to cease. This suggests the scope of the covenant named. It appears that it will be a solemn engagement to permit the Jews to carry on their temple ritual. This he now terminates. But there is far more than this shown us. "And because of the protection [literally, "wing"] of abominations, a desolator [shall be]." So I understand this phrase. No one can dispute that it is quite as good a rendering as the unmeaning "on the pinnacle of abominations a desolator." For the Hebrew word is used for a wing, and hence protection, as decidedly as for a wing or pinnacle of a building. The desolator is sent retributively by God because this Roman prince breaking covenant with the mass of the Jews is allowed to suspend their legal worship and enforce idolatry. (Compare Matthew 12:43-45; Matthew 24:15 with Daniel 11:36-39 and Revelation 13:1-18.) So we saw in Isaiah 28:18. The overflowing scourge there, is the desolator here, who will tread down the Jews once more for their guilty yielding to Satan's wicked triumph in the latter day. No doubt the Jews would scorn the imputation and count such a

concession to the Gentile who once destroyed them an impossibility. So would they have said beforehand of the rejection of their own Messiah. But unbelief of danger is the path of ruin, not of preservation. And those who refused the Christ who came in the Father's name are yet to receive him who comes in his own name, that is, the Antichrist, the wilful king of the Jews {Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; 1 John 2:18; Revelation 13:11-18}, who, in league with the Roman beast {Revelation 13:1-10}, alike wicked instruments of the idolatry and evil still worse in the temple of God at Jerusalem {Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Revelation 13:14}, shall bring down the overflowing scourge or last desolator, the Assyrian of Old Testament prophecy, "and that until decreed desolation be poured on the desolate," that is, on Jerusalem thus righteously wasted till He come and reign whose right it is.

It is no wonder then to my mind that the confusion of {Daniel 9:1-27} Daniel 9:27 with Daniel 9:26, common to most of the christian commentators, should expose their interpretation to the lawless attacks of rationalism. The view here presented however maintains all that is certain as to the past (whether in the restoring of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, or in the cutting off of Messiah, as in the subsequent, though undated, destruction of the city by the Romans, with its disastrous history up to the present), whilst it preserves the natural meaning of the last week for the end of the age, when the Roman chief {Revelation 13:1-10} of that day will meddle with the Jews again in Jerusalem and their worship, to his and their destruction under the Lord's judgment when He appears and we with Him in glory {Colossians 3:4} Other scriptures show that a righteous remnant will be kept, and that they will become the nucleus of restored Israel who are to be gathered into the land {Ezekiel 20:1-49, etc.} from all the countries of their dispersion, and blessed under the Messiah reigning in glory over the earth.

04.12. Chapter 7 The Scripture of Truth:

THE CHURCH OF GOD.Chapter 7 The Scripture of Truth:

Daniel 10:1-21; Daniel 11:1-45; Daniel 12:1-13 This prophecy differs from all the preceding visions in the minute consecutiveness with which it presents to us, not so much the succession of the Persian empire down to the struggle with Greece, as the conflicts of the Syro-Macedonian kingdom with Egypt. But even here the historical thread is interrupted, partially in the prefatory part as we shall see, still more conspicuously at the epoch of Antiochus Epiphanes, the close of whom furnishes the point of transition where an immense gap occurs, and we soon after find ourselves in presence of the wilful king in the holy land {Daniel 11:36 — the Antichrist} with the last embroilment of the last kings of the north and south. If the futurists are inexcusable in caviling against the fulfillment of Daniel 11:1-32, they of the historical school may find it convenient to slip out of all reference to {Daniel 11:1-45} Daniel 11:36-45, not to speak of Daniel 12:1-13 where their own erroneous interpretations are no less palpable, though in the opposite direction of applying to the past what is wholly unaccomplished because future. The barest outline must here suffice to set forth the true object of the Spirit, how far the prediction has been fulfilled and what remains for the great crisis at the end of the age; for this will be found to be the common issue and meeting-place of the great closing scenes in the book of Daniel, and we may say in the prophets generally. The revealing angel declares (Daniel 10:14) that this vision refers to the Jew and the latter day — not of course its starting-point of sorrow and trial, of weakness and shame, but its bright end when God will bless His people and land with power and glory.

Very briefly is the Persian sketched in the three successors to Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes, till the fourth, Xerxes, famous for his "riches," attacks the realm of Grecia. The "mighty king" that stands up is Alexander {the Great}, the great horn of the Grecian goat of Daniel 8:5-8; Daniel 8:21, whose sole kingdom breaks up, followed by four notable horns, two of which are thenceforth described in these wars, intrigues, alliances, with Palestine between them, often their field of battle, oftener an object of their strife. Here we see Ptolemy Soter and Seleucus Nicator; Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus and Antiochus, and the tragic end of that business; Ptolemy Euergetes and his successes over Seleucus Callinicus, who afterwards came against the kingdom of the south {Egypt}; then, after the death of his brother Seleucus Caraunus, the antagonism of Antiochus the Great and Ptolemy Philopator at considerable length, as the Jews figure in it; the failure of his policy in giving his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes, and his defeat by the Romans; then the tax-burdened reign of his son Seleucus Philopator, murdered by his treasurer Heliodorus; and lastly Antiochus IV, his brother, surnamed Epiphanes but called Epimanes by his own subjects in derisive resentment. The Maccabees record his impious and sacrilegious madness. But need we dwell here in the details of the Lagidae and Seleucidae? No sober Christian doubts the application of these continuous predictions from Daniel 11:5-32. Even the infidel is compelled to take refuge in the hopeless theory that they must have been written after the event! being as perspicuous as the histories of Justin and Diodorus. One might go farther and affirm that no history contains so exact, concise, and clear account of that period, the Spirit of God

dwelling with especial fullness (Daniel 11:21-32) on the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, as the last of these kings in the past; and this, because he defiled the sanctuary and sought the apostasy of the Jews, thus becoming of all these the only remarkable type of their enemy at the end of the age.

It is here that historicalism betrays its inherent weakness, especially when it forces scripture to comply with its presumed law of unbroken continuance. Every other vision in the book refutes this presumption; and if there be in this chapter an unusual and double line of kings traced, even here the beginning and the close protest against those systematizers who refuse to learn from the chapter itself its own contents. Daniel 11:2 leaps over several kings from Xerxes to Alexander the Macedonian, who overthrew the Persian empire in the person of Darius Codomanus. But a far greater gap is apparent at Daniel 11:35. In the former there is no intimation of it; in the latter room is left expressly and indefinitely for all intended. Indeed it is evident that the transition extends through two or three verses, "And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, [many] days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed" (Daniel 11:33-35). The last clauses of the quotation can leave no doubt that here we are transported from the Maccabean struggle to "the time of the end," wholly passing over the first appearing of the Lord and the gospel state of things. Suddenly in {Daniel 11:1-45} Daniel 11:36 we look on the wilful king of the last days in the holy land, with the kings of the north and south once more. Of this there can be no question for any intelligent and unbiased mind. In the course of the description of the conflict it is positively declared to be "at the time of the end," and the connection with the succeeding chapter ("at that time") is alone consistent with such an epoch and character of events; but it is the end of the age, not of the world save in that sense. It is immediately before the time of reward for the righteous on earth, the time when waiting melts into blessed enjoyment for the saints in the kingdom of God.

Evidently therefore the effort to find here the Papacy or even Mahometanism is a delusion; as also still more the old empire of Rome in the east. It is a feeble interpretation that finds in the Gospels and Acts "such as do wickedly against the covenant," or in the language of the chief priests to Pilate, the promise of Pilate to release whom they would, the address of Tertullus to Felix, and the wish of Felix and Festus to do pleasure to the Jews, examples of corrupting "with flatteries." And we need to look in quite another direction, beyond the Acts and the Epistles, for the just application of the words "the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits." It is the glory of the Christian to suffer; the Maccabees really did exploits. So too the Maskilim were among the people, the Jews; and "the many" in {Daniel 11:1-45} Daniel 11:3, not in Daniel 11:34, is a technical phrase meaning the mass of that nation. Their troubles are plainly set forth, and a persecution which was to have a sifting effect then, and up to the time of the end. And I have little doubt that there will be an analogous state among the Jews in the land when the time of the end comes — analogous, not in heroism, but in tribulation. The mistake is in applying all this to the intermediate Christian state.

Once "the king" {Daniel 11:36} is introduced on the scene, we recognize the great personal rival and usurper of the rights of Christ in the holy land. So interpreted, and only so, the prophecy flows on clearly and smoothly. It is St. Paul’s Man of Sin, as opposed to "Jesus Christ the righteous" who according to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 is to sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God;

it is he who coming in his own name {John 5:43} is to be received by the Jews that rejected Him who came in His Father's, the Antichrist of St. John {1 John 2:18}. Here he is "the king," an expression borrowed apparently from Isaiah 30:33, (cf. Isaiah 57:9) where he is really distinguished from the Assyrian, as here from the king of the north. The article does not necessarily imply a reference to some person or power already revealed in the context, but one so familiar to the Jewish mind that they at least should be in no danger of mistake who believe the prophets.

We have seen that it is not Antiochus Epiphanes, but a king after the great gap and in the time of the end. No doubt it will be before the judgment of the fourth or Roman beast, which is to revive once more by a sort of resurrection power of Satan before going into perdition (Revelation 13:2-3; Revelation 13:5; Revelation 17:8). But the wilful king's rule is in the land of Israel, as his blasphemous self-exaltation is pre-eminently in the temple of Jerusalem, and his prosperity is till God's indignation against Israel is accomplished. It is arbitrary, yea contrary to the scope of the passage, to transport the wilful king to Rome, or to conceive that the proper seat of his power is in the west or anywhere but in Palestine: {Daniel 11:1-45} Daniel 11:39 is as decisive for this as Daniel 11:37 that he is a Jew, though apostate; and this is confirmed by {Daniel 11:1-45} Daniel 11:41, Daniel 11:45, though the subject be no longer the wilful king, but his enemy the last king of the north. Everything however fixes the scene as in the holy land just before the final deliverance of the Jews. This king of the north is the little horn of Daniel 8:1-27, the king of fierce countenance, who shall stand up against the Prince of princes but be broken without hand. So here he comes to his end, and none shall help him.

Daniel 12:1-13 repudiates every effort to turn away any of its parts from the last great crisis for Israel. Daniel's people shall then know the tribulation that is without parallel even for them; and they have tasted bitter times enough under Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and Titus. But after the future and worst they shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. God will make it a means and occasion of purging them. It is true that the resurrection in Daniel 12:2 is figuratively spoken, but it is of the Israelites, and not confined to those "of a clean heart," who now lie as it were dead and buried among the Gentiles, but who then shall come forward, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. It is the time of the judgment of the quick {the living}, when evil men are no longer tolerated, and intelligence and zeal for the Lord meets its recompense (Daniel 12:3).

Again, the sealing of the book (Daniel 12:9) points to the end of the age among Jews, in contrast with the portion of the Christian in the truths now revealed, as we see in Revelation 22:10. So too the three years and a half (Daniel 12:5-7): apply as people may to others after a protracted scale, there can be no doubt that it is expressly said of the Jews at the end. A fuller revelation comes by John to us, not to Daniel (Daniel 12:8-9). The brief period of the crisis is strongly confirmed by Daniel 12:11-12, in the former of which it may be observed we have the true source of the Lord's reference in Matthew 24:15 : not Daniel 11:31, which is exclusively past in the days of Antiochus, but Daniel 12:11, which is wholly future and speaks of Antichrist only though no doubt sustained in it by the fourth beast or Roman empire. Compare Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:36-39.

We have thus taken, not a collection of extreme views, but what is set forth by an advocate of historicalism who is more than ordinarily alive to the future, in order to show that the system in its

best shape fails in representing the true scope of prophecy. The main error is preoccupation with ourselves, instead of seeing that Christ's glory is the true object of God in scripture, which accordingly shows us Him in heavenly places as the head of the church, but Him also about to appear as the King of Israel and as the Son of man to reign over all nations.

04.13. Chapter 8 General Conclusions

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Maxims have been drawn from traditional views of Old Testament prophecy, applied to Daniel in particular, which it seems well to notice before passing on to those of the New Testament.

I. The law of departure, which has been thus stated: every detailed prophecy must be viewed as commencing with the chief present or next preceding event at the time when it is given, unless direct proof to the contrary can be brought forward.

II. The law of continuity, which supposes that each prophecy is to be viewed as continuous, unless when there can be assigned some strong internal proof that the continuity is broken.

III. The law of progressive development, which conceives each prophecy that is added to give a fuller expansion of what was seen more briefly before.

IV. The law of prophetical perspective, or the notion that distant events are described more briefly in comparison with those near at hand.

1. Now no sober believer will be disposed to doubt the general truth of the first principle, though he might not think it reverent to treat the word of God as one speaks of creation around us, and to formulate canons of interpretation in prophecy as theologians have done to the great detriment of revealed truth in general. As the rule prophecy, especially detailed prophecy, starts from facts present or imminent. It supposes failure in what is actually before us, the judgment of which God pronounces, in order to make way for "some better thing." But herein lies the fatal defect of the first "law," that it is a mere intellectual deduction, even if true, which is not always apparent, leaving out man’s sin and God’s judgment, as well as His intervention another day. The moral side is thus overlooked, as well as the divine glory; that is, all that is of chief moment for God or man. But it is plain that in this cold, scientific, dissection of the prophetic Word the alleged law cannot be justly applied to the famous Seventy Weeks. If the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem was only in the days of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the terminus a quo of the series, this can scarcely be said, without extreme harshness, to have been either the chief present event, or one preceding the prophecy which followed immediately after the fall of Babylon. The object of all this is mainly to involve the reader in a preconceived theory of the Apocalypse, as well as of the Lord’s prediction on Mount Olivet, which evidently are each as distinct from one another, as both are from the book of Daniel with its distinct visions going down from each respective starting-point to the end of the age. The Apocalypse alone contemplates not only the millennial reign from first to last, but the events which follow, and even the eternal state. How groundless then to frame laws from the book of Daniel for what is so obviously different!

2. Then we have seen that, though there may be a measure of continuous order, every vision of Daniel from which the law is avowedly drawn shows a break more or less distinct; and the same principle is certainly true of the Lord’s prophecy. It is confessed that there is one apparent break in

the last. It would be truer to say that they all exhibit, after a certain continuity, a distinct gap, before resuming the connection of each with its results in divine judgment at the end of the age.

3. If it be merely meant that each successive prophecy adds more light to what was already vouchsafed, the third maxim would be true enough, and almost a truism.

4. The alleged "prophetical perspective" seems to be as purely imaginary as can be conceived. The fourth empire has far more details than any of its predecessors in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, as it has also in Daniel's vision of the beasts. So have the little horns in Daniel 7:1-28,

8. On the Seventy Weeks the law does not in the least bear; and it is reversed by the enormous disproportion given to Antiochus Epiphanes in the last vision, and still more by the space occupied by the final struggle (Daniel 11:36-45; Daniel 12:1-13). But further, to reason from the state before Christ to the eighteen centuries under the gospel, to assume that now we ought very plainly to expect a peculiar fullness of prophetic revelation, and this respecting the ordinary events of God's providence, proves nothing but the extreme pre-occupation of a special pleader. We must weigh the predictions of the New Testament themselves, without drawing rules from the visions of Daniel, so obviously different, in order to control their application as men desire. It is as true in prophecy as in the truth as a whole, and in practical conduct, that "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

04.14. Chapter 9 The Lord's Great Prophecies in the Gospels

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Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:1-38 It is allowed by the historical school that there is a real difficulty in every hypothesis, so as to make caution peculiarly needful in treating of this prophecy; and indeed that many who differ from the futurists elsewhere seem almost ready to adopt their exposition here. The prophecy begins with troubles in the apostolic age; it closes with the second advent of our Lord; yet there are express words in it, besides the apparent connection of its parts, which seem to confine it within the limits of one generation. But these considerations being inconsistent with each other, which of them must be modified or abandoned?

Three answers, it is alleged, have been given. That of Bishop Newton and others, who adopt a figurative construction of the closing scene, and thus cut it off from all immediate or direct reference to the Lord’s personal return; that of the futurists (Burgh, McCausland, Tyso, etc.), who sever its beginning from apostolic times, and regard all as converging on the end of the age; that of Bengel, Horsley, etc., who would trace a continuation from the siege of Titus to the second advent. As the moderns confess the untenableness of the first view, which chiefly rests on an unfounded restriction of "this generation" to the apostolic age, we must look a little more closely into the other two. The truth really is, that Luke 21:1-38 furnishes, not a parallel to Matthew 24:1-51 or Mark 13:1-37, but a most important supplement. This is lost, if one regards his Mark 13:20 et seqq. as an inspired paraphrase of the two other Gospels, and thus miss the true force of "the abomination of desolation" on one side, and of "the days of the vengeance" on the other. The parallelism of the prophecy is admitted; but this is perfectly consistent with the belief that the Lord uttered truths, some of which the Spirit led one to omit and another to record, and vice versa. No parallel in the Gospels is absolute, nor indeed in any part of scripture. The measure of correspondence depends on the degree in which the divine design in each permits or opposes it. It was the same occasion, and substantially the same discourse; but the design of the Holy Spirit working by each writer accounts for the difference in each reproduction of the prophecy. Inspiration is characterized by the Spirit’s selection in accordance with His special object by each instrument. This is the true key, not the notion that Luke 17:1-37 is the real parallel to Matthew 24:1-51.

Again, the point of departure in no way decides this question. Granted that in all three Gospels the prediction starts from times close at hand, instead of pointing at once to the end of the age; but how does it hinder the Spirit from vouchsafing the true link of transition in one Gospel, while the other two pass this and converge on what precedes the close which it omitted? It is the less reasonable to reject this solution; as it is confessed that between the first and second Gospels there is a very general agreement in the words of the prediction, while in the third there are much more numerous deviations. To assume that a marked deviation in Luke is a comment on Matthew and Mark is of all explanations the least satisfactory; that it should supply what is lacking in the

others, because in accordance with its own design, is as simple as sure, and worthy of the God who gave them all. The meaning of the "abomination," etc., in Matthew or Mark is not therefore to be explained away by the compassing "with armies," any more than "the holy place" points to the mountain on the east, or the "desolation" is that which has now lasted almost eighteen hundred years. But it is a total misconception that the denial of the absolute parallelism of Luke with Matthew and Mark involves the thought that no part of the prophecy relates to that destruction of the temple which was then imminent, for this never should have been a matter of hesitation to any believer. Further, it is puerile to say that the abomination (or idol) of desolation corresponds in identity with our Saviour's words a little before, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." This is no better than verbal trifling. Nor does the historical fulfillment of Luke 21:20 afford the least evidence as to the true and proper meaning of Matthew 24:15; for this is the question — its meaning rather than its fulfillment.

It is a plain error that our Lord's prophecy is professedly an answer to the specific inquiry about the destruction of the temple; for they say, "Tell us, when shall these things be, and what the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" For larger and more remote events were thus in question. It is not a choice therefore between the views which look only at the next ensuing generation, or at the last generation before the second advent; for the truth is that, while all three Gospels start from events at hand, and all close with the presence of the Son of man in power and glory, only Luke 21:24 gives us the transitional "times of the Gentiles," during which Jerusalem is trodden down by them.

Again, it appears to me demonstrable that, as Daniel 11:31 refers to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, long passed when our Lord prophesied on Mount Olivet, so the reference in Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, is exclusively, as well as certainly, to Daniel 12:11, and therefore an event not only not accomplished at the siege of Titus, but wholly future and bound up with the final tribulation and deliverance of Israel. It is ridiculous to identify, as some of the historicalists do, Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11, for one is wholly past, and the other absolutely future, and neither of them in any way connected with Titus. It is allowed that the phrase, "in a holy place" (■ν τ■π■ ■γ■■), is not so precise as those in Acts 6:13; Acts 21:28; but the other part of the clause is not "an," but "the abomination of desolation," and means that idol which brings desolation on the Jews, their city and temple. The true place of transition is then indicated in Luke 21:24, but this is an added statement, owing to the peculiar design of his Gospel, and in no way a comment on one word in Matthew or Mark. But the great and unparalleled tribulation in these two Gospels is clearly proved by Daniel 12:1 to be not a past but a future event, just before Israel's blessing at the end of the age, and far more precise than the mere "days of vengeance" in Luke 21:22. His comparatively moderate terms, in Luke 21:23, "there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people," were historically verified, and are in the clearest contradistinction from the statements of Matthew 24:21; Matthew 24:29 and Daniel 12:1, which, beyond doubt, are future, and as yet unfulfilled.

It has not been adequately considered how completely Luke 21:32 settles the real bearing of those much-debated words, "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." As long as they were regarded only in the light of Matthew 24:1-51 and Mark 13:1-37, there remained room for doubt; and certainly there could not but be doubt without a just and sure understanding of their context; and this was the very thing most contested. Those who restrained the chapters to the apostolic period, or to the end of the age, interpreted the clause according to their respective theory. But the

truth is larger than either of these human views; and when its extent and precision withal are seen, the light which flows from these words of our Lord is no longer hindered or perverted. To this end the third Gospel contributes invaluable help, not certainly by swamping the other two, but by the fresh wisdom of God communicated by Luke, making us understand each so much the better because we have all, and thus furnishing a more comprehensive perception and enjoyment of the entire truth.

Here then God has taken care for the first time to introduce "the times of the Gentiles" still going on after the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. Then from Mark 13:25 we have the signs of the last days, and finally the Son of man seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory, proving the futility of the scheme which would confound Titus capturing Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24) with the Son of man appearing in Luke 21:27. But it is after this that we read in Luke 21:32 : "Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." It is not till they "begin to come to pass," of which we do read in Luke 21:28, and a call to the faithful when they see it to "look up and lift up their heads." This generation is not to pass till ALL be fulfilled (γ■νηται). No language can be more accurate. This Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of the Jews should not pass away till then. A new generation will follow. The expression has a moral, and not a mere chronological, sense. Compare Psalms 12:7 (Hebrews 8:1-13) in contrast with the generation to come. See Psalms 22:30 (31), Psalms 22:31, (32). The clause therefore seems to be meant in its unlimited strength, and so put by the third Evangelist as to render all other applications impossible. Nor is there the least ground for taking it otherwise in the corresponding places of Matthew and Mark; but Luke demonstrates this. The case then stands thus. On the one hand Matthew and Mark do not notice the times of the Gentiles, which Luke was inspired to present very distinctly as well as the successes of the Gentiles, not only when their armies conquered Jerusalem, and led the people captive into all nations, but also during their continued occupation of that city as in fact has been the case for 1800 years. On the other hand Matthew and Mark, but not Luke, notice distinctly the setting up of the abomination of desolation and the unequalled time of trouble just before the Son of man comes for the deliverance of the elect in Israel at the end of the age, passing at once from the early troubles in the land (while Jerusalem was still an object of testimony) to the last days, when it re-appears with its temple and the Jews there, but alas! the deceived of Satan and his instruments till the Lord appears in judgment. Hence it will be observed that there is no question in Luke 21:1-38 as to "the sign of His coming and of the end of the age." In all this I see, not confusion, but the perfect mind of God giving what was exactly suited to each Gospel. It is the comment which confuses the truth, instead of learning from each and all. In Matthew and Mark the future crisis follows a preliminary sketch of troubles put so generally as to apply both to the apostolic times and to the earlier epoch when the Jews return and rebuild their city and temple in unbelief before the age ends: Matthew 24:4-14 (Mark 13:5-13) being the general sketch, and Matthew 24:15-31 (Mark 13:14-27) the crisis at the close or last half-week of Daniel's unfulfilled seventieth week. Luke alone gives us anything like continuity in the very brief words of Luke 21:24, as he alone gives us distinctly in this prophecy the past destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, as he does also in {Luke} Luke 19:43-44. {Luke} Luke 17:22-37, I do not doubt, also refers to Jerusalem, but exclusively the latter day, when the Son of man is revealed, not when Titus sacked it. In that day there will be a perfect discrimination of persons in the judgment, which proves it to be divine, not a mere providential event however awful.

04.15. Chapter 10 The General Design of the Apocalypse - Objections Met

Chapter 10 The General Design of the Apocalypse — Objections Met From early times scarce any consent has been more general than to view the Revelation as a comprehensive prophecy which extends from the days of the apostle to the end of time. A few, chiefly since the Reformation, would confine most of it to the fall of Jerusalem; a few more began to apply it to the end of the age, as the early fathers did. It seems desirable however to examine the question afresh with all brevity. There can be no doubt that faith in the future application has spread much of late years. It is the more incumbent therefore to examine what is urged by such as plead for the more extensive range of the prophecy throughout the times of the Gentiles since the days of the apostle. The objections usually pressed against historicalism appear to me of little weight.

I. The variety and even discordance of the popular expositors I have already allowed to be a feeble disproof. The truth might be in a few without being apprehended by most men or even by all true Christians. Spirituality of mind is needed to discern truth, nor is it difficult to muster objections to that which is most certain. How many saints are cloudy in their views even of grace as well as righteousness! How many fail to see intelligently the return and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus! Besides, the variety is not small among the futurists themselves. To be distracted by such clashing of opinions on either side is really to give up certainty as to all truth.

II. The adherence to a literal interpretation is necessarily absurd where the language of the book is beyond doubt figurative or symbolic. Now of all books of scripture, certainly in the New Testament, none so abounds in symbols as the Revelation. To insist upon a rigid literalism here must end in continual straining, disappointment, and error.

III. The same exaggeration is apt to appear in looking for events of a character wholly transcending the past. That such wonders do appear in certain parts of the Revelation is clear. It is unfounded to expect them everywhere.

IV. The attempt, not to run merely a parallel, but to assume identity between the prophecy on the mount and the seals, etc. of the Revelation, is unfounded. An analogy may be allowed, but no more. Such reasoning altogether fails to fix the time when the Revelation will be fulfilled. But there are weightier grounds of a wholly different nature which may be now advanced. The Lord Himself in opening the book to John distinguishes "the things which are" from "those which must be hereafter" (or after these things" {Revelation 1:19}). "The things which are" comprise the messages to the seven churches. It is the church-period {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22}. "The things which shall be after these" {Revelation 4:1-11 ff} are the visions of God’s dealings and judgments on man’s ways in the world which follow that period till the end of all things. But "the things which are" may be viewed in two ways. They are either the churches viewed as exclusively in John’s time, and hence now past — after which would begin to apply the prophetic visions of the rest of the book. In this point of view the historical school of interpretation ought not to be

discarded as untrue or unprofitable. On the contrary I believe that God was pleased to use the book for the comfort of His saints both in their early trials from the hostility of heathen Rome and in medieval as well as later times from the persecutions of Babylon, the meretricious antichurch of the Apocalypse {Revelation 17:1-18}. But in this point of view the prophetic visions must be allowed to be vague; and no wonder should be felt that discord abounds among the interpreters. But there is a second point from which we may view "the things that are," or the messages to the seven churches {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22}. They have a prolonged and successive application whilst God owns anything of a church condition on earth. This He clearly does as yet; and according to this view Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22 give the things that are still, and are not passed but rather fulfilling before our eyes. Till they are past, "the things which must be after these" {Revelation 1:19} cannot even begin to be accomplished. Then only will commence the making good of the prophetic visions in their full sense and application to the crisis which closes this age and introduces the kingdom. Of these seven, the first indicates the declension from first love which characterized the day when John saw the visions of the book; the second, the outbreak of heathen persecution which followed not long after; the third, the exaltation of the church in the empire under Constantine and his successors. Thyatira is marked by more tokens than one which prove that this state, which was fully out in medieval times, is the first of those which thence- forward go on not merely successively but contemporaneously from their rise to the Lord’s coming. As Popery, though far from Popery alone, was therein found, so Sardis presents Protestantism; as Philadelphia, the reviving not only of the brotherhood with its love but of separateness to Christ’s name and word, while waiting for Him, so Laodicea concludes the seven with the self-complacent latitudinarianism of our day which takes shape and position, more and more as time goes on. But it is all-important to the understanding of the general scope and design of the Revelation to see that, after these {starting with Revelation 4:1-11} there is nothing of a church character recognized in the book. "The things that are" will be then terminated. An entirely new state of things follows, visions chiefly of judgments on earth, or saints suffering, with testimonies and warnings from God, but never any instance assemblies or churches here below.

Indeed the case is far stronger than this. For "the things which must be after these things" {Revelation 1:19} (that is, after the church-state) open with a prefatory scene of the deepest interest in heaven, wherein is seen round the throne of God {Revelation 4:1-11} (which is neither that of grace as now, nor that of millennial glory, but of a judicial character suited to a transitional space between the two, the end of the age) the symbolic circle of the crowned elders in heaven and this in their full complement, which is never added to till the heavenly hosts follow Christ from heaven when the day of Jehovah dawns on the earth and the reign for a thousand years is begun. That is, the elders thus seen above show us the heavenly saints translated, and enthroned round the throne of God, evidently corroborating and following up the previous fact that the church-state was done with and a new condition entered on, preparatorily to the kingdom of God in power and glory.

Entirely in keeping with this we hear henceforth of thousands sealed from the tribes of Israel {Revelation 7:1-8}, and, separately from these, of countless Gentiles brought out of the great tribulation (for so it is, not out of great tribulation as a general fact or principle, but out of that special time of trouble which we know from many scriptures will be at the close of the age) {Revelation 7:9-17}. There is no gathering more from among Jews and Gentiles into the church

where these distinctions vanish. The seven churches in their protracted application had given that condition up to their last, seen on earth {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22}. God thence-forward works among Jews or Gentiles as distinct and with a view to putting the habitable earth under the rule of the glorified Son of man, the risen saints being on high, and some from Israel and the nations spared to enjoy the blessings of that day on earth; as He executes judgments first preparatorily though with increasing intensity under the seals, trumpets, and vials, till Christ with the translated saints appears in glory and reigns, judging the quick first, then the dead, after which is the eternal scene. Such is the general outline of the Revelation. In anything like a clear and comprehensive view of the book the futurists seem to be scarcely better than the historicalists. Neither party knows what to make of the vision in {Rev.} Revelation 4:1-5, Revelation 5:1-14, which follows the seven churches and introduces the strictly prophetic unfoldings of coming dealings with the world. Hence their views are almost equally uncertain. The key to the intelligence of the book lies in a right apprehension of this vision.

04.16. Chapter 11 The General Design of the Apocalypse - Direct Arguments

Chapter 11 The General Design of the Apocalypse — Direct Arguments

It must be owned that the actual state of Apocalyptic interpretation is humiliating. The book has been treated with silent slight or turned into an arena for busy conjecture rather than found to be a rich source of blessing according to the promise of the Lord. Not that God's grace or truth have failed, but that most had lost the blessing through mis-reading it. In the midst of unbelief, however, God has vindicated the value of His own word for those who have clung to it, eschewing either historicalism or mere futurism. They have read it in faith, using not only the lamp of prophecy but the still brighter light to which the Christian is entitled as blessed in heavenly places in Christ. It is well then to bring to the test what men allege as to its character, and to examine fairly and fully whatever evidence scripture affords for a decisive judgment. It will be found impossible to have either a comprehensive view of its scope or a correct application of its parts, without a solid establishment in the gospel and an adequate understanding of our own special relationship as Christians individually or as the church of God. As being the closing book of the New Testament canon it naturally supposes acquaintance with the rest of revealed truth. None can truly appreciate the Apocalypse who has been used to misapply the Old Testament prophecies of Zion and Israel to christian subjects, any more than such as fail to see the entirely new character of the body of Christ, now that redemption is accomplished and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Every one knows that the Fathers, so-called, entirely broke down, and most of them in this way, both in the mass of the older catholic bodies and in those which followed in their wake. No less have Protestants in general failed to recover the true character of the church, in consequence of confining their attention for the most part, even when orthodox, to truth for the individual, such as justification by faith and ordinary christian practice.

Let us turn then to certain arguments which are supposed to determine the true direction of the book. Does it spread over the entire period since the apostles {to the present, and even beyond} in its prophetic visions? or does it bear most strictly and fully on the closing crisis before the Lord appears in power and glory, though embracing this too and carrying us forward even into the eternal state?

I. The title of the prophecy, it is thought, points to the right conclusion — "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Some have imagined that these words denote simply the second coming of Christ, and would therefore limit the book to that great event, its antecedents and consequences. But this view is not more erroneous than to interpret the words as a removal, for the instruction of the church, of the veil which conceals the Lord now that He is ascended to heaven. Nay, of the two, the latter is much the most misleading; for the characteristic truth of the apostle Paul even as a part of God's righteousness is that the Christian sees His glory with unveiled face. It was no insignificant fact that at His death on the cross the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. The Christian walks in the light even as God is in the light. He is brought nigh by the blood of the cross; and God

looks for the fruits of light in all goodness and righteousness and truth. To make the Revelation therefore to be the unveiling of Jesus Christ in person would really be to deny that the veil was completely gone and known to be so ever since the cross and His ascension to heaven. The title then does not mean the removing of the veil from His person, but rather that unveiling of what is coming which God gave to Him, and which He communicated to His servant John and through him to us. But this leaves the question of the time still to be solved, save indeed that the closing words of the preface declare that "the time is at hand," and not in course of fulfillment. The examination of the prophetic visions too confirms this; for each of them presents to us some distinct view of our Lord in heaven, and some fresh aspect of God's providential dealings here below, but wholly different from what is found in the rest of the New Testament which directly applies to the church in its passage through the world. Further, we have already seen that Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, does not suppose a chasm between the apostle's day and the future crisis of the world, but rather bridges it over by a most instructive transition which furnishes light increasingly as God lengthens out "the things which are" — that is, the seven churches or the epistles to them. They are not yet past.

II. The analogy of Old Testament prophecy tends rather to mislead than to fix the true character of the Apocalypse, for the people of God then had to do with times and seasons in a way wholly different from us. There is contrast therefore really, rather than analogy, though one would not deny, as often remarked, the bearing of principles and help from them for christian sufferers from the Apocalypse. But the fact that the Lord has accomplished redemption, sent down the Spirit, and is ready to judge the quick and the dead, shows the total difference from the state of things before His first advent. The analogy therefore wholly fails instead of being full or complete.

It is easy to assert that the church has derived such light from the Apocalypse as the early triumphs of the gospel, the downfall of Rome, the troubles and temptations which intervened to the church, and the final triumph of Christ's kingdom. But such instances as these rather disprove than demonstrate the assertion. He who could apply to gospel triumphs the first seal, for instance (the white horse with its rider going forth conquering and to conquer), {Revelation 6:1-2} has certainly derived little true light from the Apocalypse. And as to Rome, though Babylon {Revelation 17:1-18} be unquestionably its symbol, there is much to try and exercise the heart for those who are occupied with outward circumstances; for that "great city" is far from fallen yet, though fail it must in due time. One has no wish to doubt that more or less may have been gathered from the book as to intervening troubles and temptation in principle at least; but I fear that those who drew from it the final triumph of Christ's kingdom have fallen into interpretations as unworthy as those of Eusebius, and this as time advanced, no less than in earlier ages. It would be easy, in fact, to show that the effort to apply the book, in its prophetic visions, to the course of the church on earth has led to little more than mistake in detail as well as wholesale. The church of God was meant to be from day to day expecting Christ. "Known to God are all his works from the beginning"; but He has carefully abstained from revealing to us that which might set aside the constancy of our hope. This was not at all the case before redemption. Even the rejection of the Messiah was a matter of prophetic date. Those who overcome during the various stages of the church on earth are seen translated to heaven and glorified there in Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 before the properly prophetic visions begin to apply.

III. The special analogy of the visions of Daniel breaks down when examined closely. For though there be in his visions a scarcely broken succession from his day to the first advent, it does not follow that the visions of St. John must reach from the apostolic age {down to today} without break. In none is this more conspicuous than in the seventy weeks {Daniel 9:1-27}, where we have continuity up to the death of Christ, but a distinct gap after it. The destruction of the city and sanctuary no doubt is recorded as subsequent, and a vista of desolation and war follows to the end; but otherwise it is all vague and unconnected with any date whatever. That it is after the sixty-nine weeks, and before the seventieth, is all one can learn from Daniel 9:1-27. There is no hint of time between; the last week remains to be fulfilled. Eighteen hundred years have already elapsed within that gap. So it is with the Apocalypse. Its prophetic visions converge on the great future crisis, the accomplishment of the seventieth week, within which fall also "the time, times, and half a time" of Daniel. The resemblance between the Revelation and Daniel is found here only. That is, they do not resemble where the visions of Daniel are continuous, but coalesce after the gap for the end of the age. The analogy is that, while Daniel only gave succession up to Christ, both converge on "the time of the end."

IV. The prophecy of our Lord must be perverted in order to apply the Apocalypse continuously from the Apostles' day on to His coming. For in Matthew 24:1-51 the grand question is as to the consummation of the age and not the sequence of events before it. And in Luke 21:1-38, where alone we hear of the "times of the Gentiles," we have no more information than the general fact of Jerusalem being trodden down by the Gentiles till then. We are next plunged into the signs external and moral which mark the end of the age — "signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." It is after revealing all these events that our Lord solemnly declares, "This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." This generation therefore lasts till after the second advent no less than the fall of the temple. It is a mistake that there is a twofold affirmation with regard to the times: the first, that all the events predicted concerning the fall of the temple should certainly be fulfilled in that very generation; and the other, that the day and hour of the second advent was at that time purposely concealed. One has only to read carefully our Lord's own words in order to see that there is no such distinction and that the Christ-rejecting generation of the Jews was not to pass till all was fulfilled, including the second advent — not merely till the temple fell. Scripture teaches nowhere that that day and hour are now revealed.

1. Hence there is no continuity in the Lord's prophecy, any more than in the visions of Daniel, which justifies the name of a "law" and affords a presumption that the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse must stretch over the last 1800 years.

2. The Lord's prophecy in Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46 consists of three main divisions: first, the Jewish part in Matthew 24:4-44; secondly, the christian part in Matthew 24:45-51; Matthew 25:1-30; and, thirdly, the Gentile part in Matthew 25:31-46. The disciples who were then instructed by the Lord could fittingly represent the future Jewish remnant, as this they were at that time themselves before they were brought into church standing by known redemption and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Hence the argument founded on their christian character to insinuate the propriety of prophecy about Christians and their circumstances all through entirely fails.

3. The mention of the "times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:1-38 seems a slender ground for assigning to the Apocalypse an application to so many centuries instead of to the last week of Daniel.

4. Nor does the resemblance between Revelation 11:2 and Luke 21:24 blot out their differences, still less warrant the conclusion that the Apocalyptic visions are the expansion of the earlier prophecy.

V. The presumption from the prophetic notices in the Epistles is equally slight. Thus, though the mystery of lawlessness already wrought, there was nothing in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 to indicate that either the apostasy or the manifestation of the lawless one will be before the time of the end; other scriptures prove that they will be then exclusively; with which the notices of this chapter quite agree. Still less force is there in 1 Corinthians 10:1-10, where we have Old Testament facts used as types, which no doubt might apply then or at any time. But this is moral admonition, not continuous prophecy. Again, 1 Timothy 4:1-16 speaks only of "some" and "in latter times." It is no more the end of the age than a prediction ranging over all the times of the gospel. Solemnly true and needed as is the warning of 2 Peter 2:1-12, there is nothing here to decide the application of the Apocalypse all through.

VI. The distinctive character of St. John's writings is alleged to point to the wider application rather than to the crisis. Undoubtedly the choice of the penman was in the fullest harmony with the message to be conveyed; but there is also variety as well as a common principle. The Gospel {of John}, the Epistles {of John}, and the Revelation do not only come from the same writer, but manifest character of truth peculiar to themselves. To call his the spiritual Gospel (as by the Greek Christians of old τ■ ε■γγ■λιον τ■ κατ■ πνε■μα), as contradistinguished from Luke's, Mark's, or Matthew's, seems far from precision and rather derogatory to the others; quite as much so to contrast his Epistles with those of Paul. The Gospel of John shows us really eternal life in the Son of God, the glory of the Only-begotten who reveals the Father; the Epistles show us the effect of this revelation where faith received Him, "which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness passeth and the true light already shineth"; the Revelation, the results not only in the overcoming and glory of those who are His but in the iniquity, lawlessness, and judgment of those who believe not, that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Hence it is that, while He is God and man in one person throughout all John's writings, He is more prominent as Son of God in the Gospels and Epistles, as Son of man in the Revelation. Authority to execute judgment is therefore given to Him {John 5:22-23} on those who would not come to Him that they might have life; and thus there are two resurrections, of life for those that practiced good, of judgment for those that did evil, the turning-point being faith or unbelief in His person who is the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. The crisis therefore falls in far more with this, the evident object of the Revelation, than any mere course of providential judgments spread over the continuous history of Christendom. The opening verses of the book correspond with this; for if John is said to bear "witness of the word of God and the witness of Jesus Christ," it is qualified by "whatsoever things he saw." That is, it is not the person of the Son as in the Gospel nor our possession and manifestation of the life that is in Him as in the Epistles, but visions. And when in the course of the prophecy Christ is named The Word of God (Revelation 19:1-21), it is evidently in destructive judgment whilst in the Gospel we see Him in the fullness of grace. With such marked distinctness does the Spirit guard us against wrong inference from the

rest of John's writings, and condemn those who would foist in the miscalled spiritualizing of the Revelation. Details only confirm this, if we bring each distinctive mark of the Gospels and Epistles to test the prophecy.

1. To argue that, because the Gospel and Epistles dwell not on the external and transient and earthly but on eternal truth, therefore the Apocalypse cannot disclose outward signs and wonders from the end of the age onwards till eternity, is to fly in the face of the evident scope and contents of the book. It has been already pointed out that its character is judicial (not the revelation of life in Christ), and this also enjoyed by and manifested in the saints. In the Revelation we have first the churches judged by the Son of man; and this state of things being closed, the world judged first preparatorily and with increasing intensity till (with the risen saints) Christ appears to judge in person, first the quick in the reign for a thousand years, then the wicked dead at the end before the new heavens and earth in the final and fullest sense. It is admitted however that, as in 1 John 2:1-29 {1 John 2:19} we hear of many antichrists even now, the forerunners of the Antichrist of the close, so the Apocalypse may afford light in a general way now, while it shines most distinctly on the great future crisis; and thus it is larger, as well as more exact, than either historicalists or futurists can see.

2. If both Gospel and Revelation open with the Lamb, each strikingly employs a different word, though it be about the same person: the Gospel, ■μν■ς as expressive of God's grace in all its extent and in relation to sacrifice; the Revelation, ■ρν■ον as the holy earth-rejected Sufferer, whose blood indeed has bought believers to God, but whose wrath is about to fall on a guilty world and the still guiltier apostates at His appearing till Satan himself perishes for ever.

3. The Gospel and the Epistles do suppose the Jews disowned for a new work of God {going on now}; but even so not without distinct pledges both in type (John 1:45-51; John 2:1-21; John 21:24-25) and in direct terms of mercy reserved for them (John 11:51-52). The Revelation unveils the fresh working of God on their behalf when the {present} church-state is done with; and this both in Israel (Revelation 7:1-17) and in Jews (Revelation 14:1-20). It is as false to restrict it with the futurists to the narrow limits of Judea as to efface the Jews from a distinct and precious portion in its predictions, as most historicalists do.

VII. The date and place of the prophecy are supposed to yield further and very distinct signs of its true meaning. It was revealed to the last of the twelve apostles, as the fullest evidence shows, under the last of the twelve Caesars. The first century was closing, the temple and city of Jerusalem destroyed, the Jews dispersed. The gospel was in all the world, bringing forth fruit, and growing. The church gave its testimony to Christ in the various lands and tongues of the known habitable world. The Old Testament had borne witness to the rebellious iniquity of Israel and Judah, not merely in the worship of idols, but in the rejection of the Anointed of Jehovah, and had pointed out sufficiently the consequences, not only to the chosen people in judgment, but to the Gentiles in grace. The time was now come for a final revelation, which, first of all showing that Christendom would be equally faithless to its responsibility, next hides not the dealings of God which should succeed, whether preliminary and partial before Christ appears, or completed when He executes judgment in person; and this, not only on the quick {living} throughout the thousand years' reign, but on the dead who had not shared the holy and blessed "first resurrection," the wicked dead raised after it {Revelation 20:1-15}. That John stood in a relation toward the church

similar to that of Daniel toward the Jews is plain, the latter having been a captive of the first Gentile empire [the Babylonian], as the former of the fourth [the Roman], neither of them occupied himself with the details of providence, both with the end of the age, as ushering in the rule of the heavens wielded by the glorious Son of man. Only as Daniel was given to predict the ways of God consequent on the ruin of the Jew, so John what was to follow Christ's spewing out of His mouth the last of the seven churches {Revelation 3:16}. As the privileges of the church far transcended Israel's, and the testimony for which the Christian is responsible was limited to no race, land, or tongue, instead of being cooped up in one narrow country and people, so doubtless the issues from God's hand are incomparably graver, and proportionably extended; and these, therefore, it fell to John's lot to have unrolled before wondering and aggrieved gaze.

If all the circumstances indicate a reference to the new economy rather than to those special Jewish relations which had been suspended, no less do they suppose that God is judging the failure of man under the gospel, and disclosing how He will take up all under Him, the second Man, who never failed. The prophecy therefore no more shows us Christendom the direct object of God's dealing, than its Jewish prototype did the Jews. It points out what will follow, and as the future crisis was the main airs of Daniel, so it is yet more effectually and fully of John; only John expands, as Daniel does not, not only into an incomparably vaster sphere, but also into the endless ages which follow the Lord's return. Such in fact was the uniform character of prophecy in the Old Testament. There was a series undoubtedly, and each wrote from his own time as the starting-point; but not one of them was limited in his predictions either to events which occurred during his lifetime, or to the next main event of Jewish history. They all looked onward to the coming of Messiah, and most fully indeed to His coming in power and glory. So did our Lord at the close of His own ministry. It is a total mistake that He merely took up the end of their thread, and prolonged it to the fall of Jerusalem, leaving it for John to carry it on continuously throughout the centuries which have elapsed since. One can understand such theories where the heart is in the world as it is, and man therefore as he is possesses our admiration and our interest. Doubtless there is light for the faithful at all times, and especially in an hour of ruin, through the Spirit of prophecy; but being the witness of Jesus, that Spirit hastens the grand consummation when evil shall be judged righteously, according to the light given but despised, and the Lord Himself shall take the reins. If Christianity superseded the finally proved antagonism of tho Jews to their Messiah, the corruption of Christianity gives occasion for God to indicate how He will replace the apostasy and man of sin by His kingdom at Christ's coming, and the eternal state, when God shall be all in all. This widely differs from the Protestant scheme of the Apocalypse.

VIII. A guide or mark to determine the general scope of the Revelation has been drawn from the parties to whom it was first sent. It was given to John, and through him the seven churches of Asia were addressed. It has been argued therefore that, if the Apocalypse records the history of the church, the address to the Asiatic churches {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22} is most suitable, and in full harmony with the precedents of scripture; but it is equally incongruous if the main reference of the work be to a Jewish remnant alone during a few years at the end of this dispensation. The truth is, however, that the epistles to the seven churches are but introductory to the strictly prophetic part of the book, or "the things which shall be after" the things which are {Revelation 1:19}; and "the things which are" exhibit the churches coming under the judgment of the Son of man. Thenceforward we have visions of the world judged, and the most conspicuous

absence of a church; nay more, the presence of Jews and Gentiles {who are} objects of divine grace, and this separately, instead of being united in one body. That is, the book, as a whole, in its predictions contemplates an entirely new state of things, as the result of the faithlessness of Christendom, and the removal of the faithful to heaven [at the pretribulation rapture], paving the way for the reign of the Lord and the glorified saints {when the millennial kingdom is established}. That state, however, is no return to a mere Jewish remnant, though such a remnant be one of its elements; but on the proved ruin of Christendom, as of Judaism, the visions show us God's measures for investing the Lord with the world as His inheritance. We hear the first church threatened with the removal of its candlestick {Revelation 2:5}, we see in the last its setting aside with abhorrence as the Lord's resolve {Revelation 3:16}; and this in order to make way for the visions of woe, not without testimonies of mercy, the process which introduces the First-born in judgment of the whole earth. Clearly it was meant that those in the churches, or a church position, should profit by all the communications of the book; but the book itself is the strongest proof that churches, or even Christians properly so-called, are nowhere contemplated in the scenes of its predictions. Its object is to reveal what follows in the world when those that overcame in the church-state are no longer on earth.

IX. The direct statements with regard to the time which begin and close the prophecy are another evidence of its true application. It was sent to show God's servants "things that must shortly come to pass." "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." The motive is neither that the things are in course of fulfilment, nor that they are about the church. Compare Revelation 22:10. And this last is the more striking, because Daniel was told to seal his book even to the time of the end; whereas John, receiving still further and deeper details, was told not to seal the sayings of the prophecy of his book. The true inference is, not that there was a merely human or ordinary scale of time applied to either, but that since redemption and Christ's session at God's right hand, ready to judge the quick [living] and the dead {2 Timothy 4:1}, the end of all things is at hand to John and the Christian, as it was not to Daniel and the Jew. Having the Spirit meanwhile, the Christian has divine capacity to understand all that the word, prophetic or not, reveals. It is no question of comparative distance or nearness merely, but of the immense change effected by Christ, who has brought all things to a point before God; so that the same apostle, John, could say, "it is the last time," or "hour" {1 John 2:18}. This was neither manifest nor true when Daniel lived. {For Daniel,} A revealed series of events necessarily intervened. It was otherwise when John wrote. In both prophecies the Spirit had the crisis in view. None can conceive that the earlier events predicted by Daniel belong to the time of the end, or were for many days. "The last end of the indignation" has no reference to the siege of Titus, nor will it fall within the limits of the so-called christian dispensation. "The indignation," it appears from Isaiah 10:1-34, etc., is evidently God's anger against idolatrous Israel; and "the abomination of desolation," in Matthew 24:1-51 and Daniel 12:1-13, will not be till the end of the age in the sanctuary of Jerusalem. These allusions are demonstrably outside the times of the gospel; but the Christian is entitled to comprehend what the Jew must wait for. To us, therefore, it is always morally "the time of the end"; and nothing, accordingly, is sealed or shut up from us. It is an evident mistake that 1 Peter 1:10-12 refers to these texts in Daniel, but rather to such as Daniel 2:34-35; Daniel 7:13; Daniel 9:26, "the sufferings respecting Christ, and the glories after these," which are now reported more fully still in the gospel, as some of them will be fulfilled only at the revelation of our Lord. Thus the contrast of the words in

Revelation with Daniel’s lends no support to the hypothesis that even the seals apply to gospel times from John’s day.

X. The character of the opening benediction {in Revelation 1:1-20} bespeaks the true references. It is not from God, as such, or from the Father, as such, His special revelation in grace and relationship which we know as Christians. It is rather His name of Jehovah, hitherto made known to the children of Israel, now for the first time translated from the Old Testament idiom into Greek, but Hebraistically. This surely suits a prophetic book which was intended to unfold, not christian privilege or duty, but judgment on a world guilty of rejecting as well as corrupting Christianity, where God begins to prepare an earthly nucleus for the returning Lord, and this from Israel, as well as all nations, but expressly distinct from each other. There is a difference between the form of the name in Revelation 1:1-20 and in Revelation 4:1-11; but on this we need not enter, as being beside the present argument and purpose. It is undeniable, however, that He is not in either revealed in christian or church relationship, but in a form and character suited to One who is to act thenceforward as governor, not merely of Israel, but of the nations. In accordance with this, we do not hear of the "one Spirit," as in 1 Corinthians or Ephesians, nor yet as the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit, but with a difference no less striking, "the seven Spirits which are before the throne," a phrase which suggests His fullness governmentally, and refers to Isaiah 11:1-16, but is never used when Christian standing is in question. So the characters of Christ Himself pointedly leave out what is heavenly and in church connection. It is neither priesthood nor headship; but what He was on earth, and there in resurrection, and will be when He returns. What He is displaying now on high is left out. Continuity is not in the least expressed; but rather a break from His resurrection, till He takes His great power and reigns. So with the associated title, "I am Alpha and Omega"; it may be of Gentile source, joined with one familiar to Jewish ears, and thus together most suitable to a prophecy which lifts the veil from the future crisis, when it is no longer that body wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and in all. Here we have only Jews and Gentiles after Revelation 6:1-17. As to Revelation 1:7, it is in no way to be limited to Jews, whatever the resemblance to the Septuagint version of the words in Zechariah 12:1-14. Indeed this is but one case of the general principle, that the Revelation, like the New Testament as a whole (save in application of fulfilled prophecy) enlarges the sphere, and deepens the character, of what is borrowed from the older oracles of God. But allowing that "all the tribes of the earth" should be here meant, rather than "of the land" merely, and as distinguished from "those who pierced Him," it seems strange that the bearing of "every eye shall see Him" should be overlooked. For if the object had been to guard the reader from the vague providential line of interpretation, and to fix our attention on the Lord’s coming again to the earth, it could hardly be secured more plainly than by such a text. There is a larger and more comprehensive scope than in Old Testament prophecy; but it is in relation to the world, not to the church, and to the visible display of glory, not to the kingdom of God viewed spiritually. We walk by faith, not by sight. The book is for, but not all about, the church.

XI. The special occasion when these visions were revealed is supposed to be very significant of their bearing on the church rather than the Jews. For the apostle "was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Domitian was persecuting; the conflict was begun between the witnesses of Christ and the idolatrous power of Rome; John’s exile exemplified the warfare and suffering which was to continue for ages; as Rome is seen, near the close of the prophecy, drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Thus the book traces

the moral war from first to last without token of any abrupt transition. Such is the reasoning. If the extremes are fixed, and the intermediate links many and various reasonable doubt of the continuity of the whole? The truth, however, is that John is seen throughout as a "servant," rather than a son or "child," as in his Gospel and Epistles; and the word of God and testimony of Jesus are narrowed to visions ("all that he saw," Revelation 1:2) to prepare the way for taking in as servants those saints who could not be placed on the same ground as the members of Christ's body. They will follow us on the earth, and will be His servants, having the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, when the Lord will have taken us to heaven. The Christian, like John himself, should seek to read the Revelation from his own stand-point of association with Christ risen; but the book clearly makes known other saints on a quite different footing throughout the prophetic periods. The inference drawn is therefore unsound. Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 show us the church as a whole, glorified; and Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 others on earth who, though saints, are quite distinct from the church.

Doubtless the attempt to interpret "the Lord's day" {Revelation 1:10} as the day of the Lord is mere ignorance, though men of learning have so argued. The force of that day really is, that, though John was speaking as a prophet of what is coming on the world, he did not forfeit his proper portion as a Christian. He was in the Spirit, and saw the visions "on the Lord's day," as the first day of the week was now called in virtue of Christ's resurrection. But is it not almost equal ignorance to apply the sabbath in Matthew 24:20 to the past? It clearly refers to the future crisis, when Jewish saints must pray that their flight be not on that day nor in the winter. At that time the abomination of desolation will be their signal to escape from Jerusalem, according to the Lord's warning {Matthew 24:15}.

XII. The emblems of the opening vision are supposed to be a further key to the nature of the prophecy. The first, expounded by our Lord Himself, is the seven golden candlesticks {Revelation 1:12; Revelation 1:20}, denoting the seven churches of Asia: a type borrowed from the Jewish sanctuary, but without a local centre or a visible head, so as to suit the wider character and greater liberty of the church. If the candlesticks be symbolic, why restrain the ark, altar, and temple, with its outer and inner courts, to an outward sense? And so with the stars in Revelation 1:1-20. If used to denote living intelligent persons, why should the star of the third trumpet, for instance, denote merely a meteoric stone? Why not those spiritual realities which belong to the whole church of God? The answer is plain and decisive. The Lord Himself draws, in Revelation 1:19, the line of demarcation between the opening vision, with the connected "things that are," and the "things which are about to be after these." Hence it is a rash assumption, at the very least, to say that the symbols abide the same in parts of the book so distinguished. If churches and their angels are found only in Revelation 1:1-20; Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, disappearing absolutely from the prophetic visions which follow, it is natural that so vast a change must modify in a corresponding way the application of the symbols, though of course the essential idea remains. They cannot describe these spiritual realities which belong to the church of God, when it, as a whole, is no longer seen on earth. And, confessedly, quite different symbols denote the church in heaven. But we are not driven to the pseudo-literal alternative of two Levitical candlesticks in Revelation 11:1-19, any more than to one meteor in Revelation 8:1-13. We must interpret them in

congruity with their context, not therefore in reference to the church, which is gone, but to the world, with which God is then dealing, whether among Gentiles or Jews. The star here means a fallen ruler, and in the western Roman earth, not supreme, like the sun, but subordinate; as the two candlesticks may be an adequate testimony to Christ's priesthood and royalty among the Jews. But one need not dwell on details.

XIII. A similar remark is true of the allusion to the "Jews" in the first chapters when used to govern the application in the rest of the Revelation. Certainly the seven churches (viewed either literally as the past assemblies in proconsular Asia or as foreshadowing so many phases of Christendom till the faithful are caught and the Lord utterly disowns the last outward state) suppose the title of Jews ("those that say they are Jews but do lie") misused by those in Christendom who boast of antiquity and not present power in the Spirit, of succession and not grace, and of ordinances and not Christ; and just as certainly such a phrase could only be used during the Lo-ammi time of Israel's rejection. But it is a hasty inference thence to interpret the prophetic visions when God begins to seal a people out of the twelve tribes of Israel, after the church is withdrawn from the earth.

XIV.

It is in vain for the same reason to argue from the general character of the Epistles to the seven churches, for they stand in evident contrast as "the things that are," or church-state, with the succeeding visions of the future, though no doubt a moral preparative for them of the highest value.

1. Thus the season of trial in the epistle to Smyrna might be blessed to the saints similarly tried during the prophetic periods later on; but there is the strongest possible internal reason why we should not apply these as the true meaning of prophecies which suppose the church no longer existing on earth, and new witnesses, Jews or Gentiles, succeeding who are expressly in a different relationship.

2. As little does the reference first to "the doctrine of Balaam" in Revelation 2:1-29, compared with the false prophet in Revelation 13:14-17; Revelation 16:13; Revelation 19:20, warrant the conclusion that the marks of a regular connection and sequence are herein given. Similar evil, though modified in form, is all that can be fairly drawn from the earliest and later passages. So it is with the types of the wilderness. It applies to us now; it will be as true, though in greatly altered circumstances, of others after we join the Lord above, before the kingdom be established in power and glory.

3. The mention of Jezebel in Revelation 2:20 and of her great counterpart in the prophetic vision (Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24) stands on just the same ground.

4. So does the local fulfillment of the opening predictions. They may be of profit at all times; but we cannot intelligently apply to the church what God predicted of His government of the world, or of witnesses raised up for that state of things.

XV. The nature of the prophetic scenery as described in the following chapters (Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14) yields abundant and irrefutable disproof of the notion that the prophetic visions

of the Apocalypse contemplate the church or its history on earth. For the purpose in hand there is no need of entering into the details of specific interpretation; but a few broad features may be briefly pointed out which are decisive against the notion in question — a notion entertained by not a few futurists as well as by the Protestant school generally.

1. It is perfectly true that the opening of the visions is eminently symbolical. The living creatures, the lamps of fire, the elders, the Lamb and the sealed book, the vials and the odours, all have this character, not to speak of the voice of thunder, the four horsemen, etc., in what follows. But it is a mistake that either the heavenly calling of the Christian claims especially such a veiled or emblematic mode of instruction, or that the end of the age must through all its extent see the cessation of silent mystery and the commencement of visible and material wonders. It is plainly enough revealed that it will merge gradually into a brief period in which the western powers will adopt a peculiar political order and partition with its suited chief, the north-eastern will advance for a final struggle, the Jews in their land and under their king {the Antichrist — Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17} be a main object of defense and attack, and Satan avail himself of the apostasy {2 Thessalonians 2:1-17} he has effected to reveal the lawless one in all power and signs and wonders of lying, God Himself sending those who believed not the truth a working of error that they should believe the lie. But these horrors do not begin at once, and the worst of them will steal over men by degrees. There is no such abrupt change as is conceived by such as oppose. On the one hand Jerusalem and the temple will be the scene not only of renewed and strange idolatry but of man arrogating the glory of God; on the other God will not leave man throughout the world without suited testimony and solemn judgment, increasing in intensity till the Lord appears in glory.

Let the reader remark the total change of scenery at this point. It is no longer the Son of man in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, nor the successive messages to the angels of these churches, but a throne in heaven, the prophet being called up to see and hear {Revelation 4:1-11}. The actual or church state exists no more, giving place to "things which must be after these." It is a question of government from heaven, and the throne one of judicial glory, not of grace as we know now; and hence out of it lightnings and voices and thunders, not the message of peace and salvation; and the saints now glorified surround it as the heads of the royal priesthood, no longer on earth as in Revelation 1:5-6. It is a company, be it noted, complete from first to last (Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24; Revelation 19:1-21), so that for this as well as other reasons it cannot be separate spirits but glorified men. The seven Spirits of God, or the fullness of the Spirit in attributive power, are seen as seven lamps or torches of fire burning before the throne. There is no altar, as it is no longer a question of coming to God; and, instead of a laver with water to cleanse the defilements contracted by the way, there is a sea of glass in witness of perfect and fixed purity. The cherubim, or living creatures, are no longer two but four, and seraphic as well as cherubic, characterizing the throne in executory judgment according to the holiness of God. If the aim were to reveal a new state wholly distinct from the present, and a transitional relationship, before Christ and the risen saints come out of heaven to reign over the millennial earth, it would be hard to say how it could be made more apparent or unquestionable. In full keeping with this Christ is seen after a new sort as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, yet the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David: the holy

earth-rejected sufferer, slain for God's glory, who had bought a people to God by His blood, who alone could and does open the otherwise sealed book of divine purposes and plans for the deliverance of the world and reign of God; and the elders fall before the Lamb with vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints {Revelation 5:1-14}, clearly not their own but of others on earth in a different position from themselves in glory, as the visions that follow will confirm.

2. Equally true is it that the action of the prophecy is derived from the opening of the sealed book; and that the taking and opening of it is grounded on the personal power, worth, and victory of the slain Lamb. But on the face of the scripture the scene does not follow His ascension. It rather awaits the close of the church-state and our translation to heaven, when the present work of gathering the heavenly co-heirs with Christ is finished. This in no way treats the atonement of our Lord as for eighteen centuries idle and powerless, unless the forming of the bride of the Lamb be nothing; it shows on the contrary, that, so far from exhausting the virtues of His blood, fresh counsels of God, to us long revealed, are all in His hand and for His glory who will take the earth as well as heavens under His headship, and who, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed {1 Thessalonians 1:7-8}, will take all peoples and nations and tongues as well as Israel in chief under His sway. No Christian doubts the truth and importance of Matthew 28:18 or Php 2:8-9; but the character or time of application is another question. And we may well doubt that these or any other texts determine that the Revelation sets forth in its visions the triumphs of the cross while the church is on earth, called as she is now to be the follower of Christ in His earthly shame and suffering.

3. Further, it is said that there is no event between the ascension of our Lord with His solemn inauguration in heaven and His visible return in glory, and especially now in the last days, which can claim to be the true commencement. But this leaves out the vision of Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 in its evident import, especially as following up the sevenfold message to the angels of the Asiatic churches or the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks, and as introducing the predicted dealings of God with the world in the rest of the book. The throne of God assumes a relation notably distinct from that of grace as we know it, and even from that of glory as in the millennial day; it is clothed with a judicial character akin to that which Ezekiel beheld when Israel was judged and carried into captivity, but with special features as must be in view of Christendom's ruin and God's judgment of the earth generally, and in particular of what had been faithless after such unexampled favors. And the absolutely new object seen on high is neither God's throne with the cherubim or seraphim nor yet the Son of man long before ascended, but the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders. It is strange that men should have all but universally overlooked so patent and grave a fact corroborated by circumstances already pointed out, which furnish a very defined starting-point from which the succeeding visions begin. To neglect this is to act the part of a voyager who should take his departure not from the main shore but from a floating bank of mist into uninterrupted fog. For what worthy point of departure follows the seven churches of John's day? It is wholly incorrect, as is thought, that till the return of our Lord (that is, to reign) all is one continuous dispensation — one ceaseless progression of Divine providence. The translation of the saints to meet the Lord and be presented to the Father in His house before they appear with Him in glory for the government of the world is assuredly a fact and change of amazing interest. It had been not only disclosed by our Lord, but fully opened out by the apostle of the Gentiles in his earliest Epistles; and it is now put into its relative place by John in the grand

systematic prophecy which winds up the New Testament. The peculiar mode in which the Spirit here records it is worthy of all note as flowing from His own consummate wisdom; for there is no vision of the actual rapture of the saints to heaven when the Bridegroom meets them, as if it were one of many prophetic events like those under the seals, trumpets, or vials. It is the accomplishment of the Christian's hopes, and in no way confounded with the subject-matter of prophecy, such as the appearing or return is, when every eye shall see the Lord and them in glory. It is a preliminary vision of the saints already in heaven after the church-state on earth is ended, and before the special judgments and transitional testimonies begin which terminate in the Lord's coming out of heaven followed by the saints (Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:14) already there since the end of Revelation 3:1-22 as proved by Revelation 4:1-11. His "coming" or presence (παρουσ■α) thus embraces and overlaps the day of the Lord, as it leaves room for the gathering of the saints risen or changed to Him with an interval in heaven, which the Apocalypse shows to be filled up by solemn dealings of God on earth mainly judicial but not without special mercy to saints on earth, both Jewish and Gentile, some of whom suffer to death as others are preserved for the kingdom when Christ and the glorified ones appear in His "day" to execute judgment and reign over the earth for a thousand years.

If "the second advent" be restricted, as it commonly is by almost all schools, to the day of the Lord, it leaves the fact of our seeing the heavenly redeemed under the complete symbol of the twenty-four royal priests from Revelation 4:1-11 entirely unaccounted for. Distinguish His coming for His saints and His coming with them, and all is so far plain; though it is easy to see difficulties and conjure up objections to the surest truth of revelation, or even of our being, and of the world around us. But the word of the Lord abides for ever. One may add too that the prophecy nowhere describes near its close (that is, in Revelation 19:1-21 or Revelation 20:1-15) the removal of the saints to heaven: they follow Christ to the judgment of earth {Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:14}; but how they got there so as to be in His suite in His day is not described.

It is evident then that the translation to heaven of the co-heirs, witnessed as a fact from the beginning of Revelation 4:1-11 is a fixed and clear point of departure, which the ordinary schemes of Apocalyptic students, Protestant or futurist alike, have failed to observe. It becomes then not only possible but easy to test the alleged fulfilment of the book. Before the seals or trumpets which prepare for the investiture of Christ with the inheritance, there must be in heaven an adequate answer to the plain facts, that churches are thence-forward seen no more on earth, and that a new company appear in heaven, never before seen there, under the symbol of the twenty-four elders. If men explain away or pass over so important an introduction as Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 to the strictly prophetic portion of the book, they naturally confound our gathering to the Lord on high with the day of the Lord on the earth, and a moral or partial application of its contents with its proper meaning, to the utter lowering of the church's calling, place, and walk, as well as hope.

XVI. The oath of the mighty angel is imagined to furnish another not less decisive mark of the historical acceptation of the prophecy: "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel the mystery of God shall be finished" {Revelation 10:7}. What it really says is that there should be no more delay, but under the last trumpet, which ushers in the end of man's day, God would bear with evil no longer in the grace which works meanwhile for higher purposes. He would bring in the manifested kingdom of the Lord forthwith. Israel's rejection and the times of the Gentiles may fall within "the

mystery of God," as well as the calling of the church; but not a word implies that the church was still on earth during the trumpets. Doubtless the trumpets are accomplished before Israel's restoration, but not before Jews return to their land in unbelief, set up their king, and other awful scenes of the latter-day wickedness ensue. Nor is there anything to intimate that the seals and trumpets measure the mystery of God, but simply that it closes with the seventh trumpet, as one sees in the latter part of Revelation 11:1-19. The world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come. It is no question of secret providence then, as it was during, and had been before, the Apocalyptic period.

XVII. Concurrence for sixteen centuries, even if universal, is but human opinion; and what is this worth in divine things? It is but the recent tradition of the multitude; and in these ages of declension, what can the maximum of such agreement yield but the minimum of truth? It is the refuge of unbelief at all times, and can never be right since Christendom went wrong. One need not wonder at lack of intelligence during many a century when even saints had lost the sense of eternal life, of accomplished redemption, of standing in Christ, and the varied energy of the Holy Ghost, not to speak of the church as the body of Christ and the house of God. The notion of a continued advance, slow at first but afterwards steady and discernible, is a dream, more worthy of a mere humanitarian progressionist than of one who looks for Christ to receive the saints and judge the world and above all favoured but guilty Christendom. A symbolical history of the church on earth might be founded with some show of truth on Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, not on what follows, which is expressly not "the things that are" or church-state, but what must be after these things, when the overcomers are all and "ever with the Lord."

If people only saw the special calling and heavenly character of the church, the Apocalypse from Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:1-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21, Revelation 17:1-18Revelation 18:1-24, Revelation 19:1-21 (and indeed Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14) never could have been supposed to predict its course or circumstances on earth. Men have not distinguished the various dealings of God; and hence, as some scrupled not to apply Israel and Judah, Zion and Jerusalem, in the Old Testament prophets, to Christianity or the church, so still more fell into the kindred error of tracing it here below throughout the prophetic visions of John. But it is hard to conceive a fuller combination of evidence than that which the book itself has just afforded us against the common hypothesis, and in confirmation of our being on high while the providential judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials intervene, till we follow the Lord from heaven to reign with Him over the earth.

{Concerning the book of Revelation: } þ Its preface and its conclusion;

þ the analogy of former prophecy and, most of all, of that book which it resembles so closely;

þ the season and the place and the writer;

þ the churches to whose angels messages were sent;

þ the repeated declaration of the nearness of the time;

þ the whole character of its introduction repeated often and in the most various forms;

þ the plain contrast between the churches as the things that are" with those "which must be after these things";

þ and the intermediate vision of the elders in Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 respecting the heavenly redeemed in their complete and glorified state around the throne above, seem to leave little question as to its scope to the believer, unless he sacrifice the authority of scripture to the general consent of Christendom during the very centuries when it had lost even a clear and full gospel for the world and forgotten its own privileges as well as responsibility to the grief of the Holy Spirit. In truth no one is fit to form a sound and spiritually intelligent judgment of the bearing of the Apocalypse who is not clear as to salvation and the church, as well as prophecy; and where were such to be found since the second-century remains disclosed the early and utter ruin of the christian profession? Neither antiquity nor consent, if universal, can sanctify error, though they may expose to the charge of rashness or even innovation such as go back to the once-revealed truth. But wisdom is justified of her children. Far from being self-evident, the mind of God in His word cannot be severed from our practical state in fellowship with Him. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light," is a principle as true in scripture study as in walk; nor could one wish it otherwise: it would be a premium to unspirituality.

04.17. Chapter 12 On the Year-Day Theory

Chapter 12 On the Year-Day Theory

It has now been shown that, though there may be special characteristics in the symbolical visions of Daniel and the Revelation, there is no ground for the notion that they relate to gospel times, still less that they present the church's predicted history on earth from the close of the Jewish dispensation to the second coming of our Lord. There is a transition of the greatest importance on which the details of these visions converge — an interval which has for its main object to disclose the consequences, on the one hand of Israel's evil and ruin, and on the other of Christendom's. God has taken care that the church should not be without divine light on its path, but He has done so with perfect wisdom so as not to interfere with its own proper and peculiar privileges; whereas the interpreters of almost every school have sacrificed them to their theories, overlooking the true scope of the book.

It is quite true then that the difficulty is due, not so much to the various and complex nature of the symbols themselves, as to the spiritual condition of the readers and the moral character of scripture itself, judging as it does the degeneracy and corruption of Christendom. It carries the war at once into the strongest fortresses of ecclesiastical pride and christian worldliness. The scriptures, predictive or not, which reveal Christ rejected on earth and glorified in heaven, are as obnoxious to professing Gentiles as those of His humiliation and cross were to the unbelieving Jews. In either case faith in God is called for; in the gospel especially unsparing judgment of self and separateness from the world. This is so distasteful to flesh that one need not wonder if souls shrink back from the truth which exposes their unfaithfulness, and either neglect the Apocalypse or take up schemes which allow more room, for human energy and distinction on the one hand, or for earthly ease on the other. If Christ's glory were the one object, there, would be more simple subjection to the truth; and it would soon be seen that, as Daniel unfolds the times of the Gentiles on the proved downfall of the Jews, so John gives us the judgment first of Christendom, next of the world, though not without dealings of rich mercy toward the faithful at all times, to His glory who was cast out from the earth, and is now in heaven.

I.

Let us proceed however to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the hypothesis called popularly the year-day theory, as one not only long held by Protestants but claiming of late to have its basis made sure and simple by scripture proof. It is supposed to rest on these maxims:

1. That the church was intended to be kept in the lively expectation that Christ who had ascended would speedily come again.

2. That in the divine counsels a long period of near 2000 years was to intervene between the first and second advents and to be marked by a dispensation of grace to the Gentiles.

3. That, in order to strengthen the faith and hope of the church under the long delay, a large part of the whole interval was prophetically announced, but in such a manner that its true length might not be understood till its own close seemed to be drawing near.

4. That in the symbolical prophecies of Daniel and St. John other times were revealed along with this, and included under one common maxim of interpretation.

5. That the periods thus figuratively revealed are exclusively those in Daniel and St. John, which relate to the general history of the church between the time the prophet and the second advent.

6. That in these predictions each day represents a natural year, as in the vision of Ezekiel; that a month denotes 30 {years}, and a time 360 years. Such is the general nature of the theory and of its foundations. Its statement is supposed to remove at once the main difficulties that have been felt; as for example concealing the length of the delay when the knowledge might have been injurious, and revealing it when once it became a help to the church that it should be known. The answer however is that, as Daniel contemplates manifestly only the Gentile powers of the world and Jewish saints, with the mass of the people apostate, so the Revelation does provide for the church's direct instruction as such in the seven epistles of Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22 — epistles which applied at once to the seven literally addressed assemblies of St. John's day in proconsular Asia, but surely also meant in a mystery to embrace the successive need of saints on earth as long as the Lord has any here below possessed of similar privileges and with like responsibilities. It is only when these seven states could be looked back on as fairly developed that God permitted the evidence to be at all distinct and complete; that is, when the light derived from the messages would strengthen rather than weaken our waiting for Christ day by day. In this point of view we see that the direct bearing of the prophetic visions is on the same elements as in Daniel, Israel and the nations, with the aggravated guilt of having despised the grace proclaimed in the gospel as well as exemplified in Christ and even in the church while here below. The times and the seasons are, or ought to be, well known to us, but about the earth and the earthly people. Those who belong to heaven are not so regulated. The prophetic dates therefore are about suffering Jewish [sic] or their Gentile oppressors. Those who apply them to the church ignore its heavenly title, and the fact that, when they apply, the heavenly redeemed are demonstratively on high, not here below. We may dismiss the clashing of swords between Mr. Mede or Dr. Maitland, their defenders or their assailants. Protestant or Romaniser, neither of them really understood the nature of the church as distinct from the Jew and the Gentile, and consequently they are almost equally dark as to the prophetic word.

II. On the nature of the evidence to be expected we need not dwell. It is freely granted that there may be a literality in interpreting no less spurious than the so-called spiritualizing. We have to weigh on the one hand whether the form be simple or symbolic; but we have to discern on the other whether a particular part belong to the vision or its divinely given interpretation, bearing in mind the fundamental fallacy of expecting no more from the words of God than from the writings of any man as such. Whatever is conveyed in a specially mysterious form should be weighed proportionately. The least change in scripture intimates an adequate design on God's part.

III. The general character of the passages themselves has next to be considered. Do they occur in the explanation or in the vision to be explained? Are they worded in the most simple, equal, and natural terms; or do they bear plain marks of a singular, uncommon, and peculiar phraseology,

perhaps even prefaced by words importing concealment? The following are all the passages in Daniel and St. John to which the year-day principle has usually been applied:

þ Daniel 7:24-26 þ Daniel 8:13-14; Daniel 8:26 þ Daniel 9:24-27 þ Daniel 12:5-9 þ Daniel 12:10-13 þ Revelation 2:10 þ Revelation 9:5; Revelation 9:10 þ Revelation 9:15 þ Revelation 11:2-3 þ Revelation 11:9-11 þ Revelation 12:6 þ Revelation 12:14 þ Revelation 13:6 That a mysterious character attaches to all or almost all these expressions of time naturally insinuates something more than the barely literal dates. The general application then of the longer computation may be allowed; but one must not thereby set aside the brief and definite periods of the closing crisis.

IV. The general symmetry of the sacred prophecies is supposed to yield a presumption as strong against the shorter acceptation of these numbers as in favor of the longer view. It is urged that, when a declaration of future events is attended also with one of definite seasons, one expects some degree of correspondence between the two parts of the revelation; and that scripture precedent confirms this; as in the one hundred and twenty years' delay of the flood, the four hundred years and four generations of sojourn in Egypt, the forty years in the wilderness, the sixty-five years before Ephraim's captivity, the seventy years' captivity of Judah, the forty years of Egypt's desolation, the seventy weeks before Messiah's kingdom with its minor terms, the three days of our Lord's burial, and the seven years to follow on Israel's restoration (Ezekiel 39:1-29). In these an evident proportion is held to exist between the time predicted and the event announced; whereas it is argued that in the twelve or more specified seasons which extend from Cyrus to the second advent, on the shorter reckoning all proportion is lost between the range of the events and the periods entering into the predictions: especially as features even on the surface suggest more than the letter. The answer is that, besides the principle of the break or interruption already seen to obtain in Daniel regularly, which leaves us free to take the times in their strictest force at the end of the age, there is no need to deny the Christian's title to gather help all through from the great prophecies of Daniel and John which contain them.

V. The presumption drawn from the symbolical nature of the books is of a similar kind. Since the prophetic dates are found exclusively in those two books which possess, also exclusively, a symbolical and mysterious character, it is a sufficiently natural inference that those dates have themselves a covert meaning. This may be allowed if one do not get rid of the short reckoning which finds its limits within the last or seventieth week of Daniel. The reserve of that period (seven years) is surely significant.

VI.

Again the dispensation as being one of mystery is pleaded. But the comparison of Daniel 12:1-13 with 1 Peter 1:10-12 conveys no thought of the peculiar reference of the times to us. "Prophets that prophesied of the grace toward us sought out and searched out concerning salvation, searching what or what manner of season the Spirit of Christ which was in them was declaring, while testifying beforehand the sufferings as to Christ and the glories after these; to whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to you they were ministering the things which now have been announced to you by those who preached the gospel to you in the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven." Here is no distinct assertion whatever that the times fall within our lines. As often noticed, there are three things: the predictions of old; the gospel now preached in the power of the Spirit; and the future manifestation of the Lord Jesus, when the promises shall be accomplished. It was

revealed to them, not that the prophetic dates belong to our day, but that to us, Christians, they were ministering the things now announced by the gospel, not yet the glory in which Christ and we shall be manifested together. To confound the mystery of God in Revelation 10:1-11 with Ephesians 3:1-21 or even Romans 11:1-36 is to display singular lack of discrimination; and this confusion is the reason for the hasty conclusion that the six trumpets and all the numbers connected with them must be contained within the limits of this dispensation.

VII. Their mysterious introduction is the last of the presumptions that the various forms of date in Daniel and the Revelation are not designed for the shorter periods, but in some analogical meaning which may restore their harmony with the wider range of the prophecies they belong to. But we have already conceded that a larger reference may be admitted if the distinct application to the future crisis be kept intact.

04.18. Chapter 13 The Year-Day Theory Continued

Chapter 13 The Year-Day Theory Continued The general indications of a figurative meaning having been briefly discussed, let us now as briefly notice the special evidence for the year-day system.

I. The prophecy of "the Seventy Weeks" has always held the foremost place in the direct arguments for that view. It is clear that the Weeks in this case are not of days but of years; and it is hence inferred that, since all such predictions of time bear one common character, occur in the same prophets, and have the same general object, they ought to be explained by one common rule. But theoretic consistency has its snares as much as the inordinate love of variety; and it is dangerous in the revelations of God to reason from a special prophecy to others before and after wholly distinct from it. Were the supposed key given in the first of Daniel's prophecies where dates occur, there might seem reason for it: or if it were given at the close, where dates abound, as an appendix of instruction. Whereas it is plain, on the face of the visions, that Daniel 9:1-27 has a remarkable isolation in its nature, and might therefore have a special form in this respect, as it certainly has in others. Were the time, times, and half a time, expressed in that way, the argument would be more plausible. It is rash to draw an analogy of sameness, from a single instance differently situated and characterized, to all that precede or follow. There are grounds in the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks which forbid the shorter reckoning; but this is not at all the case in any of the others. Hence the resemblance fails, and the reasons which determine in the case of Daniel 9:1-27 do not appear elsewhere.

II. The sentence of Israel in the wilderness is habitually cited as another testimony (Numbers 13:25; Numbers 14:33-34). It is plain that a retributive dealing with Israel in the desert is a slender ground for interpreting symbolic prophecies given many centuries after.

III. The typical siege of Ezekiel is another witness called to sustain the system (Ezekiel 4:4-9). Here again we have to note that an argument is based on this, not for the dates in Ezekiel's prophecy, where it is recorded, but for Daniel and John, where it is not. From such special instances, so carefully explained, it would seem safe to conclude that a day not so applied was to be taken literally, especially if given in the explanation and not in the symbolic form only.

IV.

Another argument has been drawn from the words of our Lord given in Luke 13:31-35. But it must be owned that the colour for giving this the definite meaning of three years is slight indeed.

Let us turn to the prophetic dates themselves which are in question.

V. The "time, times, and dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25), may be first considered, as it is thought to contain many distinct proofs to confirm the year-day theory, and to refute the shorter reckoning. The peculiarity of form is due to the prophetic style, which loves to arrest the attention of the reader, and to suggest matter for reflection, instead of limiting itself the phrases customary in

common life. The comparison of the different phrases for the same period in Revelation makes it perfectly certain that three years and a half were meant, even if there could have been a doubt before, which there was not: Jews and Christians alike accepted the phrase as comprehending that space. It has been already intimated however, that there is no objection to allow of a protracted application in a general way, provided that the crisis be not set aside, as is done almost always by the historical school. And it may be that such a twofold reference accounts for the enigmatical appearance of this date.

VI. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar stands on exactly similar grounds. The seven times were assuredly accomplished in the seven years' humiliation of the great Babylonian chief. It is possible that there may be a prolonged application figuratively to the times of the Gentiles from the beginning to the end of the four great empires.

VII.

Without doubt the phraseology is unusual; but Mr. Mede, the greatest advocate of the year-day system, here allows that the vision applies to Antiochus Ep., and consequently views the date as a brief period only. It seems scarcely worth while to dwell on such assumptions as that the vision is of the restored sacrifice! before a fresh desolation!! including several centuries!! not only without scripture but against the text commented on. Such proofs might be multiplied, but where is their worth? I believe myself that the "many days" are not before, but after, the numeral period, and that here, as elsewhere, the vision concentrates on the close, though not without the accomplishment of grave facts comparatively close at hand.

VIII. The oath of the angel in the last vision, and all the attendant circumstances, are supposed to be in favour of the mystic view of the historical school, and against the brief crisis at the end of the age. But why the solemnity of the oath should require the lengthy application to the past, and not the awful lawlessness of the future, seems hard to understand. That the deepest interest should converge on the out-burst of evil which brings the Lord judicially and in glory into the scene is most intelligible, and the desire be expressed to know how long such horrors are to last before the end come. To the prophet, intensely feeling for the Jews in their sorrow, and wholly ignorant of the present calling from among the Gentiles (not to speak of the one body wherein is neither Jew nor Greek but Christ is all), can anything be conceived more suitable? We may rest assured that 1 Peter 1:12 does not refer to this passage, for the apostle speaks about inquiry among the prophets, not, as here, the celestial beings whom Daniel saw and heard. Nothing can be clearer or more certain than the convergence of the thought here on the end. It is of this only that Daniel inquires, and learns that the words are sealed till then. The point is not the immediate history.

IX. The supplementary dates have been pressed into the same service, and with as little result in favour of application to the past. For, however sorrowful it is to see men so occupied with the world's doings and sayings as to overlook the abyss that is opening, not only for the Jews but for Christendom, the Lord Himself directed attention to this part of Daniel in such a way as to make argument of small moment to the believer. Compare Matthew 24:15, etc., with Daniel 12:11. Whatever Antiochus Ep. may have done similarly (Daniel 11:31), it is certain that there is to be a future abomination of desolation set up in Jerusalem's sanctuary, that a brief but unexampled tribulation will ensue, and that the Son of man will immediately after appear to the deliverance of His elect. The Lord does thus supply the amplest proof that the theory which shuts out the crisis is

false, and that the end of the age is precisely the era when these things are to be fulfilled.

X. Of the cyclical character of the prophetic times I would rather avoid speaking. The truth needs no support from science. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Even the sturdiest advocates of the protracted and intervening application have to own here the literality of the specified times, where explanation too had been sought. The mention of so many days does not convey any necessary thought of a prolonged period, but of God's gracious counting up the daily sorrow that must befall those who bore His name, and of the dishonour put on His own sanctuary and sacrifice, after they had too hastily assumed that He could own them as they will be then. The wicked will not care for this, but hail the abominations then to follow; the wise will understand and confide in the word of God which deigns to reckon up the time before deliverance comes day by day. An immense series of years would be cold comfort at such a time. No doubt the two periods of thirty days, and of forty-five {Daniel 12:1-13} added to the thirty, are a supplement to the times already mentioned, but they are really connected directly with the date in Daniel 7:1-28, without any reference to Daniel 9:1-27 (though less obviously, I presume there is a bond between all, namely, the last half week of the seventieth, which is identical with the time, times, and an half, overlapped doubly by the supplemented twelve hundred and ninety and three hundred and thirty-five days, as we have seen). But there is no hint of a long period when these dates proceed, whatever the interval before they begin. Indeed our Lord appears to intimate the express contrary, when He says, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened; "and it is in reference to the same period that, in the Revelation, the devil is represented as come down in great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. Does this look like more than a thousand years? Finally, the assurance that the prophet should stand in his lot in the end of those days does not imply that those days are themselves of a longer continuance than might appear from the letter of the prophecy. The long delay was before the days commence, not in their long continuance. The prophet knew well that he lived (then a very old man) at the beginning of the second of those four empires, though he might have no knowledge of the strange vicissitudes of the fourth, and of the mysteries which the New Testament would reveal in due season during its continuance and disappearance, before its revival, and the portentous crisis, terminating in its judgment, when these days have run their course, after which the prophet should stand in his lot.

Thus, even in the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation, the point is not at all the course of secret providence in history of which men love to weave systems, but the announcement of divine judgment, when the overt unrestrained blasphemy of the powers makes it morally imperative on God's part. This is the reason why scripture passes so curtly over the long periods of which the natural mind is so boastful, in order to fix attention on the closing scene when the responsible holders of authority come into collision with the God who originally delegated the authority. No one doubts the importance of what God works secretly; yet it is not of this that prophecy treats, but of His public inflictions when man's evil becomes intolerable by openly denying God and setting up himself instead. And as secret providence is thus excluded from prophecy, still more is the church, whereby God now displays His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10). Even when He does deign to furnish light as to His working in the church during a day of decay, till the spewing out of its last

form, He chooses seven existing assemblies, "the things that are," as the means of it, so as not to falsify His own principles in the Christian's constant waiting for Christ, and in our having a heavenly position in Him, instead of being an object of prophecy on earth. When the properly prophetic part of the Revelation commences, "the things which must be after these," those who had enjoyed the church's relationship with Christ are seen already glorified on high, and we return to Jews or Gentiles, unjust or righteous, filthy or holy, on earth. The bride is above during the visions of judgment, or at least their execution.

It is no question then of speculating about God's ways, but of submission in thankfulness, to His word who tells us the end from the beginning, and dwells not on the mere intervening stages which are noticed — if at all — in the most passing way, but concentrates our gaze on the closing conflict between good and evil, when Satan fights out his last campaign against the Lord and His Anointed, and we can the better discern by such an issue the frightful character of wiles which looked specious at an earlier day. The real difficulty to a spiritual mind would be to conceive the Spirit of God occupying, not merely the Christian now but even the godly Jew of old or by-and-by with Gentile politics and the details of their godless history. It is quite simple to under-stand that all the blessing is not introduced, when judgment intervenes first to destroy the beast and the false prophet, other enemies needing to be put down, other measures necessary to clear away evil and its effects, and that two or three months more beyond the three and a half years are added in this way. But that so seventy-five, or even thirty, years should follow the destruction of the beast and the anti-christ, before the full blessing of the millennium comes in, is a most unnatural supposition; yet it seems inseparable from, and therefore destructive of, the system which interprets these days as so many years.

04.19. Chapter 14 The Apocalyptic Numbers

Chapter 14 The Apocalyptic Numbers

Having briefly examined the reasoning of the historical school as to the numbers in Daniel, we may now consider those contained in the Book of Revelation. The same principle really applies to both; but it may be more satisfactory if we notice what is attempted to be drawn from them in detail.

I. The ten days' tribulation in the message to the Smyrnean angel comes first in order. Here it is felt that caution is needed; for men like the late Mr. E. B. Elliott* would carefully eschew such evidence. It is well known that they deny the seven Apocalyptic assemblies to be types of the main varying phases of the church on earth [Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22] till the Lord takes His own on high. Here therefore is a rent among both futurists and historicalists, some on the two sides owning, many rejecting, the larger view of these churches. Yet there are those even of the latter school who, in accordance with the acknowledgment of their application to distinct stages in the church's history, interpret these ten days {Revelation 2:10} of the ten years' persecution under Diocletian, the most remarkable in the early times of the church. So, after speaking of the Seventy Weeks, the late Mr. G. S. Faber says: "We find likewise that the Apocalyptic ten days' persecution of the church of Smyrna has been similarly proved by the event to mean, not a persecution of ten literal days, but a persecution of ten mystical days; that is to say, the persecution of ten years which is recorded by Eusebius, and Lactantius, and Orosius." (Sacred Calendar, 1. 45, 46). Homogeneity is supposed to require a similar construction of the various other numbers of these two prophets. It is notorious however that many, even in early times, interpreted the ten days of the ten persecutions down to Diocletian, as others recently in more general terms. The real thought appears to give the persecuted the comfort of knowing that it was limited, a meaning familiar to the reader of scripture from Genesis to Daniel. But on the prolonged scheme one need not set aside the general facts more than this.

* The protracted view of the seven churches neutralises Mr. E.'s primary objection to futurism — the supposed instant plunge of the Apocalyptic prophecy into the distant future of the consummation. . . .

II. The time of the locust-woe has next to be examined. Here the most natural allusion appears to be the ordinary period during which locusts live to ravage: so should the scourge symbolized by them last, and no such space as to wear men out. It is but a preliminary infliction, tormenting but not prolonged excessively. Greater judgments must follow: this is the first woe.

III. The time of the second woe, or Euphratean horsemen, is thought to afford another proof, though involved in greater difficulties from the various readings or versions. The true text is that attested by the Alexandrian and Porphyrian uncials, supported by many cursives, versions, and patristic quotations: κα■ ■μεραν, and the cursive Cod. Reuchl. omit these words, as does the Complut. Pol., most probably by oversight. The Basilian uncial however, and more than twenty cursives, before ■μεραν intercalate ε■ς τ■ν, and six cursives (28, 38, 49, 79, 91, 96) τ■ν only.

Hence Mr. Faber says in a note to page 420 of his Sacred Calendar, ii., The many erroneous versions of this passage have arisen entirely from improper. punctuation. I read the original Greek, pointed as follows: Κα■ ■λ■θησαν ο■ τ■σσαρες ■γγελοι, ο■ ■τοιμασμ■νοι ε■ς τ■ν ■ραν, κα■ ■μ■ραν κα■ μ■να κα■ ■νιαυτ■ν, ■να κ. τ. λ. The accusatives, ■μ■ραν and μ■να and ■νιαυτ■ν, I consider as denoting continuance of time, and as depending, not upon the preposition ε■ς, but upon the verb ■λ■θησαν . Hence he would render, "And the four angels, who had been prepared unto the appointed season [which would require, rather καιρ■ν than ■ραν] were loosed during both a day, and a month, and a year, in order," etc. Another author of the same school prefers: Matthaei's text, framed on the comparatively later, or Constantinopolitan, authorities, and would translate, "the angels prepared for that hour, and (for) that day, were loosed both a month and a year," evidently to fit in to the supposed period, so as to agree with the three hundred and ninety days of Ezekiel. However it is the less needful to refute this fanciful analogy, as the author himself appears to have abandoned it, and in a more recent work returned to the ordinary text and the common rendering. But it will be observed that all this shows the extreme precariousness of the historical application, and of the effort to extract a chronological period for the Turkman woe, as we may see in the former case, where the school divides into the classes which see either one period of a hundred and fifty years, or two such periods in the same Saracenic woe. The truth appears to be that in the vision the angels were loosed that were prepared against the hour, day, month, year fixed of God — that is, it is an epoch rather than a period; and this is secured by a single article {the word "the"}, which brackets all together. As another remarks, had the article been repeated before each, the ideas of the appointed hour, day, month, and year would have been separated, not, as now, united; had there been no article, we might have understood that the four were to be added together to make up the time, though even thus the ε■ς occurring once only would have made some difficulty; for the natural way of expressing such a meaning would be ε■ς ■ραν, κα■ ε■ς ■μ■ραν, κα■ ε■ς μ■να, κα■ ε■ς ■νιαυτ■ν. If this be so, we must conclude that this phrase in the second woe has no more bearing on the year-day question than the five months in the first. It may be added that, if an aggregated period had been meant, the natural order would have been the inverse of the actual one, for a year, and for a month, and for a day, and for an hour.

IV. The treading down of the holy city, and the related numbers, we have next to consider. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth" (Revelation 11:2-3).

1. It is true that two distinct phrases are used to denote the time, and that neither is the usual phrase in common life. But that this points to the mystical interpretation desired, or accords with it only, is more than should be affirmed. One can understand the time presented in a different light from spiritual motives, and wholly apart from any question of disguising continuance of time. Indeed, if the object were simply the acting on the year-day principle, it would seem more natural to adhere solely to so many days, which is exactly what the Holy Spirit avoids. The variety of forms is therefore adverse to what is sought as evidence. Whether one apprehends justly or not the aim that underlies each variety may be questioned; but it is not a sound judgment that any, or all, of them can be counted inconsistent with the space of three and a half years. The usage depends on

other and higher considerations than concealing a long space under an apparently brief one, though this be not absolutely denied. But who does not feel the propriety of telling us how His witnesses prophesied in sackcloth "a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days?" and so of feeding the mother of the male of might in a place prepared of God in the wilderness {Revelation 12:1-17}, though it be the same space which is styled "a time, times, and half a time" when she is said to flee there, and be fed, away from the face of the serpent? Within these extremes we have the forty two months, during which it is given to the Gentiles to tread down the holy city, and to the beast to practice or pursue its career.

2. Again, what is there, in the comparison of Revelation 11:2 with Luke 21:24, to prove, or even insinuate, that, because the treading down of Jerusalem stretches over the times of the Gentiles, therefore the treading down of the holy city in the Apocalypse must be equally spun out? It would seem more pertinent, on the contrary, to infer, from the limited terms of the Revelation, that the latter must be a brief space as compared with the former. The historical treading is as long as the times of the Gentiles, the symbolic and future is restricted to forty-two months.

3. Is it not weak to argue from the allusion to Elias, in the account of the witnesses {Revelation 11:1-19}, that the period is presumably twelve hundred and sixty years? Undoubtedly the time of famine in that prophet's day is twice mentioned in the New Testament as lasting "three years and six months"; but the same term need not be used in a prophetic book if the time here were identical: other reasons, as we have seen, might operate to modify the expression. And, granting the typical character of his history, it is straining matters to infer that the time of the witnesses must be an immensely larger, as well as analogous, period.

4. In the gospel of Matthew three days and three nights are predicated of the Lord's burial. This style of speech was according to Jewish reckoning, which counted even a small fraction of a day before sunset, or another after it, as a night and day respectively. The principle involved was that of a full witness to His death. In the Revelation it was no longer a question of this, but of such a computation as suits and is intelligible to men at large.

V. The wilderness abode is of the mother, not of the bride; of Israel, not of the church (Rev. 10: 12).

1. The symbolical teaching therefore points away from the church to the ancient people of God, when they once more enter the field of divine dealing in the latter day; and thus the presumption is rather against, than for, the year-day.

2. The woman is no doubt a miniature, but of Israel at the end of this age; and thus the plainest consistency with facts demands that the time should be taken in its literal import. See Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 12:1-13.

3. The distinctness of the phrases denoting the same time in no way betokens a prolonged mystical period, their unusual form being due to reasons of a spiritual, and not merely a chronological, character.

4. Further, there is a most express intimation in Revelation 12:12, which seems to forbid the lengthening out of the times into a very considerable portion of the world's history. The reason for the great wrath of the dragon is said to be because, when cast down, he knows that he has "but a

short time." It would require strong proof to show that this means, not three years and a half, but twelve hundred and sixty. There is nothing in the Old Testament predictions about Israel which could lead us to gather that there will be again a delay of even forty years, as of old, in the wilderness, though we know from Ezekiel 20:1-49 and Hosea 2:1-23 that God will plead with them there once more. There is quite a different object in such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 and Hebrews 4:1-16, which refer to the Christians apart from time, and not to Israel in the future crisis (as in Revelation 12:1-17), subject to times and seasons. To say that there is a designed coincidence between this chapter and the texts in Numbers, Ezekiel, and Daniel 9:1-27, usually cited for the year-day, shows a warm imagination in quest of constructive evidence: what else? It is in vain to eke out an appearance of proof by alleging that, as the unbelief of Israel turned the forty days of search into forty years of wandering, so the similar unbelief and corruption of the church has turned the twelve hundred and sixty days expressed on the surface of the prophecy into those twelve hundred and sixty years of actual delay and desolation which lay couched beneath the expression, and have been slowly fulfilling into the course of divine Providence. This is rhetoric, not even logic, still less scripture. For the woman, mother of the glorified Man in Revelation 12:1-17, is beyond doubt not the church but the Jewish people — first, as seen in God's mind and purpose; then in the latter-day trouble through which she must pass, though strong and rapid means of escape from Satan's murderous malice be provided of God. In short, the argumentative or rather fanciful application to the church is the merest and most fatal mistake, not of details merely, but of the entire object of the chapter.

VI. The close of the mystery of God, and the oath that announces it in Daniel 10:5-7, are supposed to supply another proof, less evident perhaps at first sight, but which on examination is said to be of the strongest kind, when compared with the parallel text in Daniel 12:1-13 {Daniel 12:5-8}.

1. It is true that this oath, in the most general view of its meaning, denotes the shortness of the delay, and the impending close of the mystery of God. "There shall be delay no longer." But it is a mistake to think that this implies the six trumpets to have been really a time of long-suffering, still more that the previous delay in the course of those trumpets had been of long continuance, and, most of all, that this of itself can accord only with the larger interpretation of the times. Nothing hinders our believing that the time of longsuffering preceded the Apocalyptic judgments, that these follow in quick succession, but that the last introduces the reign of God when evil is set aside for the world finally.

2. The oath in Revelation 10:1-11 unquestionably resembles that in Daniel 12:1-13, though each has its points of grave distinction. But the more August and peremptory is that in the Apocalypse, the less does it lend itself to affording evidence of a chronological sort.

3. This conclusion is refuted by the words themselves. It is well known that the Authorized Version of the clause is untenable, suggesting an unfounded contrast of "time" with eternity as if instantly to follow, whereas a whole millennium and more must intervene. Besides, χρ■νος is not used in this abstract way, but for a long or short space, a lapse or interval, and hence delay; and this as pointedly is contrasted with καιρ■ς in Daniel, which means not mere duration of time, but a set time and hence "a year." It is in evident allusion to Revelation 6:11, where it was told the earlier martyr-band that they must rest ■τι χρ■νον [μικρ■ν], a while, or space "longer"; whereas the oath now runs that χρ■νος ο■κ■τι ■σται, "there should be no longer delay." It is strange that Dean

Alford, who agreed in this correction, should nevertheless have given, even in the third edition of his Greek Testament (1866), the same erroneous version as the Authorized; but he sets it right in his small Testament, compared with the Greek (1870), "there shall be delay no longer." It has been objected indeed, that this does not convey the full meaning of the oath, and for two reasons: first, that the narrative in the following chapter implies some measure of delay, even after this announcement; and, secondly, that the analogy with the oath in Daniel is almost entirely destroyed. But the answer is, first, that the terminus a quo of no delay is the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he should sound the trumpet, as he was about to do, whereas the main part of the following chapter precedes the third woe, as any one can see by inspection; and thereon, when the second is past, follows quickly the seventh trumpet, which does introduce the closing scene forthwith; secondly, general scope and minute phraseology stand here in marked contrast, not analogy, with the oath in Daniel, as already noticed. A more correct and consistent version therefore cannot be looked for.

4. With these convictions we cannot but discard the strange rendering of "A TIME no longer," a version which is contrary to all scriptural usage, and satisfies not a single condition of the text.

5. The use of the word in Luke 1:57; Acts 1:7; Acts 3:21; Acts 7:17; Galatians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:1, is too obviously different to require detailed argument. Nor can any words either sanction or disguise the confusion of it with καιρ■ς, as if they could equally bear the same interpretation. Even the very few who contend for the interchange evidently feel the difficulty, which is in no way removed by their reasoning. For the contrast with the Apocalypse is evident in what follows: compare, Daniel 12:9 with Revelation 22:10. And the comparatively narrow compass of the oath in the Old Testament prophet is as noticeable as the breadth and depth of that in the New. The strict correspondence of the two oaths is therefore fallacy, so transparent that perhaps overzeal in controversy can alone account for the assertion. Nor again is it true that χρ■νος and καιρ■ς are so nearly allied in their meaning that the difference vanishes in a correct version. It is only to deceive oneself if one reasons from the four places in the New Testament where our translators have loosely given season for χρ■νος, as in every one it should be while, or time, or space; equally so to infer from the sixty places where they translate κ. by time, that the distinction between them is evanescent. No scholar who has weighed this usage would deny their distinctive propriety in every instance, as the Christian ought to believe it, because he is certain of God’s wisdom in every word He has written. It is only a lax rendering therefore which seems to assimilate the two words.

6. But the absurdity of the effort will be made apparent if one were to give to Revelation 6:11 the sense sought to be imported into Revelation 10:6; and the stance ought to be the fairer test, inasmuch as the one may be justly reckoned to refer to the other. What would be thought, then, of imposing on the earlier text the meaning of resting longer for a year, be it of days or years, until both their fellow-bondmen and their brethren, who were about to be killed as they, should be fulfilled? Every intelligent mind would scout such sense of Revelation 6:11; yet there is as much, or as little, ground for so understanding Revelation 10:6. Not a single instance of χρ■νος occurs in scripture approaching the desired meaning. The demonstration is complete therefore, that χρ■νος lends no help to the scheme which denies the future crisis of three and a half years, and makes of it an interval of many centuries.

VII. The duration of the sixth, or rather seventh, head of the beast (Revelation 17:6-11) has long been thought to furnish another reason for the longer reckoning. But the argument is a mistake. The sixth king, or form of Roman government, was the then existing imperial, as distinguished from the five already fallen; the seventh, when he came, was to remain but a little while, that is, as compared with the previous state. The eighth, who is also of the seven, is characterized, not by remaining a little while, but by going into perdition; let his remaining be ever so short is not the point, but his coming out of the abyss and going into perdition in a way altogether characteristic. What is there, then, in this really to confirm the year-day theory? The seventh head has a brief continuance, as compared with the preceding heads, and certainly the sixth or imperial; or with the eighth, and its awful source and end peculiar to itself! There is not a word implying that the time of the last must be greater than a few natural years. This may suffice to show how little real ground there is to boast that the evidences for the year-day theory are full, clear, and unambiguous. The presumption is arbitrary that the dates have some secret meaning; and there is no such thing as a plain and certain key of interpretation appointed of God, which explains the transactions of modern history. When we proceed to look more closely into the particular passages where the dates occur, they appear to yield decisive opposition to the system which denies the brief crisis at the end of the age, and sees only the protracted history of Christendom, in their occurrence.

04.20. Chapter 15 The Year-Day Theory Concluded

Chapter 15 The Year-Day Theory Concluded The direct arguments for the denial of the future crisis, in order to make out the protracted historical reckoning of prophetic times as the true meaning of scripture, have now been briefly met; and many of the usual pleas have been shown to be groundless. But there are a few others, differing from those we have just noticed, which call for a short examination, especially as one cannot but reject the pseudo-literal narrowness of the futurists quite as much as the vagueness of their adversaries.

There is no need to dwell minutely on the conflicting theories on either side, which owe their rise to ignorance of scripture and of the power of God. A few remarks may suffice for the review of what remains to be noticed.

I. The uncertainty about the ten kingdoms does not seem so small a matter as the historicalists like to think, but the allegation against it of their adversaries is not an objection of much weight. It is plain and has been reasoned out, that the prophecy itself points to temporary changes by marriage or alliance in Daniel 2:1-49, and by uprooting of no less than three horns before the little horn which came up among the ten in Daniel 7:1-28.

There is a far graver obstacle to the providential scheme in the fact that, in the prophecy, the ten horns compose the instruments of the power of the fourth beast in its last phase; whereas in the history, which some regard as its fulfillment, they are the separate kingdoms which the barbarians, enemies and destroyers of the Roman empire, erected on the ruins. This is strengthened by the intimation of Revelation 17:12 that the ten horns of the close receive authority as kings one hour with the beast — not especially at, or merely so, which would require the dative, but the accusative, for one hour (μ■αν ■ραν). They have received no kingdom as yet: when the beast or Roman empire revives, they will. When the beast originally had its way, there was no such division. The Caesars governed an undivided empire. When the Germanic and other kindred hordes broke up the empire, they may have formed some ten kingdoms, less or more, in the West; but the empire was gone, save in name. There was no such thing as the co-existence of an imperial system with its head, and of these ten kings animated with the one policy and purpose of giving their kingdom to the beast. It will be so when "the beast that was and is not" "shall be present," before he goes to destruction, God putting it into the heart of the no longer jealous Western powers to do His mind, and to do one mind, till His words shall be finished. But this future condition is as far from the present or medieval division into separate kingdoms as the old undivided Roman empire differs from both. Now the Spirit of God in Daniel clearly contemplates as the full meaning of the prophecy the same state of things as John does in the Revelation, where there is an imperial chief directing the united energies of the ten kingdoms of the West, which, in any proper or full sense, is in neither the pagan times nor the papal, but in the future only. The utmost which can be allowed is, that the papacy may have shadowed in part the enormities of the little horn in Daniel, and of the beast in John; but assuredly the complete fulfillment awaits the final crisis, when that empire, which smote the Lord Jesus of old in humiliation, will rise again from the

abyss to oppose Him as He comes again in glory {Revelation 13:3-4; Revelation 19:19}, but must go into perdition. This is a far more serious objection to the system which sees only an immense web of providence, in past history, and it is riveted, not removed, by the most exact review of the prophetic word. Nothing that has already been exhausts the vision.

II.

Much has been said of late for and against the true terminus a quo of the twelve hundred and sixty years. But some, who reasoned from its uncertainty to overthrow the historical school, seem to have misunderstood the meaning of the prediction. Thus, if the saints have been for ages given over to the blasphemous little horn of Daniel 7:1-28, it was thought incredible that the church should be at a loss when and how the change happened. Many, it was urged, assert that it is; others are as fully convinced that it is not; and nine-tenths stand silent, avowedly unable to give any opinion on the subject. "They may, or may not, be in the hands of the little horn, and he may, or may not, be wearing them out, for anything they know. They hope and believe that they are the saints, but whether the beast is making war with, and has overcome, them, they cannot tell; it is a deep, curious, and litigated question, and one on which, among so many conflicting opinions, they never pretended to form a judgment for themselves." Dr. Maitland's retort has embarrassed not a few. The fact, however, is, that the prophet means that not the saints, but the times and laws, were to be given into the hand of the little horn. God does not let His people out of His own hand. On the other hand, the giving of the times and laws into the hand of the little horn is a very different thing from the pope's perversion of the prophecies, and wresting the promises of the future glory of the kingdom to the present grandeur and dominion of Romanism. And, whatever be the guilt of forbidding marriage to the clergy, or, yet more, of annulling the rebellious sin of idolatry by what we may call christening images, of heterodoxy and lying pretension in the Mass, of refusing the cup to or shutting up the Bible from the laity, and of sanctioning troops of false mediators in the worship of saints and angels and Virgin, it is not true that every feature of the prophecy finds its counterpart in the Roman papacy. It is in vain to say that the little horn claims the office of a seer, who has full insight into divine mysteries; and of a prophet, as infallible interpreter of the divine will. This is a true description of the pope, not of the little horn, which symbolizes a king, or rather emperor, not a bishop — a king, small at first, but not always, before whom three of the ten fell, and who wields the force of all the rest, rising up to the greatest height of his power before he is cast down for ever by divine judgment, and the beast given to the burning flame. "Eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things," in this horn, do not warrant the notion of an episcopal any more than of a prophetic dignitary. The symbol attributes high intelligence to this Roman chief {the coming Roman prince of Daniel 9:1-27 and the first beast of Revelation 13:1-18}, as well as audacity of speech, which takes the character of blasphemous pride against the Most High. (Cf. Daniel 7:11; Daniel 7:25.) He assumes the power of changing times and laws {Revelation 13:1-18}, like Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:1-33). Only this will be done by the emperor of Rome dictating to the Jews in Jerusalem, and changing the divinely-enjoined feasts and institutions given to that people. One may compare with this the last verse of Daniel 9:1-27, where he is said to cause sacrifice and oblation to cease "in the midst of the week," which would coalesce with the beginning of "a time, and times, and the dividing of time." Nor is it faith to plead the superior reasonableness of giving these predictions for many generations, rather than for one only. This is to make the actual circumstance outweigh the communication and enjoyment of God's mind, and is opposed to all

that is really spiritual. Our notion of utility is apt to mislead, guided as it ever is by mere reason. The question for a believer is the true meaning of the word, the intention of God Himself, which the Holy Spirit will surely unfold to those whose eye is, by grace, single to the glory of Christ. It does not commend itself to the ear of faith, when the effort is not to vindicate the prophecies from the guesses of men, but to reduce them to the same uncertainty as the twelve hundred and sixty days among historical commentators. Such reasoning ought to warn souls that it is the spirit of man which is at work, and not the Holy Ghost.

III. Of the repeated failures in the predicted close of the twelve hundred and sixty year-day system others have said enough. They are notorious. Yet they have found an apologist, who argues that these successive interpretations, mistaken as they were, are just what it was reasonable to expect. This might be, if prophecy were no such thing as God's word, or if we had not the Holy Spirit of God to give us the truth of it. In human things man progresses gradually, and the sense of past failure stimulates to future success: is it so in divine things? Is it true that, only by such failure and men's gradual approach to a correct view of the times and seasons, could the two main purposes have been fulfilled — growing knowledge of the prophecy, with a constant and unbroken expectation of the Lord's coming? To the Christian who repudiates the jarring schools of men it does seem no light instance of the irony observable here below, that Protestants should boast of a year-day theory, as applied to the time, times, and a half, which confessedly appeared about the year 1200; that they should avow the uncertainty of the ten kingdoms; and that they should cry up a few apparent successes, spite of a thousand mistakes, in their application. The effort to retort failure on those who, from apostolic times, have been awaiting the Son of God from heaven, is as unworthy as it is baseless. For, while the apostle Paul, for instance, taught the saints to be, with himself, ever looking for Christ, there was the most complete care never to connect Christ's coming for us with a single date. The times and seasons are, without exception, bound up with the trials and deliverance of the Jews, never with the church.

This, it will be seen and felt, goes to the root of the year-day system, when it takes the place of being the true and full aim of the Spirit in the prophetic visions. Hence, the more closely Daniel is searched, the more it will appear certain that the church is never contemplated as the object directly concerned in the scenes there disclosed to the view of faith. Again, the Apocalypse affords still more positive instruction, because therein we have a protracted scheme of the churches here below as "the things which are"; after which no such state is known any more, but a new company is seen for the first time in heaven, and the old distinction of only Jews and Gentiles follows on earth, with the most marked absence of the churches. Yet, singular to say, total failure in apprehending this, the broadest and weightiest lesson of the Revelation, pervades the opposing parties of futurists and historicalists alike. Nor is it here only that they are almost equally mistaken, but also in confounding the christian hope with the prophetic word, a distinction which runs through the New Testament, from John's Gospel, and before it, to the Revelation, but formally distinguished in 2 Peter 1:1-21, as in fact the apostle Paul does in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; for he beseeches the Thessalonians by the coming of our Lord, which is to gather the saints on high, not to be soon troubled, as though the day of the Lord were present — that day of solemn judgment for the earth, and men on it, of which the prophets had very fully spoken. So the apostle of the circumcision reminds his brethren that we have the prophetic word more firm (that is, confirmed) by the scene witnessed on the holy mount of transfiguration, to which they were doing well in

paying heed, as to a lamp or candle shining in a dusky place, till day dawn and the day-star rise in their hearts {2 Peter 1:16-20}. Those who knew Old Testament prophecy were thus encouraged in holding it fast; but it was at best a light for this scene, now wrapped up in gloom, but soon to enjoy the reign of Him whose right it is; and they should desire another light, as much brighter as that of day exceeds a lamp however excellent, and that too shining from, and centering in, Christ above, the day-star, whom we look for from heaven before the terrible day of the Lord come upon the world. The heavenly hope rising in the heart is thus wholly distinct from prophecy which tells us of the judgments which usher in the day of Jehovah on the earth. But of this most sure distinction, momentous as it is, not only for the affections but also for true intelligence, it would be hard to say which of the two contending schools is farthest from the truth. In general they are on the same ground of confusion in this respect, though most evidently wrong are they who are the boldest in saying, My Lord delayeth His coming. May neither of them say it in the heart, whatever be the faultiness of their systems! Where is the scriptural intimation of gradually increasing light from prophecy to sustain the lively expectation of the Bridegroom's coming for us? The analogy of providence has nothing to do with what is a matter of His word addressed to hearts animated with divine love and hope. To unbelief, no doubt, this may seem general and vague; not so to those who, with bridal affections, have the Spirit prompting the cry, Come {Revelation 21:17}. If it is a mere question of reasoning from a literal sense of the words, hope must wane away, and each succeeding generation feel less and less warrant for inferring the nearness of the advent. Hence the theory is that prophetic dates must dawn with a gradually increasing light in order to quicken the church's hope, which had otherwise lapsed into more and more indifference; and it is confidently affirmed as a fact, that ever since the reformation those who have most studied the prophetic dates, as an actual chronology of sacred times, have been the main instruments in awakening the church to a lively expectation of the coming of Christ.

Very different is our Lord's own representation. The virgins who at first went out with their lamps to meet the Bridegroom, while He tarried, all slumber and sleep. Surely this condition of slumber, as regards the hope of our Lord's return, characterized Christendom long after the Reformation, and down till our own times. However this may be, at length follows (not prophetic research, but) a cry at midnight, Behold the Bridegroom! go ye out to meet Him. It is this really which accounts for the present activity of wise, and even foolish, virgins. The cry is gone forth, but it is at midnight, not the flattering notion of a time of increased light, gradually bringing in the day.

Certainly the prophetic word, when studied in faith, gives one to judge principles now at work, it may be hiddenly, by God's revelation of their full fruit and of His public dealings at the end. The effect is to separate one to Himself from the scene ripening for judgment. But the coming of the Lord for His own is associated with His love, and the highest enjoyment of His glory with Him in the Father's house, with moral feelings and practical effects of another character, higher and more intimate, far above the prophetic word and its solemn announcements, however right and glorious. To confound the Christian's hope with prophecy, to supplement the state of the apostolic church with the fuller light of the present, to assert that the history of the year-day expositions accords in the closest way with these truths, like successive steps towards the just apprehension of the course of divine Providence, seems as distressing in its ignorance as in its presumption. It was a false alarm as to the day of the Lord, not excitement about His coming, which shook the Thessalonians. There is in scripture no protraction of His coming, always and only a lively

anticipation of it contemplated, and this up to the last chapter of the Revelation, though we have there plenty of times and seasons revealed before His day. It is the year-day theory which tries to conciliate errors and simply misses the truth. The supposed successes of Protestant interpreters call for few remarks here, though open to not a little assuredly. Suffice it then to say, that the chosen anticipations drawn from prophecy, which have proved so singularly correct in their main features, are these:

First, about the year AD 1600 Brightman calculated in his commentary that the overthrow of the Turkish power would occur AD 1696. In the year 1687 Dr. Cressener renewed the prediction, placing the time a year earlier, but restricting it to the close of the year of the "Turkish encroachments," or the last end of their "hostilities." This is caught up as in almost exact accordance with history, because the year 1697 was marked by that most signal victory of Prince Eugene over the Turks, which has proved the final limit to their aggressions upon western Europe. Bengel and Fleming are brought in to swell the train.

Here are the words of Brightman (p. 171, ed. Amst. 1611): "The execution of the commandment lighting upon the year 1300, by due consent of all history-writers; when their domesticall dissentions being appeased, and all consenting to the empire of the Ottomans, they might freely bende themselves with all their power to enlarge their borders, and some time at length creape out of their narrow straightes. How long time this power given to the Turks should continue is declared in the next words, prepared at an houre, and a day, and a month, and a yeere, which so exact description perteineth to the comforting of the godly whom the Spirit would have to know, that this most grievous calamity hath her set boundes, even to the last moment, beyond which it shall not be continued. Which indeed seemeth to be the space of three hundred ninety and six yeeres, every several day being taken for a yeere, after that manner which was interpreted the mouthes before. Thus he makes it out: from AD 1300 + 396 AD 1696; or as he says on Revelation 20:3 (p. 650), if we follow the reckening of the Julian yeeres, the impious kingdom shall not be prolonged beyond seven yeeres; then utterly to be abolished without so much as the footsteps of his name after him. It will be judged hence how far it is candid to say that Brightman's anticipation was verified. Was there indeed such an extirpation of the Turkish name (not to speak of 1696, but) in 1697? Was it singularly correct in its main features?" The fact is that Brightman taught that the thousand years' reign began in the year A.D. 130, and that the first resurrection belonged to the nations of Europe (p. 656); that three hundred years had then passed since that resurrection (p. 657). "We must also yet tarry some short space before that our brethren the Jews shall come to the faith. But after that they are come, and Christ shall have reigned some ages most gloriously on earth by His servants in advancing His church to most high honour above all empire,* then also all nations shall embrace true godliness," etc. (ib.) Hence Brightman was expecting the papacy and the Turk to be utterly abolished shortly. "Until this victory be gotten, the church yet is in war, liveth in tents, and sigheth with many adversaries. But after this war is finished, she shall keep a most joyful triumph, and shall rejoice with perpetual mirth. . . . The truth shall yet reign among the Gentiles for seven hundred years: how long afterwards among the Jews no declaration doth declare (p. 658). Is this the Protestant way of keeping the expectation of Christ's coming lively? It may be added in illustration of this chosen expositor's skill in prophecy, that he interprets the destruction of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:1-15 of the overthrow spoken of in Daniel 11:45; Daniel 12:12; Ezekiel 38:8, when the hour, day, month, and year of the Turks' tyranny shall come

out, to wit, at the year a thousand six hundred ninetieth more or less. Finally, Brightman held that the rising of the dead small and great for judgment before the great white throne means: "the full restoring of the Jewish nation" (p. 664).

* One sees by this the worthlessness of Protestant pretensions to spiritual intelligence, or to the least right apprehension of the church's calling here below. Instead of being content to suffer with Christ, waiting to be glorified with Him by-and-by, Brightman covets for Protestantism what the popes won for Romanism. And is it to such blind guides as these in prophecy or the church's hopes that some would lead back our souls under cover of attacking futurism? But the strangest thing of all is that the very advocate who cites Brightman's deduction from Revelation 9:15, as a conclusive answer to such as have declaimed on the total failure of these prophetic times, had himself rejected the reading, and of course the translation, of the text on which this anticipation was based. Thus while Brightman adopted the common text in that verse, which is essential to his calculations, his advocate, at the time when he commended this calculation as an instance of a distinct and accurate insight into what was coming on the earth, adopted as preferable Matthaei's reading. This ought to have made no small difference if it was a date. But we have already shown that it is not, Brightman and his advocate being alike wrong.

Further, Dr. Cressener, like Brightman, looked not merely for a grave check or severe defeat of the Turks, but their then total overthrow, or as Cressener says in the preface to his Demonstration (p. xx, London, 1690), "the last end of all Turkish wars." Was this a just estimate of the battle of Zenta?

Secondly, Cressener in 1687 anticipated "that the true religion will revive again in some very considerable kingdom before the general peace with the Turks or eight years at furthest." "The next year seems in all probability to be a year of wonders for the recovery of the church." Will the christian reader believe that all this is thought to have proved singularly correct in the revolution of England, AD 1688, and the peace of Carlowitz, 1698? Again, Cressener conjectured that before 1800 Rome would be destroyed, and soon after its chief supports, ecclesiastical and civil? Is this correct too?

Further, R. Fleming, jun., in 1700 predicted that the French monarchy, after having scorched others, would itself consume before 1794; as Bengel thought that the papacy would close its chief dominance in 1809. But surely, whatever the coincidence in appearance, our minds must feel that the grounds were as weak as the fulfilment was imperfect. His Apocalyptical Key, or "Extraordinary Discourse on the Rise and Fall of the Papacy" (my copy is the reprint in 1793 of the original published in 1701) pretends to no more than "some conjectural thoughts on this head; for I am far from the presumption of some men to give them any higher character." It may be added that in the same work the author conjectured that a divine judgment to be poured on the dominions belonging to the Roman See would begin probably about 1794, and expire about 1848, which has been regarded as no less strikingly verified than the former thought. But what is the ground of these anticipations? His view of the vials, which, according to him, suppose a struggle and war between the papist and reformed parties, every vial being regarded as the event of some new periodical attack of the former on the latter, but the issue proving at length favourable to the latter against the former.

Hence Fleming considers that the first vial began with the Reformation, and continued about forty years (that is, 1516-1566); that the second ran on thence about fifty years (1566-1617) to the confusion of Spain and partially of France; that the third closed with the peace of Munster in 1648 after Germany was humbled; and that the fourth expired with 1794. "The reason of which conjecture is this; that I find the pope got a new foundation of exaltation when Justinian, upon his conquest of Italy, left it in a great measure to the pope's management, being willing to eclipse his own authority to advance that of this haughty prelate. Now this being in the year 552; this, by the addition of the 1620 [really 1260] years, reaches down to the year 1811, which according to prophetical account is the year 1794." And this involves his idea that the state of Protestantism is what is set out in Revelation 16:10; namely, "Atheism, Deism, Socinianism, irreligion, profaneness, skepticism, formality, hatred of godliness, and a bitter persecuting spirit continue and increase among us." But is it really the fact that the French monarchy, after scorching others, did itself consume by doing so, till it exhausted itself towards the end of the eighteenth century, as the Spanish towards the end of the sixteenth? For my own part I cannot but agree with the more weighty commentators of recent times, that, if we are to apply the vials historically, the scheme of Fleming is a mistake, and that the vials, in a partial way at least, begin with the French Revolution instead of the fourth ending there and then. Napoleon answers thus to the scorching agent, and the blaspheming sufferers who repented not are chiefly the papal nations of the European continent. Further, it seems superficial to cry up his applying the fifth vial to the years 1794-1848; for unquestionably it is rather since than before that the pope has been so signally ruined in his temporalities, and this by Italy spite of France, of which the conjecturer had not the most distant notion. He had pitched on 1848, reckoning the 1260 years prophetically from 606 when the pope received the title of Supreme Bishop. Then would follow the sixth vial on Mahometanism or the Turks up to 1900, as the seventh up to 2000 by Christ's appearance (though not personally) bringing in the total judgment of Rome, etc., with the millennium afterwards. The first and inevitable result of his system is to set aside the waiting for Christ and to make death the necessary expectation of the Christian. "Though we are not to live to see the great and final destruction of the papacy, the blessed millennium, or Christ's last coming to judge the world, yet seeing death is the equivalent of all these to us," etc. (p. 82). Is it not strange to hear such a conjecture cited as a witness of the value of the Protestant system by one who avowedly rejects his basis? Is it right again, to notice the last instance, that one who was perfectly aware of Bengel's chimerical system of Apocalyptic chronology, to which it may be doubted that he converted a single individual of sobriety, should deign to use an example which had no more solid basis than the prognostication of an astrologer?

Pious and learned as the prelate may have been, no one will think that such remarks are too stringent on his prophetic dates, when it is remembered that he started with the assumption that the famous number of the beast 666 in years = his allotted term of forty-two months. Hence a καιρ■ς = 222 and two ninths years, and of course 3.5 καιρο■ = 777 and seven ninths; the little time of Revelation 12:12 (■λ■γος χρ■νος) = 888 and eight ninths; what he oddly calls the non-chronus (or as he thinks in better Latin — which may be doubted — the ne chronus) of Revelation 10:6 = 1111 and one ninth; the μικρ■ς χρ■νος of Revelation 20:3 = half a καιρ■ς, strange to say, or 111 and one ninth; the millennium, or χ■λια ■τη (though Brightman indeed makes two, the first of Satan bound, the second of the saints reigning) = 999 and nine ninths (sic); the χρ■νος = 1111 and one ninth; the α■■ν = 2222 and two ninths, of which he gives 3.5 to the

world, 7777 and seven ninths or 490 of his prophetic months. As the result, Bengel in his eagerness for dates finds a chronus in Revelation 6:11 (that is, 1111 and one ninth years) from AD 98 (a rather early beginning) to 1289 or Innocent III.'s crusade against the Waldenses. The first woe, with its five prophetic months = 79 common years, dated from AD 510 to 589; the second, with its hour, day, month, and year = nearly 207, from AD 634 to 840; the non-chronus from AD 800 to 1836, within which are placed the interval after the second woe (84-947), the 1260 days of the woman after the birth of the man-child (864-1521), the third woe (947-1836), the time, times, and half-time, with the beast and his number (1058-1836), the everlasting gospel 1614, the end of the 42 months 1810, the beast from the pit or abyss 1832, the general dates closing with 1836 when the mystery of God is finished, the beast destroyed, and Satan bound.

Apology is due for presenting such a mass of crude and unfounded or rather ill-founded speculation; yet this is the expositor whose opinion that the chief period of papal dominance would close in 1809 is not only cited for the censure of those who objected to the historical system, but said to have distinct grounds! The charge of delusion and falsehood brought against these estimates of the prophetic dates, unless advanced with important limitations, is said to be itself false and delusive. This is bold; when it is known that he who thus dogmatizes did not differ from but agreed with his adversaries that Bengel's entire system of Apocalyptic dates has not an atom of truth in it. The Christian will judge from such specimens, which are no doubt the best that could be produced to commend the popular scheme of prophetic chronology, that, if there is little to attract or reward in the expositions of futurists, there is nothing to trust for candour or correctness in the defence of historicalism. One may not look for depth or breadth of truth where the heavenly headship of Christ and the distinctive association of the church with Him are ignored if not denied; but it is painfully instructive to see how special pleading destroys common honesty, and not least in the things of God.

04.21. Chapter 16 Concluding Observations

Chapter 16 Concluding Observations

We have now briefly examined the leading assumptions of the historical school; we have tested what is peculiar to the system, and have given sufficient evidence to show its lack of spiritual intelligence, even when, as of late, reasserted with considerable confidence to oppose further light which God has caused to shine afresh from His word. The objections urged by the futurist party may not be always well founded; but a really close search into scripture will prove that they both err by their narrowness: futurism by slighting the prophetic light cast on the past; historicalism by still more serious oversight of what is coming; both by overlooking the heavenly glory of Christ and the church's union with Him in it, as distinct from the past as from the future ways of God on the earth. The extreme advocates on both sides lead equally to unbelief through their one-sidedness. We have seen that the crisis at the end of the age, closed by the Lord's appearing in glory, is the grand point in Daniel and the Apocalypse, as well as our Lord's own prophecy; though there is also a passing notice of the older Gentile empires, to which the world-power was successively assigned by God, when the Jews had proved themselves unworthy by idolatry, as at length by the rejection of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. Finally, the year-day theory, when applied definitely and in detail now, we have seen to be as superficial as might be expected from its source in the dark ages.

It is in first or fundamental principles that these schools betray their character. Not only are they narrow, and thus short of the full sphere, but they ignore the divine center, and fail to distinguish the heavenly circle from the earthly one, the body and bride of Christ on high, from His people and kingdom under the whole heavens, though embracing all peoples and kindreds and tongues. No prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation; isolate it, as the historical system in general does, from the future coming and kingdom of our Lord, the gathering point of the prophetic word in Old and New Testament, and the Holy Spirit's object is missed, the key lost. You are no longer in harmony with His line and aim who inspired all. Judged by this divine criterion (furnished by the apostle Peter) historicalism is most faulty, though its rival is blamable enough for denying the use of the lamp throughout the night. The spirit of the world, ever magnifying man and the present course of the age, is the main hindrance; as the Spirit of God, who searches all, even the depths of God, alone gives us to know, by and in and with Christ, what has been freely given us of God, and this spoken in words taught, not by human wisdom, but by the Spirit, spiritual things being communicated in spiritual words.

Now Christ and His glory are ever before the revealing Spirit; and as His kingdom over (not Israel only, but) all the earth is what all the prophets attest, so the apostles point to His heavenly exaltation and His bride's along with Him. The obstacle to the truth, then, is far wider and deeper than any party question of polemical divinity; though no doubt, as some few of the futurists have been swayed by the (perhaps unconscious) desire of palliating popery, so many of the historicalists no less by their scarce too strong abhorrence of that soul-enslaving and idolatrous

system. They seem both to have forgotten the maxim which the apostle John impresses on the little children, or the very babes of God's family: "As ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now are there arisen many antichrists, whence we know that it is the last hour" {1 John 2:19}. The futurists think only of the coming antichrist, the historical school are absorbed with the many antichrists. The Christian should not forget, on the one hand, that even now there are many antichrists in being (antiquity being the worst possible disproof of opposition to Christ); on the other, that a great personal antagonist of the Lord is surely coming, of which the many that have been and are should be regarded as signs and precursors, rather than as the fulfillment.

It is confessed, even by the apologist of ordinary views, that there was in the mind of many Christians an exceeding jealousy of all discussion on unfulfilled prophecy. It was thought to be speculative and uncertain, adapted to produce and foster a vain curiosity, and to divert the mind from the duty of practical religion. Hence arose a tendency to dwell only on unfulfilled predictions, to consider evidence as the main benefit to be derived from the study, and to proscribe all investigation of the future as unlawful and pernicious. It is owned that these notions were too defective, and too plainly opposed to the statements of scripture, to endure the test of a prolonged inquiry; and that thoughtful minds, however cautious and devout, could not fail to see that other purposes of equal or greater importance were to be answered by these sacred predictions, warning to the careless, instruction to the faithful, instruction in the nature and outline of coming events, spiritual preparedness, etc., being real objects recognized by scripture itself, and only to be answered by unfulfilled prophecy. Thus evidence was seen to be only a secondary use for the conviction of the incredulous, while the purpose was the help of the believer to enjoy the confidence of Him who revealed all in His love.

Hence, as has been supposed, a natural recoil from the prevalent doctrine which had proscribed the study of unfulfilled prophecy as useless and dangerous, to the opposite extreme, which treated fulfilled prediction as powerless for instruction or profit; and hence also a tendency to transfer as many predictions as possible into the class of unaccomplished prophecies, which might thus be still available for the guidance of the church.

Far from any believer be the thought that the prophetic word has not a decided bearing on the divine side, as revealing God's glory and ways, besides its reference to, or use for, the personal wants of man. All scripture has this twofold character, and prophecy among the rest. But it is not in general seen, whether by futurist or historicalist, that the prophetic word treats of judgments and earthly blessing by God's power and goodness, but does not as such unveil the depths of God now revealed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. (See 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 Peter 1:1-25.) It was the prerogative of Christ the Son thus to communicate to His own, in contrast with a prophet or even the greatest born of women, who could not rise above the earth wherein he had his origin, while the Lord Jesus, coming from above, is above all, and testified what He had seen and heard, and the Holy Ghost taught all things about the truth which they could not then bear, besides bringing to remembrance all that Jesus had said. In the communion of this precious and special intimacy stands the Christian and the church; and hence their exceptional place in relation to the prophetic word, as we have seen in the end of 2 Peter 1:1-21, where the apostle shows that the believers addressed should heed that word for this dark squalid scene, till daylight dawn and the daystar arise in their heart. Prophecy is an excellent lamp, but there is something yet brighter, the daylight of our heavenly association with Christ Himself on high, source and centre of all,

(daystar as He is here called), which is far better.

It is this which exempts the Christian from the system of times and seasons, though he is entitled to know them, but to know them as bearing on the earthly people, not on those whose portion is with Him whose light is brighter than the sun at noon. With this accords the fact, that, when we look into the saints contemplated in the details of Daniel, they are found to be Jews, and so are those in the Saviour's prophecy of the dealings with Jerusalem in the end of the age; only that we hear then of Jews and Gentiles now on earth, but at that crisis not of the church or heavenly saints, who are previously seen in the Apocalyptic visions glorified, and with Christ above, whence they come with Him in the day of His appearing. No thoughtful Christian then denies the value of fulfilled prophecy as evidence of revelation. It was really in no small measure the forcing of prophecy to bear on what was not its object, and the popular effort to make it speak of the past and present in gospel times, which largely led to the reaction expressed in Dr. S. R. Maitland's words:

We point the infidel to the captive Jew and the wandering Arab, but who challenges him with the slain witnesses? We set before him the predicted triumphs of Cyrus; but do we expect his conversion from the French Revolution and the conquests of Napoleon? We send him to muse on the ruined city of David, and to search for the desolated site of Babylon; but who builds his arguments on the opened seals of the Apocalypse? And why is this? I do not speak hastily, and I would not speak uncharitably, but I cannot suppress my conviction that it is because the necessity of filling up a period of twelve hundred and sixty years has led to such forced interpretation of language, and to such a constrained acquiescence in what is unsatisfactory to sound judgment, that we should be afraid, not only of incurring his ridicule, but of his claiming the same license which we have ourselves been obliged to assume. I firmly believe that the error lies in adopting an interpretation which requires us to spread the events predicted respecting three years and a half over more than twelve centuries, and which thus sends us to search the page of history for the accomplishment of prophecies still unfulfilled (Enquiry, pp. 84, 85. 1826). It is not that one cites this futurist leader as laying down principles of sterling value; for his work was much more negative than positive, and he was as much as his adversaries under the idea that the main end of prophecy is to convict unbelievers. The error lies in two things: first, unbelief of the authority of God's word; and, secondly, ignorance of our privileges as Christians in the perfect favor of God, and unwillingness to accept the truth that the world is awaiting the suspended judgment of God at Christ's return. Those who, justified by faith and in peace with God, stand in His grace and rejoice in hope of His glory, do not need evidence that the word of their God and Father is true, or that the providence of God orders all the varying plans and thoughts of men to the fulfillment of its own deep and wonderful counsels. And for him who knows what it is to walk in the light as He is in the light (the place of every Christian), it is strange doctrine to hear that fulfilled prophecies lend great help to our thoughts in seeking to attain this holy and divine elevation. It is really by faith of Christ, as possessed of His life and cleansed by His blood. What a descent from His presence thus to history, or the account of all the events of time under the light of the prophetic vision, good as it is; and how painful the effort thus to christen, if one may so say, all the main subjects of classical study and pursuit!

Again, to talk of the sure progress of all history towards its consummation in the kingdom of Christ is very apt to blind men to the fact, that "the times of the Gentiles," under which we live, are really

an interruption in God's ways with men on the earth, a parenthesis rather than the orderly course of things, though a parenthesis since redemption during which a mystery of the deepest grace and richest glory is revealed, a mystery great indeed as to Christ, and as to the church. When our Lord returns, the world will pass under the direct government of God, when Israel and the nations shall be blessed under the glorious Son of man, as of old all fell to ruin which stood on man's responsibility. To blend in such prospects of glory with the whole range of history, to make all the events recorded by profane historians, and by the orators and poets of Greece and Rome, so many pledges to us of the everlasting kingdom, is to confound clean and unclean, and to verge on profanity itself, if it have any definite meaning. In all this reasoning it is plain that the Protestant is no less dark than the Catholic in seizing the true and special nature of the church. This misleads both the conflicting parties; and it is hard to say which errs most from the truth. Thus we are told by the historicalist that there is in the full provision of divine truth in these fulfilled prophecies an unspeakable exhibition of God's wisdom and love, who, knowing the weakness of our faith as to all the great blessings He has promised, by these connected and continual visions converts every event of providence when fulfilled into a new and fuller pledge of the mercies still only in prospect; and Babylon and Persia, Greece and Rome, Cyrus and Alexander, Antiochus and Titus, the powers that have oppressed or the conquerors that have wasted (not Israel or even saints among the ancient people of God but) the church! become tokens of the approach of Messiah's triumphant kingdom. None can be surprised if there be the widest divergence in general doctrine, in worship and walk, in communion and hope, seeing that there is such total ignorance of the church in fact and character. The effect is disastrous in the extreme. As our special relationship to Christ at God's right hand is unknown, so perpetual interest in all the events of past history takes the place avowedly of setting our minds on things above; so too boasting of the whole deposit of revealed wisdom successionally unfolded from age to age forbids the sense and confession of our actual fallen estate, and the foreboding of the troubles (not of the Jews and Gentiles at the end of the age, but) of the church eclipses the continual looking for the Bridegroom as our proximate hope.

It is indeed solemnly true that there will be a judgment of the quick {living} as well as of the dead {2 Timothy 4:1}, and that the kingdom over the earth covers the space between for a thousand years; that the past is not something extinct and perished for ever, but that every actor shall give account, and every work be manifested before the Lord; but how this teaches us the perpetual interest of the church of God in all the events of past history seems an inference very wide of the premises. The value of Old Testament facts, as well as testimonies, we are best taught in the application of them by the Holy Ghost in the New; but this is a thing very different from our busying ourselves with all the events of past history, or the records of bygone days, as such.

We may notice too that, where the church of God is relegated to history for its moral lessons, the whole of revealed truth is classed under the law, the gospel, and the word of prophecy, ignoring those writings of the apostles which make known the mystery hidden from ages and from generations {Colossians 1:26; see also Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:9}. Promises and law, gospel and church, might each and all be distinguished from the displayed kingdom of which the prophetic word speaks so fully. The Old Testament gives us the promises and the law; the New Testament, consequent on the work of the Son and the mission of the Spirit, gives us the gospel and the church; while prophecy is found in both, more largely in the Old Testament, when all

blessing was future, more profoundly and completely in the New, where what is coming is treated systematically till the eternal day. As in the New Testament we have the truth in Christ for the individual and the body, so we have not merely this evil or that, but all that opposes itself against the will of God, and this from the first to the last. Hence, whatever be the iniquity of the popish system, the Spirit testifies against all the forms of departure from God and His grace. Thus, in the seven Apocalyptic churches, not to speak of the apostolic epistles, there is a word from the Lord bearing on all which He judged it of special moment to notice; and the prophecy, strictly so-called, discloses the second beast as distinct from the first, and Babylon so different from the beasts, that she becomes at last the object of destructive hatred to one, if not both. There the varying and opposed evils of men are seen successively, or together, falling under the righteous wrath of God and the Lamb; while the saints are seen as variously blessed according to the Father's gracious wisdom, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named.

Yet will it be found in practice that no one will be found intelligently to profit in any full measure by the Apocalyptic visions as a whole, who is not established in the riches of grace and the counsels of glory, and, above all, in that present sense of association with Christ in heavenly places, which is the central truth of the Pauline testimony. To those who by grace are thus fitted to weigh the book of Revelation, its visions are invaluable, and as instructive as they give solemnity to the spirit and joy to the heart. If the visions were fulfilled, they would be no more effete and worthless than the books of Moses or of the prophetic Judges that followed, which, if read in the Spirit, repay quite as richly, or more so, than the predictions of Isaiah or Ezekiel which remain to be accomplished. But they are, as we have seen, "at hand" in any full sense, not yet accomplished, and so in every way invite and will reward the reader with a double blessing from Him who promised it to such as read, hear, and keep the sayings of that book. To His name be all the praise and glory.

04.22. Appendix A: {Prophecy: Its Classes, Purpose and Study}

Appendix A:

{Prophecy: Its Classes, Purpose and Study} The prophecies of holy writ may be divided broadly into these two classes: those like Isaiah's, which were addressed to the people of Israel while standing in recognized relation with Jehovah as His people; and those like Daniel's, which suppose the Jews disowned for a season till grace restore them in the latter day, placing them under Messiah's reign and the new covenant. Of old God had governed Israel as His people, and the pavilion of His presence in their midst was its sign. The present interval, humbling to conscience and solemn to faith, is marked by the departure of the Shekinah till its final return never more to leave the city and sanctuary where the eyes of Jehovah rest continually; and during that space imperial authority is confided to four successive and well-known world powers, the great Gentile empires. This is "the parenthesis," as it has been justly designated; and the term is so suited to maintain a true sense of the peculiarity of the interval, and to hinder forgetfulness of its total difference from the ordinary course of God's direct government of the earth according to the great and regular scheme of prophecy, that it would be most unwise to forego its use because some do not, and others will not, understand it. The "times of the Gentiles" span this remarkable interval, begun by the captivity of Judah under the head of gold, and closed by the destructive blow which the returning Lord, the Little Stone cut without hands, will inflict on the iron-clay feet, reducing the entire image to powder, before the Stone itself expands into a great mountain and fills the whole earth. Then and not before will have come the world-kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15-18; Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 20:1-15).

It is very intelligible that the professing Gentile should revolt at the fact, plainly as scripture reveals it, that, whatever the deep ways and heavenly counsels of grace revealed since Christ came (the whole New Testament indeed), the Gentile empires have merely and precisely the function, under God's sovereign will, of filling up the gap between Israel's fall and their rising again. It is offensive to such as glory in the arts and letters of Greece and Rome, in the sciences and discoveries of modern civilization. Hence wounded feeling proceeds to worse daring, and profanely mocks at this view of the parenthesis, which is the sure representation of God's word, as if it were no more reasonable than a dream of Arabian or Hindoo mythology. But it is foolish to kick against the goad: the fact, humiliating to Gentile conceit and call it as we may, is written indelibly in letters of light.

It is alleged however, in order to reduce the sharpness of the truth and its moral lesson, that, in a sense exactly similar, the whole Mosaic dispensation is itself a parenthesis between the times of the patriarchs and of the christian church; while the millennium is another parenthesis between the dispensation of the Spirit (the reader must overlook so unintelligent a phrase) and the final glory, when the redemption is complete. Now, while in a limited sense this may be allowed of all economic or mediatorial dealings as compared with the boundless infinitude of eternity, the parenthesis was spoken of as such in respect of God's government of the earth, whether partial or complete, past or future; which government all the faithful surely believe to be the only normal

condition for the world since God deigned to make it His plan. Not only before the deluge but after it, till the call of Israel out of Egypt, God did not govern the earth in this way. Men previously had only to maintain His honour, as we see in Job 31:27-28; but this was soon lost through idolatry, and Abram was called out, the nations being abandoned to walk in their own ways. Hence evidently the patriarch's call was not God's government of the world. On the contrary God, though He left Himself not without witness, as we see in the destruction of the guilty cities of the plain, would not then interfere because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full {Genesis 15:16}; and the wandering patriarchs, so far as they were faithful, had in the land of promise not so much as to set their foot on, though we cannot but discern also, how God suffered no man to do His prophets harm, rebuking kings for their sakes. But at the Exodus, as is known to all, God judged the nation that oppressed the sons of Israel and brought themselves out of the house of bondage as His people, in whom His government was to be exercised and His ways displayed. And so they were (not merely that secret and ceaseless providence of His which never fails), till by their persistent hopeless apostasy from Himself for idols, subsequently fixed yet more by their rejection of Himself in the person of His Messiah, they were in the just dealing of God, after unwearied patience, set aside as no longer His people, though still providentially kept apart, until He resumes at length His immediate government of the earth {in the millennium}, He will in Christ returning to reign in the last days. The gap then, since Israel became Lo-Ammi {Hosea 1:1-11}, till they are restored again and for ever as His people to His land, as the central sphere of His earthly government, is filled up by the four successive beasts {Daniel 7:1-28} or imperial Gentile powers {Daniel 2:1-49}. The regular course of earthly dispensations supposes the throne of Jehovah in Jerusalem; the removal of it when power was committed to the Gentiles is exactly a parenthesis as to His earthly, government, which is true of Israel's history neither before nor after these "times of the Gentiles"; for Israel is the exhibition, in the past of failure under law, in the future of power under the Messiah, in respect of God's proper and immediate government of the earth, whereas the intervening Gentile period is its interruption, whatever the wonderful works of God in His grace meanwhile. Yet God has not lost sight of these parenthetical times, abnormal as they are, but inspired Daniel particularly in the Old Testament, and, John in the New Testament, to write of them, though in view of the blessing at last of the people still under rejection, as well as of the higher and larger things for which that rejection furnishes occasion. It is our Lord too, who in Luke 21:1-38 vouchsafed to us that very term "times of the Gentiles," which is only another way of describing the parenthesis; though Christians, like the heathen, turn it into pride, overlooking its real nature and denying its importance. Nothing but this can account for their designating this period "the sacred calendar and great almanac of prophecy," wholly slighting the fact that far the greater part of the prophetic word bears on the time when God governs the earth immediately from within His people restored and blessed {in the millennium}, instead of merely confiding authority meanwhile to powers which from first to last He calls "beasts"{[Daniel 7:1-28}. The axe may boast against Him that heweth therewith; but saintly minds ought to know better than encourage it. But it is not true that Daniel 2:1-49, any more than Daniel 7:1-28, contemplates, as the learned J. Mede fancied, a regnum lapidis, as well as regnum montis (Works, iv. 743, 744, ed. 1677, folio.) It would be strange indeed if the dream of the heathen monarch had a spiritual view presented which was not vouchsafed to the holy prophet. The idea however is quite unfounded. The first action of the Stone (or in the kingdom of God in Christ) was not to accomplish redemption or to found a spiritual kingdom, but to crush to atoms the imperial Gentile system, especially dealing with the Roman

empire in its last shape, after which itself spread and filled the whole earth. Not the gospel but divine judgment effects it. See also Isaiah 2:1-22; Isaiah 11:1-16; Isaiah 25:1-12; Isaiah 65:1-25; Isaiah 66:1-24, and a crowd of other scriptures. Does it not seem odd, by the way, to find Tobit quoted here as an authority, and at yet greater length in iii. 579, 580?

Within this parenthesis, and inside the bounds of its last clause (the fourth empire of Rome), the gospel or Christianity and the church come in. And just as the ruin of the Jews gave the signal for Daniel's prophecy, so did the failure of the church here below, {give the signal} for the book of Revelation, which, after its seven epistles {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22} and the heavenly episode that follows immediately {Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14}, shows us judgments on the world summed up at length, in its two chiefs, the apostate first and second beasts {Revelation 13:1-18} the Roman empire in its last phase, and the false prophet power in the land, with Babylon the great harlot of Christendom {Revelation 17:1-18}.

It is here that men, and even the pious if committed to things as they are, find no little difficulty. Men's will can resist stubbornly, their mind easily raising objections to the truth which condemns them. It is this much more than the symbolical style of the predictions which made Daniel's visions unpalatable to the Jew, and the true scope of the Apocalypse unwelcome to many a Christian. They would like to think present circumstances and that history with which they are most familiar {to be} the direct object of God's prophetic survey; they fail to see that its real fulfillment is in the great but brief crisis, after the overcomers (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22) are taken to heaven, till Christ and they appear in glory to reign, whatever be the light thence derivable for discerning the principles at work all through our earthly pilgrimage before their full manifestation at the close when judgment comes. The case was complicated too by a few more or less disposed to palliate Rome, who could detect error in the popular view, and facts as to the future not generally recognized, but who availed themselves of all to undermine truths still more important for their moral bearing on souls as well as on the Lord's glory. With the evil principles of Drs. Maitland, Todd, Burgh, etc., one has far less sympathy than with the honest but imperfect and, to say the truth, far from intelligent testimony of Mede or Daubuz or their representatives to this day, able and learned as some of them were in other respects. It is forgotten perhaps equally on both sides, that the church, since apostolic days till the Reformation at least, was not in a condition to use the Revelation in general. Certainly the earliest Fathers applied it substantially as the futurists do. The great pre-requisite for a safe and wholesome study of the prophetic word is a clear apprehension of the difference between the church called by sovereign grace for heavenly places in Christ and the immediate divine government of the world of which the Jews form the nearest circle on earth round the Messiah, according to the purpose and ways of God (Deuteronomy 32:8). God has set aside the Jews for their rebellious idolatry and at last their rejection of the Messiah; but He will resume His government of them again, an immediate rule on the earth wholly different in nature, character, and results from the powers that be now, entitled though they are to our submission and honour, however little able to deal with the misery and corruptions of mankind.

Adversaries may talk of wire-drawn abstractions and baseless hypothetical systems; but they are themselves blinded by tradition and self-confidence to a change of the profoundest interest and of incalculable moment, against which no sophistry can prevail for those who bow to scripture. It is the more apt to deceive themselves and others where such unbelief works in men who deny not but hold Christ's future reign over the earth in personal presence and power and glory. For this is

the government of the earth or "the kingdom," of which both Testaments speak, as distinct as possible from the calling of saints from among Jews and Gentiles to be the body of Christ, not of the world even now as He was not, while the anomalous bestial rule still goes on here below. The truth of the {earthly} Gentile parenthesis {of judgment on Israel} does not make the scheme of God's moral government a piecemeal and fragmentary thing; but a mass of confusion at issue with all scripture they make it who do not discriminate God's calling of the church to heaven from His government by law on earth. Nor can any sentence be worse both in ill construction and violation of truth, than that which assumes one uninterrupted chain of divine government, and ignores the revealed facts of God's rupture of His regular earthly government {i.e., the times of the Gentiles}, of an immense interregnum while the beasts rule, and of God's final resumption of that government at the return of our Lord. But if we limit ourselves to considering God's moral government, its scheme is perfect. Part of it was to blind Israel, while another work proceeds in the richest mercy to the Gentiles. And prophecy reveals the judgments by which the whole result will be brought about according to God. Meanwhile His providential wisdom and power order all, whatever be the anomalies in the phases of the world's history for nearly 2500 years; and we by His word and Spirit make good His will in the measure of our faith, while evil is not yet put down by the intervention of that power which will bring in the sabbatism that remains for the people of God. The confusion of thought, generally prevalent as to this arises from the supposition that God's government has its results now, which it never can have till the manifestation of Christ, in view of whom and for whose glory all has been carried on. To look for its accomplishment in the absence of Christ is a fatal mistake. God's people are not the sun in the solar system of His truth, or of His government; but Christ is. To substitute the first man for the Second is the constant effort and error of the natural mind. It is to prefer guesswork, founded on first appearances, to demonstrated truth; and to conceive the church to be the center of movement, instead of knowing it in the true Sun, Christ the Lord.

Undoubtedly the work which God has now at heart in the calling of the church, founded on the accomplished redemption of the Son, and accompanied, nay, effectuated, by the presence of the Holy Spirit, while the gospel goes out to every land and in every tongue, transcends all that ever preceded in His ways. But this in no way interferes with the fact that, as the calling of the church is a heavenly parenthesis, so also are "the times of the Gentiles" a still wider earthly one, which fills the blank in the earth's history since God governed in the midst of His people under law, as He will by-and-by when they are under the new covenant. This is so true, that we hear of the mystery as to Christ and as to the church, hid from ages and generations {Colossians 1:26} — hid in God {Ephesians 3:9-10}, not in scripture — not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. It is also said be made known by prophetic scriptures (Romans 16:25-26), but these are of the New Testament, and not of the Old — a notion obscured by the English version — "the scriptures of the prophets," which is unequivocally incorrect, and naturally points to the well-known Old Testament writings and writers,* contrary to the express drift of the context. The apostle constantly cites the Old Testament prophets to vindicate what was not made known there, but what illustrated the truth when the mystery was revealed. Thus proofs of Israel blinded, and of Gentiles called, he does cite as accomplished in the mystery, but in no way as the revelation of it. How do they reveal Christ as the heavenly Head of all creation, and the church, Jews or Gentiles alike, as the one body, His body? But reasoning is needless; scripture is express that the mystery has now been manifested.

* Romans 1:2 does prove that the gospel was promised before by God's prophets; but the difference of phraseology answers to the difference of the subject-matter in Romans 16:26. The mystery was hid, not promised, though now manifested by prophetic scriptures, and according to the commandment of the eternal God made known for obedience of faith to all the nations. It is ignorance to confound them. But it is no slight error that the church is connected with earthly arrangements as Israel was, and self-delusion to confound this, with trials, helps, hindrances, and temptations here below, on the one hand, and on the other hand with preaching the gospel, going out to the heathen, social ties and duties, etc. When and how did God connect His church with the earth? Education and habit may account for such a statement; to faith the word of God never gave it. That historically the church thus fell is true; that Satan so sought, and succeeded in doing so, is plain; that in a measure of accomplishment it was predicted as the fornication of Babylon with the kings of the earth {Revelation 17:1-18} is not denied; but is the sufferance of such corruption to be regarded as His sanction? Is it the form of things produced by His will as that which He would thus make to answer His mind? The connection of Israel with the earth is God's institution: is Babylon His institution? Nor is our hope the second advent of the Lord to the earth, as Israel's was His first coming; it is going up to meet the Lord in the air, and so being ever with Him {1 Thessalonians 4:15-18}. To be with Him in the Father's house {John 14:1-3} is no question of dates or prophetic messages. How anyone could mistake the character of Revelation 1:7, for instance, would be a marvel if one did not know the power of prejudice. It is beyond a doubt the coming again of Christ in judgment, His appearing to the world, to the Jews that pierced Him, and to every eye, in contrast with chosen witnesses and the day of faith now; so that all the tribes of the earth (or land) mourn because of Him. Is it not strange to hear so solemn a warning styled the main object and desire; and that the apostle contemplates His coming as a whole but with especial reference to his own hope and that of his fellow-christians?

It is an ineffectual effort to reason from an assumed similarity where there is a real contrast. The heavenly character of the Christian and the church is unknown, yet the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Spirit do surely now make that character good to faith. God's providence, though a very different thing from guidance in the Spirit, is most real now, as of old; but that secret control of all circumstances, so that all things work together for good, is quite distinct from the public display of His power of which prophecy treats. Some may have blundered as to the true bearing of 1 Peter 1:10-13; but it is well to heed the distinction there drawn between the predictions of the prophets, the gospel meanwhile declared in virtue of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and the full accomplishment at the appearing of Jesus. Receiving soul-salvation now, we await salvation for our bodies and the fulfillment of the glories predicted when He appears. And this helps to the right understanding of Luke 2:32, as little understood by the Protestant {historicalist} as the futurist. It is a question, not of the church, but of the Gentiles, who were of old in the dark, as Israel now are, while Gentiles are brought to light. They have Christ now a light for their revelation, as by-and-by He will be the glory of God's people Israel. He had overlooked the times of ignorance hitherto, but now enjoins men that they should all everywhere repent. But it is urged that the church has come into the place of Israel, and that as an election was taken out of them, so now from among the nations of Christendom. This idea, however, in both its parts is erroneous. Secretly there was an election, not only from Israel, but from the Gentiles, as Heber, Rahab, Jonadab, etc.; but Israel was an elect nation governed and owned by God as His people. "My people" never means hidden election; it is the nation in speaking of Israel. But Christendom is not a nation elect or otherwise; in

the greatest part of it is Babylon, even for Protestant opinion. Is Babylon elect as Israel was? Whatever might be the stranger spirit of pious Israelites, the elect people had their home on earth. It is a mischievous error, lowering to all christian life in worship and service, to confound our calling with theirs. Nor is it the church, but the Gentiles, which are grafted into the tree of promise with the true of Israel. For, first, the church is not the "own olive-tree" of Israel; and, secondly, the believing Jews entered the church (see Ephesians 2:1-22; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31), as did the believing Gentiles, whereas they abode in their own olive-tree. See Romans 11:1-36, a chapter which proves continuance in promise, but parenthesis in government, and quite distinct from the revelation of Christ's body, where all is alike of grace and heaven, and above nature — one new man {Ephesians 2:15} as new to the Jew as to the Gentile. Blindness in part is happened to Israel until — there the parenthesis ends; and so all Israel shall be saved {Romans 11:26}. For there shall come forth a Deliverer out of Zion. We look for God's Son from heaven {Php 3:21} who will receive us to Himself where He is {John 14:3}. For our blessing characteristically is in heavenly places, as we are told in Ephesians 1:3.

Indeed it is vain to reason on prophecy when it is taken as a basis that Christendom is God's covenant people, and therefore that, as the earlier prophecies all centered around Israel, so do the later ones round the visible church among the Gentiles. Israel were then the covenant people, and so long as they thus remained, all divine prophecy clustered around them, from Moses to Malachi; but it is urged that ever since the days of St. John this privilege has been transferred from them to the visible Gentile church. The kingdom of God, as our Lord assured the Jews, has been taken from them and given to others. Hence the very same principle, which made all Old Testament prophecy center in the Jewish nation, requires that all New Testament prophecy should center around the Gentile church, the actual people of the covenant, who have been ingrafted in their stead, and the appeal to the Old Testament prophets to support an opposite conclusion must be utterly vain. Setting aside a main principle of God's moral government, and destroying a law of His revelation, to sustain a mere circumstance, it infers that God will leave His covenant people for near two thousand years without any distinct light of prophecy, because they always enjoyed that privilege in a dispensation of dimmer light and less abundant grace. Such is the argument in its most plausible shape. But what proof, what sign, what appearance of truth, is there in such an hypothesis, traditional though it may be? When did God enter into covenant with the Gentiles? God has given Christ, the rejected Christ, for a light to the Gentiles, that He may be His salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6); but He is (ver. 8) a covenant of the people, not peoples. Hence the Gentiles are never said to be grafted instead of the Jews. Generically they are grafted in with the Jews left there in the inheritance of promises, of which Abraham was the stock planted by God in the earth; and they are responsible for the maintenance of blessing. But no covenant was made with them. Even if Matthew 21:43 be certainly applicable, it is only to fruit-bearing, not to covenant, that it applies. And how can this be said of Christendom, unless Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 be such fruit? But the fact is, that neither it, nor Deuteronomy 31:21, nor Romans 9:21-25, nor Romans 11:11-15, say a word about the church coming into the place of Israel, nor of the church as such at all.

Again, it is beyond controversy that the church-state in the Revelation {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22} does not go farther than "the things which are," in contrast with the future visions, or "the things which shall be after these," and that its prophecies therefore do not center

round any church or people of God whatsoever, but are occupied with judgments on the world, whatever may be the pledges of mercy to the sealed of Israel, or to an innumerable crowd out of all nations and tongues {Revelation 7:1-17}. There is no judgment (and the Apocalypse treats of judgment) on a covenant people of God; nor does a people of God on earth, in any case or way, form a center there. It is absurd to contend that the twelve tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:1-17 are Gentile, contrasted as they are with a great crowd out of every nation; and it is inadmissible that Christendom is God's covenant people, unless Babylon be such.

Further, not only do Christians possess all the prophetic word, but they have ample and clear and direct light in the Gospels and Epistles (especially 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 and 2 Timothy 2:1-26, and Jude 1:1-25) supposing the Revelation did not at all apply (which is not affirmed) beyond the wonderful messages of the Lord Himself in the seven Apocalyptic epistles. No one doubts for a moment the sovereign and moral government of God: but to identify this with His ways in Israel, as the popular argument already cited does, is just confusion and ignorance, whatever be the confidence of such as put it forward. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). All agree that Old Testament prophecies not only left room for the parenthetic interval or blank for Israel when they were Lo-ammi and Gentiles are called, but used pregnant phrases, whereby God's ways might be confirmed when this state of things arrived; but they never revealed the mystery, which Paul did, while it was made known to all God's holy apostles and prophets. And here let me say, though it be only in passing, that the grave point in Ephesians 2:20, Ephesians 3:5, is, not that the apostles and prophets were necessarily the same individuals, but that they are here viewed as one common company, though distinguished in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28-29. The criticism that would separate them here is as erroneous as the interpretation that makes the prophets to be of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New, the one article expressly forbidding the notion of two distinct classes. So far is the church of God from being anterior to redemption, that its foundation is of the New Testament apostles and prophets. The mystery was hid from ages and generations previously. No prophet in Old Testament times revealed it. A blank was left for St. Paul to fill (Colossians 1:26). As to the utilitarian argument which has been applied to decide the bearing of the Apocalypse on history since St. John's day, as against the crisis, it hardly deserves the notice of serious men. But as some may be influenced by what appeals to natural feeling, without an atom of spiritual weight, one may reply that, in pleading for a more exact fulfillment in the latter day, it is not denied that the book has been accomplished partially all through.

It is in vain to deny that in Protestant hands prophecy was valued chiefly as evidence by its fulfillment to convict the unbeliever, and that this disposed men to enlarge as much as possible the field of fulfilled prediction, in order to increase their arms against infidelity. Now no sober Christian denies this to be a use of prophecy, or its importance for its own end. The reasoning directed against the use of prophecy after its accomplishment was only against this use exclusively. People used very generally to say, as some do still, that prophecy was mainly, not to say only, useful as proof when fulfilled. This was false ground, injurious to saints, and dishonouring to God. "The design of God was (to cite Sir Isaac Newton's applauded sentence), when He gave this book and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but to the end that, after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event."

Alas! how foolish in the things of God are the wise. The vast mass of prophecy warns of God's final judgments as ushering in the reign of the Lord. The event will prove their truth, no doubt; but it will be to the ruin of those who did not foreknow and heed the warning. Thus the antediluvians may have argued, and perished in their unbelief. Not so Noah; by faith he, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Not so did Jehovah deal when He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" And if he was the friend of God, what are we? and why has Jesus called us His friends? (See John 15:1-27). Did this include the apostles only, or has not one of these "friends" of Jesus, when treating expressly of the coming of the Lord, of the destruction of the world that now is, and of the new heavens and earth, said to us, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware . . .?" The men of those days, who had precious faith, did not wait for the events before believing; they did not use the prophecy as a mere confirmation of Christianity; they read, understood, and profited by its warning. The Spirit of truth, according to the Lord's promise, showed them things to come; and they found the blessing of that sure word which shines as a lamp in a dark place. Sir Isaac Newton was not the least sagacious or sober of Protestant interpreters; yet even he asks us to abandon the gracious purpose for which God gave prophecy to His children, for the lowest application for which human incredulity can require it. Unquestionably prophecy is a weapon of divine temper to confound and, if grace work, to convince the sceptic (though we may question such an effect from the jarring notes heard on the seals, trumpets, and vials); but surely it is its humblest office, instead of being the only wise and all-absorbing one. May we not ask, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

Again, when we find Tertullian applying the fifth seal to martyrs, as then in course of slaughter under pagan Rome, surely we may think that he did not understand its full bearing, without saying that such an interpretation was a delusion, destitute of one particle of real truth. Nor would one question that God honoured the German reformer's testimony against Babylon, founded on a later portion of the Revelation. Does this prove that Luther knew, or that we ought not to learn, a fuller development of the great whore, for which no room is left in the ordinary interpretation?

Singular to say, some who narrow to a single line the Revelation (the deepest and most comprehensive of all prophecies) think it certain that elsewhere, as in Isaiah 2:1-22, for instance, the Spirit of God intended one reference as well as the other — first, an incomplete and figurative, then a complete and literal fulfillment; and yet they would repeat for the Apocalypse the error of the Futurists, though in an opposite direction. Thus the soundness of the principle is admitted by some on both sides. Apply it to the Apocalypse, and not only are men who stand for the future crisis, without denying the protracted accomplishment, justified by their censors, but the mere Protestant interpretation is condemned by the very reasoning meant to establish it on the ruins of futurism.

Doubtless it is a canon with some whom Mr. G. S. Faber represented, that no single link of a chronological chain of prophecy is capable of receiving its accomplishment in more than a single event or period. But this is not true even of Daniel, who, as almost all antiquity saw clearly, makes Antiochus Epiphanes the type of a still worse personage at the end. And it would be strange indeed to contend that the final prophecy and profoundest of all should have a scope more confined than a Jewish one. Mr. Mede saw at length that the seven 'churches' {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22} had a double reference; he might have learnt to his profit that the prophetic portion is not less significant. Nor is this the only inconsistency in such special pleading. For if the

principal use in all cases is the manifestation of the divine glory in the foreknowledge, wisdom, and providence of God, whether before or after the fulfillment, if the use, whether of warning before, or of evidence after, fulfillment, is always secondary and subordinate, the utilitarian argument sinks into little. On this showing its grand object was as much attained during the seventeen centuries the book did not apply (if that ground be taken) as when it did. And is it not strange that the manifestation of the divine glory should be lowered to the foreknowledge, wisdom, and providence of God? One might have looked for some regard to His government in such a question, if righteousness and grace were too much to expect. Yet the reason of their absence is evident: they would suppose contrast of dispensation in principle, and intervention in power; and the wisdom of this age likes and bows to neither.

But, granting the divine glory, in an infinitely richer way than has been before alleged, to be the end, as of all God's word and ways, so of prophecy which reveals the result of all and the judgment by which it will be effected, still it is so evident as to need no reasoning for the spiritual mind, that God's direct practical aim in prophecy was the warning, instruction, and comfort of His own before fulfillment; and all Christians should be thankful to be recalled to this precious privilege, of which they had been long deprived. And assuredly the Futurists, spite of defects and one-sidedness and even errors, contributed to this end incomparably more than the Protestant school {historicalists}, engrossed as it used to be, and even now is almost entirely, with fulfilled prophecy.

It is plain that, if the early Christians had regarded the twelve hundred and sixty days as so many years, they must have anticipated such a lengthening out of the ages as the Protestant scheme contends for, which it is certain not one did, so far as we know. Does this, as far as it goes, tell in favour of futurism or historicalism? It is no less plain that the times of Daniel in chapters 7 and 12 (taken up in the Revelation) suppose the Jews in their land and carrying on their worship, but hindered by the little horn — that is, not the long ages of their scattering, but when they return, though not yet owned as a nation by God. Confessedly the early writers on prophecy expected two actual witnesses, and a personal Antichrist, an infidel domination and a fiery persecution of at least three and a half years, and this in Jerusalem at the end of the age whenever it might be. The soundness of all this may be questioned; but it is absurd to argue, as some do, that in these points (wherein, more than any others, they agree) the Fathers substantially approximate to the protracted {historicalist} view of the prophecy. The earlier and central chapters, not to speak of the closing ones, they applied in general as the Futurists do. Even if we confine ourselves to the future literal application, one cannot allow that it was useless. Was the blessed hope put before the Philippians, "The Lord is at hand," of no use because it is still unfulfilled? Did the Christians then expect it not to occur till after so long a time? Has it been wholly useless? or is the imputation deplorably unbelieving?

Assuredly it is a mere reverie that the Apocalypse announced to every age of the church, and to each generation of believers, events that were really near at hand, or that in every later age it also contains many predictions already fulfilled, the fulfillment of which has been more or less clearly discerned by thoughtful Christians. The early writers, we have seen, applied the prophecy to a brief and terrible tribulation at the end. Then the whole mass fell into deep and deepening darkness. In the middle ages, when the Apocalypse was used, it was never an intelligent application of earlier parts of it, but, conscience being shocked and alarmed, an imaginative

apprehension prevailed that Antichrist was come and the end imminent. It was the dread of being at the consummation which appalled men. That the church used it suitably from age to age, as it was developed into history, is a mere chimera, which can deceive no one acquainted with facts but only those who accept just what they like. If it be meant that the church ought to have so discerned the prophecy, it is a circular argument which amounts to something of this sort:- If the church had held my view (which is demonstrably untrue), they would have profited by it as warning from age to age, and as evidence of things past and fulfilled. Since my view is right, it has been at least possible, and indeed highly probable, that many believers in every age should have been warned by it of imminent changes, and have had their faith in God's word confirmed by many glimpses of its actual fulfillment. Is this serious either as history or as logic?

Test the facts. If any part of the visions is fulfilled, the seals must have been according to the historic view. Is there a tittle of evidence that the seals announced to any age of the church any one imminent change therein supposed to be predicted? What single individual correctly interpreted a single seal beforehand? To this day the utmost variety of thought exists among the leading Protestants {historicalists} themselves, not in detail merely but as to their general bearing. Can none gainsay the conclusions of Mede or Vitringa, of Faber or Cuninghame, of Elliott or Keith? Can it be said that these men were captious and speculative like the Futurists, who rejected evidence, real and sufficient, if not of that sort which compels assent? Are they not all among the most trusty and familiar of the historical school, and as notoriously discordant in their views at the threshold? Yet of all parts of the book one might, on their principles, expect here the most of agreement, if not unanimity. But enough. The grand fault of the considerations here examined is that, whilst God is at work to help on His children, they are an effort to lead back believers from that knowledge of the church's true relation, as united by the Spirit, to Christ on high, which is the key to real intelligence in the Christian. It is not merely human reasoning to support what is partial at best, and often erroneous; it is decidedly antagonism to truth of the deepest moment for God's glory, as well as the blessing of His saints. It is also ignorance of what scripture treats as the proper government of God in the midst of His people on earth when He will arise and inherit all nations. The importance of such prophecies as those of Daniel and John is great; but they must treat for the most part, even the latter, of the times of the Gentiles, not of the "kingdom" in any sense. To lose sight of this as Fathers and Protestants {historicalists} alike have done is fatal to spiritual intelligence on this subject. The question here, as everywhere, is to whom the prophetic revelations apply, not to whom they are given. The revelation of what happened to Lot was given to Abraham, whilst the communication was made to Lot in time to deliver him out of the judgment, and this with precision as to the execution of it. So the Revelation says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." The book was given, as all the scriptures, to the church of God, without distinction of Jew or Gentile — there was none such in the body of Christ; and it could be given to none else. On the other hand, there is this observation to be made respecting Daniel and the Revelation: that they are the revelation of the consequences, the former of Israel's failure, the latter of the church's failure, as witnesses of God here below. Hence we have a far more direct interest and more solemn responsibility, as to the contents of the Apocalypse than as to Old Testament prophecy in general, or even as to Daniel; while, as to times, scenes, and personages, there is doubtless much in common between the two books. But the Babylon on the seven hills [Revelation 17:1-18], which the apostle saw drunken with the blood of saints, is to us a thing of

nearer and graver import than the great city which Nebuchadnezzar built on the plain of Shiner.

Furthermore, the time is said, and said repeatedly (Revelation 1:1-20; Revelation 22:1-21), to be at hand; and this as a reason why its sayings were not sealed to John as they were to Daniel {Daniel 12:4}. The work of redemption being done, Christ gone on high, and the Spirit sent down to be in the Christian and the church, the time of the end is always near to us, as the Lord is ready to judge the quick and the dead. Still the ground taken from first to last is, not that we are in the scenes of the prophecy, but that "the time is at hand," not present. It is very possible that the prophetic warning it contains may be the divine preservative against the sins which at length draw down the closing strokes of God’s wrath on the apostasy of Christendom. Into this worst, this rebellious, corruption the professing mass sink during, if not before, the hour of temptation {trial} which is to try them that dwell on the earth {Revelation 3:10}. Out of this hour the Lord has pledged Himself to preserve such as keep the word of His patience. The faithful, His church, will not be in that hour or scene. The Lord keep this promise, full of comfort, before our souls!

Chapter 46

04.23. Appendix B: The Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Briefly Contrasted

Appendix B: The Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Briefly Contrasted

I am not without hopes that, under the gracious teaching of the Spirit, the simple statement of the distinction we are going briefly to examine may be blessed to souls. Happy is it when we are brought to ponder on the riches of grace which God has lavished on us, and that in the spirit of children, not desiring to prove our own notions, but to learn the thoughts, purposes, and ways of God; happier still when, in the communion of Him who dwells in us, our delight is to be shown, and to adore the Lord Jesus Christ in His various glory. His various glory, I repeat; for this the natural mind relishes not, but it is exactly what the Spirit loves and leads into (John 16:13-15). Hence it is that to unbelief the scripture is a blank without heights, without depths. The purity of its sentiments, and the simple grandeur of its style, may be allowed and admired. But there are no landmarks, no chart, no star of Bethlehem to direct and cheer the unbeliever's way. His conscience is not in the presence of God, and therefore there is no true Christ in his heart. The Bible to him may be a very wonderful book, but this is all: if it seem to be owned practically as that which reveals the divine way of salvation, almost everything in it is made to bear on this one point. Warnings, threatenings, exhortations, invitations, instructions, commands, prayers, ordinances — nearly all that Old and New Testaments utter is made to converge on what, to the flesh, really amounts to this — God helping us by His Son and Spirit to save ourselves. From this quagmire God has mercifully extricated all His people; He has taught all His children, with more or less intelligence, to rest upon the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is that the vast field of the written word opens apace, the different displays which God has made of His character, and the effect of these dealings upon believers and unbelievers in the several dispensations, summed up in the person of Christ, whether viewed once here below, now in heaven, or by-and-by returning again. Thus the child, led of the Spirit, grows in knowledge, and begins to see the revealed past, present, and future, in their just proportions, because he begins to learn all in Christ, whose mind he has (2 Corinthians 2:1-17). In few words, he is learning to prove the things which differ.

Now it may be a narrow, but certainly it is an important, part of the things which differ that is suggested by the title to this paper. Nor would I pretend to sketch minutely the ways in which the estimate formed, by a godly Jew respecting Christ's advent is distinguishable from the hope set before the church in His future presence. Let us content ourselves with certain, broad essential differences, which are nevertheless often confounded by Christians to the obscuring of their proper portion, and so far to the detriment of their souls. The testimony of scripture is so full and distinct, that little reasoning is necessary; still its importance may well demand ample quotations. The advent of a glorious Messiah to the earth was characteristically a Jewish hope. I speak not of traditional fables, but of the truths which the Jews saw and held fast in their scriptures. To such believing Jews Messiah was the centre and security of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He was the accomplisher of all righteousness, blessing, and peace in their land —

Immanuel's land. By Him they expected to be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all that hated them; that so they might serve Jehovah without fear all the days of their life {Luke 1:68-79}. He was to cut off all the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the righteous; to save Zion, and build the cities of Judah, that they might dwell there, and have it in possession, and thus the seed of His servants should inherit it, and they that love His name dwell therein. This, as is plain in the Psalms, is the character of the deliverance pleaded by the Jewish remnant — not a rapture out of the earth, but a destruction of their enemies in it; a divine vengeance upon their enemies here below, not a gathering to the Lord in heaven. They looked, and will look, for Jehovah to go forth and fight against the nations He will gather at the latter end against Jerusalem; they will look for His feet to stand upon tho Mount of Olives, and Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. There, with David their king over Israel, restored, as it were, from the grave, and Ephraim and Judah united perfectly and for ever under the rule of the true Beloved, they expect to dwell in their land, and the heathen shall know that God Jehovah sanctifies Israel when His sanctuary shall be in their midst for evermore. They might read of a Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, but their hope was the presence and reign of the Messiah here below, in special connection with the Jewish nation and land. The following texts will still more plainly show the truth we have been stating:

Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalms 2:6-9). "For Jehovah most High is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (Psalms 47:2-3). "Great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion: on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge" (Psalms 48:1-3; Psalms 65:1-13; Psalms 67:1-7; Psalms 68:1-35). "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen" (Psalms 72:4-19). I need not go more minutely through the Psalms, beyond directing attention to Psalms 128:1-6, as evidently in accordance with the remarks already made. So also

Psalms 132:13-18. The inspired praises of Psalms 146:1-10; Psalms 147:1-20; Psalms 148:1-14; Psalms 149:1-9; Psalms 150:1-6 will then have their literal fulfilment. It is earthly joy under Messiah's dominion, and all is in unison with the thoughts, feelings, associations, hopes, and triumphs of His people Israel. The prophets are equally explicit. "In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when Jehovah shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" (Isaiah 4:2-6).

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

One might transcribe almost all Isaiah 11:1-16. "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out the land of Egypt (Isaiah 11:4-16).

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously (Isaiah 24:21-23). "And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people 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. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and Jehovah God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill (Isaiah 25:6-10). "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem (Isaiah 27:6; Isaiah 27:12-13). "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? Where is the receiver? Where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Jehovah will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king: he will save us (Isaiah 32:17-20).

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom, abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of Jehovah, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall

flee away (Isaiah 35:1-10). The whole of Isaiah 60:1-22; Isaiah 61:1-11; Isaiah 62:1-12 are closely in point, but can only be referred to now. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former 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. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah (Isaiah 65:17-25). "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh: and the slain of Jehovah shall be many (Isaiah 66:10-16).

Jeremiah, the prophet of affliction, speaks no otherwise. "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers (Jeremiah 3:16-18). "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, Jehovah liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but Jehovah liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land (Jeremiah 23:5-8). To this we may add, as most express, Jeremiah 31:1-40; Jeremiah 32:1-44; Jeremiah 33:1-26. For other prophets we need not cite express words: the following selected references may suffice. In Ezekiel the reader may consult Ezekiel 16:1-63, Ezekiel 20:1-49,

Ezekiel 36:1-38, Ezekiel 39:1-29, Ezekiel 40:1-49, Ezekiel 41:1-26, Ezekiel 42:1-20, Ezekiel 43:1-27, Ezekiel 44:1-31, Ezekiel 45:1-25, Ezekiel 46:1-24, Ezekiel 47:1-23, Ezekiel 48:1-35; also Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 8:1-27; Daniel 9:1-27; Daniel 12:1-13; Hosea 1:1-11; Hosea 2:1-23; Hosea 3:1-5; Joel 2:1-32; Joel 3:1-21; Amos 9:1-15; Obadiah; Micah 4:1-13; Micah 5:1-15; Habakkuk 3:1-19; Zephaniah 3:1-20; Haggai 2:1-23; Zechariah 2:1-13; Zechariah 8:1-23; Zechariah 9:1-17; Zechariah 10:1-12; Zechariah 12:1-14; Zechariah 14:1-21; and Malachi 3:1-18; Malachi 4:1-6.

Another distinction which may be briefly noticed is, that the Jews had the revelation of outward circumstances and ordered dates whereby to regulate their expectations. We need do little more than refer to the communications of God made to Abraham in Genesis 15:1-21, as well as others subsequently, for illustrations of this. "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance (Genesis 15:13-14). Now it will not be disputed that the father of the faithful rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it, and was glad (John 9: 56); but it was through, and at the end of, a long course of years and trying vicissitudes as regarded his seed. Abraham was in no way waiting for that day as if it might happen in his own life, or shortly after. He was perfectly certain that the day of Christ could not come for some centuries at least. Full well he counted upon that day bringing in deliverance to his family, and hence his joy. (See also Genesis 49:10.)

Again, passing over intermediate predictions, the word sent by Gabriel to Daniel is even more detailed, and with chronological points of a very defined character. "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined (Daniel 9:25-26). Hence it is plain that, if we suppose a godly Jew of that age to have understood the prophecy of the seventy weeks, he could not expect Messiah to come and be cut off till the expiry of nearly five hundred years. Ignorance might seek the living among the dead, but no believer with intelligence of this divine prediction could possibly look for the arrival and cutting off of the Christ previously to the revealed epoch. It would have been faith in him to have said, "I expect the Messiah after so many years, not before; for so hath the mouth of the Lord spoken." With the church, on the contrary, the case is wholly different. Her hope is not the times of restitution of all things, but to be with the Lord in heaven as His bride: and as her hope is unearthly, so is it wholly unconnected with the times and seasons {Acts 1:7} which characterized the expectations of Israel. Not that we are ignorant of these dates and epochs; but we know perfectly that the day of Jehovah so cometh as a thief in the night {1 Thessalonians 5:2} — a day of destruction whence there is no escape. But we are not in darkness that the day should overtake us as a thief. We are already children of that day, and when the day arrives we shall come with the Sun of righteousness {Malachi 4:2} who ushers it in. We shall have been with Him before the day breaks, for we know Him as the bright, the Morning Star {2 Peter 1:19}, and the morning star He will give to him that overcomes {Revelation 2:28}.

Certain times and seasons, we are quite aware, must precede the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:1-26). Thus we know that one week remains out of the seventy of Daniel 9:1-27,

when the prince that shall come — a Roman prince — shall confirm covenant with the mass of the Jews for seven years. But, like another traitor and son of perdition, he shall put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he shall break his covenant (Psalms 55:20). The covenant with death shall be disannulled (Isaiah 28:1-29). "In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." This is followed by the abomination of desolation for the allotted term, "even until the consummation." (Compare with Daniel 9:1-27; Daniel 7:19-26.) "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matthew 24:21). "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it (Jeremiah 30:7). "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). The church knows these revealed periods, but knows them as connected, not with herself, but with Jerusalem and the Jewish people, Daniel's people. The church does not wait to be gathered under a Messiah on earth, but to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be ever with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18); with Him in His Father's house; with Him when the successive judgments (symbolized by the seals, trumpets, and vials) are falling on the earth; with Him when the marriage-supper of the Lamb is celebrated above; with Him when He wars with the beast and the false prophet; with Him when we reign together for a thousand years; and with Him in the subsequent eternal state. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Surely it is a blessed hope that the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ is to set to rights all things here below which are now out of course. Creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and Israel no longer blinded but seeing. All Israel shall be saved when the Redeemer comes out of Zion, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob {Romans 11:26} And if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?

Yes, and if we look above, the long usurped possession of the air (Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 6:12) shall be rescued from Satan and his angels; no longer shall he be permitted there to accuse the brethren of Christ in the presence of God (Revelation 12:1-17); no longer will there be conflict with wicked spirits there. That old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, shall be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, before the last vain struggle when he is cast into the lake of fire. But not any nor all these things are our proper hope, which is to be caught up and to meet the Lord Himself {in the air and to be taken to} in heaven. As it is said in John 14:1-31 : "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." Is this on earth, or in heaven? Is it merely the honours of a displayed kingdom? or is it not nearer and higher intimacy with the Son of God in the home of the Father on high? The disciples did not ask, nor did the Lord indicate, when these things should be. But in Matthew 24:1-51 He does give the sign of His coming, and of the consummation of the age. He is meeting the inquiries of the disciples from their own Jewish point of view; He enters into full particulars respecting Jerusalem, Judea, the temple, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, etc., which were but the beginning of sorrows. The end was not yet, nor should it come before the gospel of the kingdom was preached in all the habitable earth for a witness to all the nations. Then He describes minutely the particular marks of the closing crisis, up to His manifestation to all the tribes

of the earth, or land, and the complete ingathering of His elect (Israel) from the four winds. Of His elect earthly people this gathering must be; because when Christ, our life, appears, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {Colossians 3:4} — the church and Christ are manifested at the same time in glory; whereas the elect described in Matthew 24:1-51 are only gathered after the Son of man's appearing, and cannot therefore be the church. All the context, the more it is examined, proclaims them to be Jewish disciples, who, at the signal of the setting up of the abomination, flee, and so escape the unparalleled tribulation of these days and scenes of the end; for their simple trust is in the man of God's right hand, "the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself" (Compare Psalms 79:1-13; Psalms 80:1-19). But the passage in John's Gospel has nothing to do with Jerusalem, nor the earth, nor earthly circumstances. John never speaks of a special tribulation for Jewish disciples at a particular time and place, but of the constant tribulation we should count upon in the world at all times (John 16:33). So the coming is not merely deliverance to a persecuted Jewish remnant on earth, but to receive us to Himself in heaven, without one hint of time, place, or circumstance.

Doubtless the church is to reign over the earth, the bright witness of the Father's love; for the world shall then know that He loved her as He loved His Son, both being displayed in the same glory. And how blessed the ministry of the church in that day, serving the gladsome earth according to the grace which has called, kept, and glorified herself on high, the bride, the Lamb's wife! We shall inherit the earth; we shall judge the world and angels too, in that administration of the fullness of times, when all things shall be gathered together in one in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth [Ephesians 1:10]; even in Him in whom we also have obtained an inheritance. Joint-heirs with Him, we share all that He will rule as the exalted Man. And God has put all things under His feet. Though we do not yet see all things put under Him, we do see Himself exalted; and when the day arrives for Him to take the dominion, it will be manifested that He is head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all {Ephesians 1:22-23} The Old Testament prophecies are full of the earthly glory. In the New Testament we have the mystery of God's will made known to us, involving the inheritance of things in heaven, as well as things on earth, and the church co-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, as His body and God's children (Ephesians 1:9-14). No prophets of ancient times had ever uttered such thoughts. It is not merely that such a portion was not understood, but it was not revealed. It was kept hid in God, and now revealed {Ephesians 1:9-10}, we are told, unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The old prophets had spoken of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when Israel, or at least a Jewish remnant, repent and are converted; they had largely depicted the times of the restitution of all things, when Messiah comes from the heavens which now receive Him (Acts 3:1-26). No doubt they foretold the rule of the heavens (Daniel 4:1-37), and anticipated the joy and peace of the world under that kingdom. But they never predicted, much less did they know, that Christ will have a heavenly body and spouse associated with Him, and enjoying all His love and glory in the heavenly places; though they did celebrate the time when the land shall be married, and Jehovah shall make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The bride they sing of in the Canticles {Song of Solomon} and the Psalms is an earthly bride. Very different is the church of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 5:1-33. Very different the marriage of the Lamb of which John tells in Revelation 19:1-21, as far above the espoused one of the Old Testament as the heavenly glory of Christ exceeds His earthly, though all be perfect in its place.

Further, be it noted that, whether it be deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 2:1-32), whether it be judgment of the Gentiles in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:1-21), with both we find wonders displayed in the heavens, and in the earth blood and fire and pillars of smoke: the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. Nothing of the kind is ever connected in scripture with the catching up of the church, whose only sign is the descent of the Lord Jesus to summon her into His presence in the air. His descent, and her consequent rapture, are nowhere described as events which the world is to behold. To them that look for Him, Christ appears, but to none else, so far as scripture shows, until He is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ {2 Thessalonians 1:7}. His public revelation, in order to judge, is called "the day of the Lord," "the appearing," etc.; and it is certain that many signs will precede that day, and manifestation to every eye. The apostasy must be ripe, and the Lawless One manifested without hindrance; and the great tribulation out of which comes the innumerable Gentile multitude of Revelation 7:1-17, as well as the future unparalleled tribulation in Judea.

Outward signs precede. But this is not all. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:29-31). But I would not dwell further upon these points of contrast, only praying that we may remember, day by day, that our place, the church’s only right and befitting place, is to wait for Christ from heaven. It is not judgments that we expect to be in; it is not the hour of temptation we have to await and dread (Revelation 3:10), for we shall be kept out of it in the grace of Christ. Our business is to wait, as a heavenly bride, for our heavenly Bridegroom. Those who link the church with earthly circumstances will be misled in their ways now, and at times pass on miserably disappointed. Not so the hearts which the Spirit directs, animates, and sustains in the longing cry, Come, Lord Jesus. May it be so with us, beloved, increasingly as the moment, unknown to us, draws nearer! Amen.

04.24. Appendix C: Remarks on 1 and 2 Thessalonians

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Remarks on 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Connected with the Revelation As further evidence of the immense importance of rightly seizing the christian hope, not only for the soul's fellowship with the Lord but for the due intelligence of prophecy, I present to the reader two letters I had from the late Mr. E. B. Elliott in 1851. From them it is plain enough how very defective were his views, not merely in detail but fundamentally; yet was he the acknowledged leader of the Protestant {historicalist} school in our day. But the reader will judge for himself, perusing first the paper which was given him to read, and his remarks with my comment; for I regret that I am unable to furnish the answers sent at the time.

There are few simple-minded Christians who, in searching into the prophetic word, have not felt the difficulty of reconciling the undoubtedly normal posture of the church in daily waiting for Jesus with the long train of successive events presented in the Revelation. The principle, if not the measure, of the difficulty is the same, whether you understand the Revelation to be fulfilled in a brief eventful crisis, or to extend over a course of many hundred years. In either way, I cannot truthfully expect Jesus from heaven from day to day if I am looking out for a series of numerous, and some of them unprecedented, and all of them solemn, incidents to occur on earth, the gradual and accumulative evidence of His approach. But it is certain that in the apostolic times, when the grace of God was proclaimed in its real power and freshness, when His word was most prized and best understood, and when it produced its loveliest effects, the saints were habitually expecting Jesus to come. In Him they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and they knew it. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise {Ephesians 1:13}. Were they therefore satisfied? Was not the Spirit Himself, blessed divine Comforter though He be, yet was not He the earnest of still greater blessings? Doubtless they received Him as the Spirit of sonship, and not as a spirit of bondage unto fear (Romans 8:1-39); but, instead of His leading them into rest and contentedness here below in the absence of Jesus, in the same chapter it is said: "Ourselves also, (besides the groaning creation) which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is the groaning of those who are justified by faith and have peace with God. It is the groaning of those who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, and bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God. It is the groaning of the adopted, earnestly yearning for the full results of adoption: of those who, because they have known God's grace in redemption forgiving their sins, look for more, for all, — for the redemption of the body in the actual presence of the Saviour, that they may be like Him and with Him for ever. The aim, however, of these remarks is not to prove that the personal coming of the Lord was the hope of the church — proofs easily found elsewhere. My desire is rather to convince those who know what is and was meant to be the hope of the church, that God by no concurrent or subsequent revelation ever interfered with the practical power of that hope. That He might give fuller details as to the growing iniquity of man, of the Jew and especially of the outward

professing body, and as to His own judgments upon each before the millennial reign; that He might describe in greater minuteness the circumstances of that reign and the events that succeed it, is not only possible but that which He has done. But that He, on this or any other theme, corrects in one part of His word what is affirmed in another, is that which every Christian ought surely to repudiate from the bottom of his soul, in whatever modified form it may be insinuated. The word of our God needs no apologies from man. Unhesitatingly believed, every part of it will be found to be perfectly true, though (from the narrowness and imperfection of our apprehension) patient waiting on God is necessary to avoid the systematizing of the human intellect, and to discover in what order God puts things together. Haste in deciding such questions only leads to forcing scripture, which will not yield; and hence the danger of framing one-sided hypotheses, which are only tenable by shutting the eye to the plainest scripture which contradicts them as hypotheses, though there may be elements of truth in them. To apply this to the matter in hand, it is undeniable that the apostle Paul (to say nothing of others) invariably speaks of the coming of the Lord to take the church to Himself as that which might be at any moment, however Jesus might tarry; but no necessary detention — no chain of occurrences involving a period virtually — no certain lapse of time — is ever presented to the church as keeping Him in heaven. On the contrary, if he writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:1-58), it is: "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Admitting that "we" is a representative word, not the persons addressed merely but those standing in the same privileges: still, will any one say that the apostle or the Corinthian saints knew that the moment would be deferred till they had fallen asleep? Was it not calculated, beyond all cavil, to keep them in simple constant expectancy of the Lord? And the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1-10), who were trained, from their birth to God, in looking for their Deliverer, were they mistaken enthusiasts? Or did not the blessed work of the Spirit in their case consist in turning them from idols, not only to serve the living and true God, but to wait for His Son from heaven? Did that wise and faithful servant, who knew what it was to mingle the service of a nurse with the affectionate care of a father — did he consider that blessed hope to be unsuited food for such babes? So far from it, that when he writes to them supplying some things that were lacking, the Holy Ghost impresses this great doctrine in so repeated and different modes as to demonstrate how cardinal a truth it is in the mind of God, and how influential as regards the walk and communion of His saints. It ramifies both epistles, being not only found at least once in every chapter, but in some chapters occupying the most conspicuous place. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:5.) They had rejoiced in this hope of our Lord Jesus Christ from their earliest christian career; they had patiently continued it through the Spirit, and the blessedness of such patience was sweet to the absent apostle, even as their work of faith and labour of love. True, they needed further light as to its circumstances, and the Lord granted it. So immediately were they awaiting the Lord, that the decease of some of their number plunged them into sorrow — not, I apprehend, that they for a moment doubted of the salvation of those who were gone. No one knowing the gospel in word only (much less knowing it in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as it came to them,) could have such a doubt. But they feared that death had severed their departed brethren from the glorious hope they had so brightly burning before them, of being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. They were gone — doubtless were happy; but would they not be absent from that crowning joy for which they themselves were waiting? Here

was the place, if they had been mistaken in so waiting, to have corrected it. Here was the place for the apostle to say: We have been all wrong in living with our eyes heavenward till the Son of God comes to take us to Himself. He is not coming soon. We need not expect Him, for many ages must expire before He comes. Besides He has already given you some, and He now adds more signs of His advent. You have not seen these signs yet. You must wait for them, and not for His Son. But there is the exact reverse. The Holy Spirit deliberately keeps them in the same attitude of waiting which He had previously wrought, and sanctioned in them, though He gives them a comfort of which they were ignorant as to their brethren who had been put to sleep by Jesus. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [that is, go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with 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: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." But it may be said, If the Holy Ghost did not here correct the excited notions of the Thessalonians, He did in the second chapter of the second epistle. I answer that the true question is, Does the Holy Ghost correct Himself? He may supply that which is suited to correct the undue sorrow of the believers in one epistle, or their fears in another epistle; but I insist upon it in the strongest manner, that, if the church is set in the position of waiting for Christ's coming in one part of scripture, no other part can possibly alter such a position. It is necessarily right, whatever increase of instruction may be given. Let us only be well assured in the perfectness of every word of God, and we shall soon see how little the passage warrants the notion that the apostle Paul, in the second epistle, dissuades them from expecting Him, whom the first epistle had confirmed them in expecting. In the first place, it is generally assumed that the day of Christ (or "of the Lord," for this is the true reading) is identical with "the coming (παρουσ■α, presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ" in the verse before {2 Thessalonians 2:1-2} But it is a groundless idea. If it be affirmed, let proofs be adduced. It is quite clear to me that the day of the Lord is a distinct though connected thing. In its full, ultimate sense, and no one disputes that such is its force here, it supposes the presence of the Lord; it is the judgment consequent upon that. But the presence, or the coming of the Lord, by no means necessarily supposes judgment. Is there a word of judgment, or wrath, or destruction, expressed or implied in the full description given in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 of the Lord's coming for His own? So when the apostle says, "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). Where is the word of judgment on evil? On the other hand, when the day of the Lord occurs, it is, whether used in a full or limited application, habitually connected with judgment and its consequences (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Zephaniah 1:1-18; Zephaniah 2:1-15; Zephaniah 3:1-20; Zechariah 14:1-21; Malachi 3:1-18; Malachi 4:1-6). I conclude therefore that, though the coming of the Lord may include the day of the Lord, as the whole includes a part, the coming of the Lord {1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; etc.} is in itself presented in an aspect of grace, not of judgment, and that the terms and things are not be confounded. In the second place, while it is true that the day of the LORD cannot come before the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin arrive {2 Thessalonians 2:3}, which are to be judged in that day [of the Lord, at its beginning], yet is there a serious error in the English rendering of the last clause of 2 Thessalonians 2:2, "is at hand." The word usually rendered "at hand," "near," or "nigh," is ■γγ■ς or ■ν■στηκεν, as is known to

scholars. The present word åç æ , on the other hand, is never so rendered in the New Testament, save in the passage before us. On the contrary, occurring several times, it is used invariably in a way which excludes the possibility of such a rendering (more especially when it is, as here, in the perfect tense). Let us briefly examine.

1. The first occurrence is in Romans 8:38. It is evident that here ■νεστ■τα cannot mean things at hand. It is contrasted with μ■λλοντα, that is, "things to come." It signifies only and emphatically "things present," and is so rendered in the common Bible.

2. See the same words and the same contrast in 1 Corinthians 3:22.

3. Again, in 1 Corinthians 7:26, δι■ τ■ν ■νεστ■σαν ■ν■γκην is properly translated "for the present distress." A distress not actually come, but only at hand or coming, would spoil the meaning.

4. The next is Galatians 4:1-31, "this present evil world," the only possible meaning of the word here. The next world, or age, will not be evil, and therefore "at hand" or "imminent" is shut out.

5. Compare also Hebrews 9:9, ε■ς τ■ν καιρ■ν τ■ν ■νεστηκ■τα "for the time then present," not "at hand," which cannot be the true force. All these are instances of the same tense as 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

6. The only other occurrence is 2 Timothy 3:1, ■νστ■σονται, in the future middle. Here the English version renders it, "shall come." Still the meaning indubitably is not "shall be at hand," which could have no point, but "shall be present." To be impending merely was little: the grave thing was, that perilous times should be actually there in the last days. It may be concluded therefore, from an induction thus complete, that in all the other instances the Authorized Version is right, but in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 it is wrong. It is not conceivable to uphold both; so that, if right in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, the version must be wrong everywhere else. But we have seen, from the intrinsic meaning of the word, as well as from the sense imperatively demanded by the context, that in all the other cases the translators are justified. They are therefore mistaken here, and the proper rendering, in conformity with their own translation of the word in the same tense elsewhere, ought to be "as that the day of the Lord is present." The Thessalonian saints had from the first known much affliction. They had notoriously suffered from their own countrymen, and this to such a degree that the apostle, in his earnest and watchful interest about them, sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. They knew that "we are appointed thereunto." Nevertheless, they needed comfort. The apostle had warned them before, that "we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know." "For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." But Timothy brought good tidings of their faith and love, and the apostle could break out into thanks and joy for their sakes before God, and he lets them know it in his first epistle. The tempter however was not to be discouraged nor diverted from his wiles. They had been already taught that the Lord Himself was to come, and the saints, sleeping or living, were all to be changed, and be caught up together to meet Him in the air, and so to be ever with Him. They also knew that the day of the Lord (or Jehovah) was one of destruction and terror, unlooked for by the world: "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" {1 Thessalonians 5:2}. Accordingly he

appears to have distracted the saints by the harassing statement that the day of the Lord was actually there {2 Thessalonians 2:2}, thus seeking to rob them of all profit and joy in the persecutions and tribulations which they were then enduring. Nor let any think it strange, if, in a time of perplexity for the world and persecution of the church, the fears of saints might be wrought upon; particularly as they knew that the day of the Lord in the Old Testament by no means necessarily implies the personal presence of the Lord, though it looks onward to that anticipatively. (Compare, for instance, Isaiah 13:1-22, where God's judgment of Babylon and the Chaldeans is so designated:) "Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty," etc. (See also Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1-11; Amos 5:18; Amos 5:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zephaniah 1:14-15, etc.) In the second epistle, the Holy Ghost conveys the needed instruction. "We ourselves," says the apostle, "glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer; seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" {2 Thessalonians 2:4-9}. The time of retribution is not when Jesus comes {for us}, but when He is revealed. For though at His coming the church is caught up, there is nothing yet of a retributive character. It is favour, not a process of judgment. Whereas the revelation and the day of the Lord are, as is manifest, associated with judgment, and hence there is the public award of God then for the first time manifested to the world; "seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed." Doubtless there is a tribulation, and even the great tribulation, in the time of Antichrist, previous to the revelation of Jesus; as obviously there is rest to those who sleep in Jesus now, and there will be rest in a fuller sense when our bodies are changed, and we are caught up to be with Him. But both are wholly distinct from the divine retributive tribulation and the rest here spoken of. It is the day of punishment with everlasting destruction to the adversaries, as it is the day when Christ comes, not to present the faithful to Himself, nor to take them to mansions {abodes} in the Father's house, but to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believed. For when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Colossians 3:4}. It is the public judicial dealing (not the hidden joy or blessedness before then, or afterwards), which here enters into the scene.

Next the apostle turns to the source of their agitation. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled." Assuredly, the consolation administered here is not that Christ's coming was a distant thing! Can it be that theologian upon theologian has desired to make of this fancied long and far-off absence of the Lord a balm for the tried and fearful? Can it be that the poor church has but too willingly sipped the cup, and, heedless of His words, cheers herself on the delirious career of worldliness and folly, and of faithlessness to Him? "Lord, how long?" Not so the Thessalonians. Full well they knew that His coming was to end their sorrows and crown their joys. Under apostolic guidance they had looked, and the Holy Ghost had commended their looking, for Christ. Was it not

the part of the evil servant to say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming? {Matthew 24:48}. But Paul was a blessed faithful servant, and never says anything of the sort. He uses the fact of the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as a comfort against the anxiety created by the idea that the day of the Lord was already arrived — nay more, as a proof that such an idea was false. His ground of entreaty is twofold. He urges a reason connected with the Lord and heaven, and a reason connected with earth and the man of sin. There must be our gathering above {2 Thessalonians 2:1}, and the falling away below {2 Thessalonians 2:3} In the first place the Lord was to come, and they were to be gathered together unto Him, in order that He and they might bring in the day and appear together from heaven. This had not taken place, and therefore they were not to be disturbed as if that day had come, or could come, previously. In the next place he presses the point that the evil must first be developed completely which that day is to judge. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come the falling away (or the apostasy, αποστασ■α) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or object of worship; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" {2 Thessalonians 2:3-4}. But the apostasy was not then come, nor the man of sin revealed, and therefore the day of the Lord, the day of vengeance upon these evils, is yet to come. "And now [if one may translate the apostle's word a little exactly] ye know what hindereth that he might be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that now hindereth till he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the appearing of his coming" {2 Thessalonians 2:6-8}.

No! the Thessalonian believers were not mistaken in waiting for the Son of God. It is not wrong to believe that "the Lord is at hand," (■γγ■ς) as the apostle pressed upon the Philippians when drawing to the close of his career. It is not wrong to stablish our hearts because the coming of the Lord draweth nigh ■γγικεν, James 5:8). Nor does the language of the Spirit in the passage before us depict excitement from a too eager anticipation of this glorious event — alas! that Christians should suppose we could too earnestly desire it. The expressions in James 5:2 denote fright and agitation. The enemy sought to instill the idea that the day, the judgment, was come, and that they were obnoxious to its terrors. Where then was their hope to be caught up to the Lord and to come along with Him? Would it have been sorrow and fear if Christ had come and they had been translated to meet Him in the air? Rather would it have been their chiefest joy, as it had been the object nearest their heart since their conversion. Their faith was growing exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded; and, far from weakening that which he had already taught, the apostle prays for them in the last chapter of the second epistle, that the Lord would direct their heart into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. That is, he confirms them in their expectancy of the Lord. But the deceiver had affrighted them, not of course by presenting the coming of the Lord as an imminent thing, which was what the Holy Ghost had done, and which is for the church a hope of unmingled comfort, but by the report that the day of the Lord was actually present — "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." The apostle had already told them (1 Thessalonians 5:1-28) that they were not in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief. The tempter disturbs and confounds them with the thought that, as a thief, it was really come upon them; using it would seem some false spirit, or word, or letter {2 Thessalonians 2:2}, to give to it the colour of the authority of Paul

himself. And how does the apostle defend them from such assaults of others, and fears of their own? For, let it be repeated, it was not high-wrought feeling as though Christ were at hand, but terror arising from their giving heed to the false representation that the day of the Lord was present, and they in tribulation on earth, instead of being caught up to Jesus above. The apostle at once brings them back to the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him {2 Thessalonians 2:1} as their ground of comfort and protection against the alarms of the day of Jehovah. As if he had said: the Lord Himself is coming, and you will be gathered to Him. When His day comes, you will be with Him. You are the children of the day: you will come along with it, for you will come with Him who ushers it in. You therefore need not be troubled; be rather in peace. That day is not come. You will go to meet Him whom the church knows as the bright, the morning star (Revelation 22:16, compared with Revelation 2:28); so that, when the day breaks and the Lord appears, you too will appear with Him in glory. You will introduce the day together — that day of retribution, when those who trouble you shall have trouble, and you, the troubled, shall have rest with us, when Jesus is revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance. In harmony with this, it is written in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, that the lawless one will be destroyed, not simply by the coming of the Lord, but by a further step of it, by the appearing or manifestation of His coming. This scene is given at length in Revelation 19:11-21, where the seer beholds, in the prospective vision, the heaven opened, and the rider, the Word of God, upon the white horse, issuing to judge and make war. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" — the righteousnesses, not of angels, but of saints (compare Revelation 19:8). The saints are already with Him. They follow Him out of heaven, as His army. Christ therefore must have come before this to take them to Himself, for they have been with Him in heaven and leave it together, preparatory to the battle with the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies. This then is not merely the coming of Christ. It is Christ appearing, and we with Him in glory. It is His revelation from heaven, taking vengeance. It is the day of the Lord, when sudden destruction comes. It is the shining forth of His presence, or the brightness of His coming, which destroys that lawless one.

Matthew 24:23-31 falls in with this view: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." It is His coming in connection with His earthly rights. Rejected of this generation as the Christ, He comes as Son of man (in which capacity He is never presented as coming to take the church). "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The elect, here gathered together by the angels of the Son of man from the four winds, are demonstrably not the church, because they are gathered subsequent to His appearing. The church, on the other hand, had been translated before. For when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Colossians 3:4}. Our manifestation in glory cannot be after His manifestation. Christ and the church are manifested together. Hence the signs specified in this chapter {Matthew 24:1-51} are to elect Jewish disciples indices of His appearing. They are not to be regarded therefore as interfering with the posture of the church in continually waiting for the Lord from heaven. They are

signs for a remnant in special relation with Judea, who will be awaiting the coming of the Son of man. No signs of this or of any other description were ever put before the church, as such, whereby to judge of the near approach of Christ to take her to Himself. On the contrary, what the Holy Ghost taught the church is, to a simple mind, inconsistent with such indications: she was to be expecting always because she knew not the moment of His coming. The apostle (1 John 2:18) would have even the babes to know that it is the last time {hour}; and this, not from the spread of the Spirit of Christ, but from the presence of many antichrists. But, although they had heard that the antichrist should come, no signs to be seen, no evil to reach its climax, no specific tribulation, are ever put before them, as events necessarily retarding the coming of the Lord to take the church. For the bride, the one heavenly sign is the presence of the Bridegroom Himself. But for a converted remnant of Jews, of whom the Lord has graciously thought in the instructions of Matthew 24:1-51, there are signs which will be given before the coming of the Son of man.

Now it is precisely here that the Revelation affords so distinct a light, showing us the position of the church in heaven, Christ having come and taken her to Himself, and afterwards, during the interval of her absence in heaven before she appears along with Him, God's dealings, testimonies, judgments, and deliverances, on earth. The epistles give us simply the fact of the rapture of the church, but did not inform as to the length of the interval before the appearing and the kingdom. That such an interval existed might have been gathered; but whether long or short, or how filled up, does not appear in the epistles. The Revelation furnishes that which was lacking upon the subject and connects, without confounding, the church caught up to the Lord on high, with certain witnesses to be raised up during the closing term of the age on earth before He appears in judgment. As for the relative bearings of the different portions of the New Testament, it may be said in general that the Gospels have a character peculiar to themselves. It is not certainly an exclusively Jewish condition, neither is it a proper church condition, but a gradual slide, in John more marked than in the others, from the one to the other. The Lord Jesus, rejected, was with His disciples here below. The Holy Ghost, who of course was then, as ever, the faith-giving quickening agent, was not yet given, that is, in any new unprecedented way, because that Jesus was not yet glorified {John 7:39}. Hence the disciples, although possessing faith and eternal life (John 6:35; John 6:47; John 6:68-69), were not yet baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body (compare Acts 1:5 with 1 Corinthians 12:13). In a word, the church was not yet built nor begun to be built: "Upon this rock," says the Lord, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). But the Acts historically, and the epistles doctrinally, point to a different state of things as then existing: Jesus absent and glorified in heaven; the Holy Ghost present and dwelling on earth in the saints, who were hereby constituted the body, the church. Christ had taken His place as head of the body above, and the Holy Ghost sent down was gathering into oneness with Him there, into membership of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Such is the mystery of Christ which it was emphatically given to the apostle Paul fully to make known. And as the Gospels may be regarded as the preparatory transition out of Jewish relations to the blessed elevation on which the church rests, the Revelation answers as the corresponding transition from the church one with Christ in heavenly places, by various steps or stages, down to those Jewish relations which for a time dropped out of sight in consequence of the calling of the heavenly body. The doctrine of the church is clearly at the root the ONE HOPE, which is found in the intermediate part of the New Testament. For along with the truth of the peculiar calling of the church, as the body commenced by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and thenceforward guided and perpetuated by Him — along with

this truth, it will be found that the peculiar aspect of the coming of the Lord, for which I have contended, stands or falls. None of the school of interpreters commonly called "the Protestant school" {historicalists} understood by the church anything more, at best, than the Augustinian notion of an invisible company from the beginning to the end of time. None of them therefore has an adequate idea of the new and heavenly work which God began at Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The consequence is that, if they read of saints in Daniel, in the Psalms, or in the Revelation, they are at once set down as of the church. If they read of "this gospel of the kingdom" in Matthew 24:1-51, or of "the everlasting gospel," — it is to their minds the same thing as what Paul calls "my gospel," the gospel of the grace of God preached now. Hence follows, and quite fairly too, a denial of any specialty in the walk and conversation of the saints since Pentecost, and a general Judaizing in doctrine, standing, conduct and hopes. It is also a simple and natural result of this, that all Protestant interpreters [historicalists], if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present as the hope of the church that which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant, namely, the day of Jehovah, the Son of man, seen by all the tribes of the earth, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Nor is the truth of the church unknown to the Protestant interpreters only; it is equally an object of dislike to many of the Futurist school. And it is my conviction that the two baleful heresies which have brought such shame upon the revival of prophetic study towards the beginning and the close of the last twenty years, are intimately connected with the rejection of this grand truth. For an error touching the church cannot but affect Him whose personal presence is what is so essential to it; and that which dishonours the Spirit goes far, in the long run, to disfigure or deny the person and work of Him of whom the Spirit is the vicar. In the epistles, it is beyond doubt that the church is continually addressed, as if there were no understood, and fixed or necessary, hindrances to the rapture at the coming of the Lord. How could this be if the church be the same body as those saints who are described in Daniel, the Psalms, etc., as being destined to certain fiery trials still future from a little horn and his satellites who are yet to appear? How comes it that the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the coming of the Lord, never hints at this tribulation, as one through which the church must pass; but always presents the advent as an immediate thing which might occur from one unknown moment to another? That the apostle Paul understood the just application of these prophecies, better than any since his day, is that which few Christians will question: they were scriptures long revealed and familiar to Jews; and the Lord Jesus, in Matthew 24:1-51, had very significantly linked His fresh revelations upon that occasion with the predictions of Daniel. Yet the Holy Ghost, in His constant allusions in the writings of the apostles to the anticipations of the church, never once refers to these terrible circumstances as a future scene wherein the church is to enact a part: on the contrary, the way in which the coming of the Lord is put before the church, as a thing to be constantly looked for, seems incompatible with it. We have examined the only statement in the epistles which might appear to interpose such a barrier, and we have seen that, so far from contradicting the thought of immediateness, the apostle seeks to relieve the Thessalonian saints from all uneasiness about the day of the Lord and its troubles, by the blessed hope of His coming and their gathering unto Him, which are in his mind indissolubly bound together: a gathering unto Him which must be before He appears to the world, and judges it, because He and they are to appear together. It is certain, moreover, that there must arrive the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin (not before the coming, but) before the day of the Lord. The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during

which "the prince that shall come" plays his terrible role. "And he shall confirm a covenant" (see margin and compare Isaiah 28:14) "with the many" (that is, of Daniel's people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations there shall be one desolating, even until the consummation" (or consumption, as in Isaiah 28:22), "and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate" (Daniel 9:27). That this prince is not "the Messiah the prince" is manifest, not only from the fact that the former is described as one "that shall come," after the latter has already come and been cut off, as is plain from Daniel 9:26, but also from the certainty that "the prince that shall come" is the prince of the Roman people: his people "shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." We know who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple — the people of this future prince. The latter part of Daniel 9:26 does not continue the thread of the history, further than the general expressions "and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." In the last verse we are transported to the epoch of "the prince that shall come," and his actings during the last week of the age. This period is shown to be broken into two parts, during the former of which, according to covenant, Jewish worship is resumed, but "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

If Daniel 7:1-28 be consulted, it will be seen that there is a certain little horn rising after the ten horns of the fourth Roman beast, before whom three of the first horns fell — "that horn that had eyes and a mouth, that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows" (Daniel 7:20). "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High [or of the high places] and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25). Is it not evident that in Daniel 7:1-28 is a horn or king whose blasphemous pride brings judgment upon the beast, or Roman empire, and whose interference with times and laws, that is, with Jewish ceremonial order, continues for three years and a half? and that for the same space of time, or the last half week, "the prince that shall come," the Roman prince of Daniel 9:1-27, overthrows this ceremonial worship? But the Revelation not only takes up the last half of Daniel's week (Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18) but shows what is the place of the church during this period — a truth which it was not given to the Jewish prophet to reveal, because it was that which supposed and fitly followed the revelation of the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. Paul had shown us the church waiting for the presence of the Lord. What is it that the Holy Ghost adds by John? What is the great outline given in the Revelation?

After the vision of the Lord Jesus, in Revelation 1:1-20, we have "the things that are," epistles to the seven churches {Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22}, so conveyed as to apply not only at that time but as long as the church subsists on earth, and then the properly prophetic part, the things which should be after the church-condition had passed away. Throughout the prophetic portion of the book the church is never described as being on earth. At the close of Revelation 3:1-22, it altogether disappears from earthly view; and, instead of its course being any longer traced here below, a door is opened in heaven and the prophet is called up to see the things which must come to pass after these, that is, after the things which are, or the church regarded in the completeness of its varying phases on earth. Besides other things (the throne and One that sat upon it being the centre of the vision), John sees, not seven candlesticks, but, suited to the new circumstances of heaven, four and twenty thrones, and upon them four and twenty elders sitting,

clothed in white raiment and upon their heads golden crowns {Revelation 4:1-11}.

Here we have, in vision, the place and functions of the church after it shall have been taken up to meet the Lord, and before its manifestation with Him in glory. And for this simple reason, that the way in which He and they are here represented emblematically is totally different from what is revealed as connected with either, when the moment comes to leave heaven, for the purpose of judgment upon the beast, etc.; or from what is revealed touching the reign for a thousand years subsequent to that judgment: that is, in Revelation 19:11; Revelation 20:4-6. Nor can the scene in Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 be interpreted consistently with any view, save that of the church being actually caught up and completed in the presence of God. It is quite a distinct thing from our sitting in heavenly places in Christ {Ephesians 2:6}: this is the subject of the epistle to the Ephesians. Neither is it the same thing as the boldness which the partakers of the heavenly calling {Hebrews 3:1} have even now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Such is the subject of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the high-priesthood of Jesus is dwelt on at length, and the liberty which we have in consequence to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith; for it is still faith, and not actual possession, however it may be, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The purpose of Revelation is to disclose the dealings of God, whether the facts be expressed or understood, but dealings which involve a certain condition of things, which was future if considered in relation to the circumstances looked at in the epistles, as actually subsisting at the time — the things in short which must be after these. Nor can this chapter {Revelation 4:1-11} be supposed to describe the blessedness of the spirits of the saints previous to the coming of Christ for the church, because the departed who are with Christ could not be symbolized by twenty-four elders; that is, by an image evidently borrowed from the full courses of Jewish priesthood. The whole church, and not a part only, is comprehended in the symbol. But this can only be after the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain, are caught up together with them in the clouds, and so are ever with the Lord. Accordingly here they are represented in heaven, the Lord being also there, and although made kings and priests even when on earth, still the time is not yet come for the exercise of government. In beautiful harmony, therefore, with this peculiar and transitional period during which they are removed from the world, they worship above. But the saints below are not forgotten. Those above have golden harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, not only because He was slain and had redeemed themselves, but had made them, that is, these saints, to their God, kings and priests. They should reign over the earth. The fulfillment is seen in Revelation 20:4-6 : the reigning with Christ not merely of those symbolized by the elders, but of the Apocalyptic saints also.

Moreover, it is clear on the one hand, that the lightnings and thunderings suit neither the day of grace nor the millennial state. Earth is certainly not yet brought under the power of the blood of Christ, when these symbols will find their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are saints on earth, while the twenty-four elders are before the throne above. That is, it is neither the millennial nor the present state; but an intermediate period of peculiar nature, in which we have the throne, not of grace as now, nor of displayed glory as by-and-by, but clothed with what has been justly termed a Sinai character of awful majesty attached to it. But those above

exercise their priesthood in the presence of God as the full completed church. Hence the symbol of twenty-four elders round the throne, at a time when, as all confess, earth is still unreconciled, however there may be, in the next chapter, the anticipative song of every creature. If this be true, it follows that the Lord's coming to meet the saints takes place between Revelation 3:1-22; Revelation 4:1-11 (if the thought be pursued, which I doubt not, that Revelation 6:1-17, Revelation 7:1-17, Revelation 8:1-13, Revelation 9:1-21, Revelation 10:1-11, Revelation 11:11-19, Revelation 12:1-17, Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 14:1-20, Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21, Revelation 17:18, Revelation 18:1-24, Revelation 19:1-21 will be fulfilled in a rapid crisis), room being left there for the coming described in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 and elsewhere. Then the main action of the book goes on subsequently to the removal of the church, and after this another character of testimony from that of the church properly is announced, and God Himself is revealed in ways different from those which He is displaying now; that is to say, not as showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, but in the chastening judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, preparatory to the great day of the Lord which Revelation 19:11 ushers in. On this state of things Daniel compared with the Revelation will be found to cast and to receive much light, for it seems plain that the saints of the Most High, or heavenlies, of whom we read in Daniel 7:1-28, identify themselves with the saints who suffer under the beast, after the rapture of the church and, before the Lord's appearing. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which, be it noted, is the spirit of prophecy, and though they are not of the twenty-four elders, they will have their blessed and holy part in the first resurrection. And here let it be remarked, that the term has nothing to do with the question whether all are raised at the same time; it simply describes the condition of those who rise and reign during the thousand years, as distinguished from those who do not rise till that period is ended. How true this is, is manifest from the fact that Christ has part in the first resurrection, who nevertheless rose before the church more than eighteen hundred years {ago} at least. Hence the thought is not forbidden of certain saints being raised who stand and suffer after the church is gone. The symbol of the twenty-four elders continues unchanged throughout the course of the book, till Revelation 19:1-21. They enter into God's ways and judgments, as interested in whatever affected His glory, as may be seen in Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 19:1-21. But in Revelation 19:1-21 there is a striking change. After the opening scene of the rejoicings over Babylon the elders no longer appear, but the time for the marriage being come (and how evidently the church therefore is still viewed in the Revelation as unmarried), the bride, the Lamb's wife is announced as made ready. The heavenly joy and the Bridegroom and His bride being thus incidentally glanced at, He takes a new aspect, for the day is about to break upon the world; and so do we, for we will have gone long before to be ever with the Lord, and if He is about to appear, so are we along with Him in glory. Hence, in Revelation 19:11, the prophet sees heaven opened, and a white horse, and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. In unison, therefore, as He thus comes to smite and rule, the armies which are in heaven follow the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful, which expressions are sufficiently clear to determine who are meant by the armies, if any one should have a doubt. It is the church which was in heaven following Christ in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Contrasted with the marriage supper of the Lamb, all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited to the great supper of God. The

prophet sees the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. The result all know.

Next follows the angelic binding of the dragon for a thousand years, and the parenthetic revelation of the sitting on thrones, or at least, of the living and reigning with Christ during that period, of such as had part in the first resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, though their office may be discharged in a different way from what we saw as to some of them in Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14, but they all reign with Christ for a thousand years {Revelation 20:1-15}.

It is a prominent feature of the book, that in it is traced the sovereignty of God, not only in His purposes regarding the church properly so called, but in His gracious ways with an election from among Jews and Gentiles subsequently. Thus, after the church is seen in its completeness in heaven, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders (Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14), we hear in Revelation 6:9-11 of saints suffering, yet crying for vengeance; and the announcement to them that they should rest yet for a little, until their fellow-servants and brethren, doomed to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Vengeance should not arrive till then. These are evidently not the church, but saints on earth after the church is in heaven, whose sufferings and cries to the Lord accord much with the experience detailed in the Psalms. Still, whether Jewish or Gentile, they are not named here. But in Revelation 7:1-17 we have distinctly brought before us a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel sealed with the seal of the living God, and after this an innumerable multitude out of all nations, etc., who are characterized as coming out of the great tribulation, and as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These bodies are evidently distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other: and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the church; for we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders, that is, the confessed symbol of the glorified being still represented as a separate party in the scene (Revelation 7:11).

Under the trumpets again we find the prayers of saints alluded to, who are of course supposed to still be on earth (compare Revelation 8:3-4, with Revelation 5:8), and an implication of the sealed Jewish remnant being in the sphere, though saved from the effects of the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9:4). In Revelation 11:1-19 are seen the two witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth, and killed. In Revelation 12:1-17 the woman is persecuted by the dragon, who wars with the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is accomplished in the beast of Revelation 13:1-18 who makes war with the saints and overcomes them.

Revelation 14:1-20 is clearly a sevenfold sketch of the dealings of God, which brings the crisis to a conclusion: the hundred forty and four thousand associated with the Lamb on Mount Sion; the everlasting gospel summoning all to fear and worship God because of the proximity of His judgment; the fall of Babylon; the declaration of torment to the bestial worshipers; the blessedness from henceforth of those dying in the Lord: the harvest of the earth, out of which were redeemed the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb; and lastly, the vintage of the earth. The reader has only to weigh Revelation 14:12-13, in order to have the foregoing remarks confirmed. Even here we have the patience of saints described just before the harvest; the portion, too, not of the church (for we shall not all sleep), but of a special class of saints here below, while the church is hidden above. In Revelation 15:1-8 (preparatory to

Revelation 16:1-21, that is, the seven outpoured bowls of the wrath of God), is heard the song of the conquerors of the beast, celebrating the works of the Lord God Almighty and the ways of the King of nations. Compare also Revelation 16:5-6; Revelation 16:15; Revelation 17:6; Revelation 18:4-6. To those who kept the word of Christ's patience (Revelation 3:10) the promise was to be kept (not in or during, but) out of the hour of trial, out of that fearful tribulation which is in store for the dwellers upon earth. In the preceding scriptures it is clear that after Christ has fulfilled His promise in the translation of the church to heaven, there are saints on earth, both from among Jews and Gentiles who suffer throughout the tribulation. And these Apocalyptic sufferers are described in Revelation 20:4, as having part, equally with the church, in the first resurrection. For that text discloses first, the general place of the glorified in the millennial reign, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them"; secondly, those killed in the earlier persecutions of the book (Revelation 6:9-11), "And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God"; and thirdly, the later witnesses for God, "and those who had not worshipped the beast," etc. (Revelation 15:2). Those saints who were called and suffered after the rapture of the glorified, are emphatically mentioned, because it might have appeared that they had lost all by their death. Not members of Christ's body before He comes for the church, they share not in the rapture; not protected from death during the prevalence of the beast, they cannot be the living nucleus of Jews or of Gentiles, saved to be the holy seed on earth during the reign of Christ. They suffer, are cut off, but are not forgotten. "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Thus the truth brought to light in the epistles to the Thessalonians, is assumed in the view which the apostle John was the honoured servant to enunciate, namely, the blessed condition and holy employ of the church round the throne and the Lamb, after the removal from earth, but previous to the appearing with Christ in glory. The central part of the Revelation then appears to corroborate on an irrefragable basis, the truth that the church will be taken away and fulfil the symbols we have been noticing, previous to the day of the Lord, during the same time that other saints are still groaning and shedding their blood like water here below (Psalms 74:1-23; Psalms 79:1-13).

Such seems to be the main key which unlocks an important portion of the book and confirms the view, so sweet to the renewed mind, of going to meet the Lord without one earthly obstacle between: keeping unblunted the point and energy of a truth only revealed in the New Testament. For the Old Testament spoke of His coming with all His saints, not for them; of His appearing in glory to the confusion of His enemies, and not of His descending to meet His friends, when we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and caught up together in the clouds. And hence it would seem, the emphatic language of the apostle, conscious that God was by him revealing a new thing to faith. For in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 he says, "Behold I show you a mystery"; and in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

How sweetly do the closing appeals tell upon the heart of him who has an ear to hear! "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." It would be to lose the blessedness of keeping the prophetic sayings of this book, to have any other thought than that Jesus is coming quickly (Revelation 22:7). It is well to read in their light the signs of the times: knowing the closure, we can thus detect the principles now at work. But it is a mistake and a misuse to construe of such signs obstacles to the coming of the Lord: to say, until I know the arrival of this or that precursor, I cannot

in my heart expect Jesus. Blessed be God! such is not the language of the Spirit. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Are these the words of mere feeling, unguided by spiritual understanding of the mind of God? As a fact, we know that the Lord has delayed; but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But who will say that it is conceivable to be looking for the Lord, wholly uncertain of the time of His advent, and at the same time have the revealed certainty of a number of events which determine the year, or, it may be, the day? That Jesus will arise, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:1-6), is clear, and we know that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:1-58). But this same Jesus is more than the supreme power of righteous government on earth. He is known to the church, at any rate, as the bright and morning Star. Blessed light of grace, ere the day breaks, to those who watch for Him from heaven during the dark and lonely night! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come."

"He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I am coming quickly. Amen! come, Lord Jesus." Here are the letters with remarks on each:

[Letter I., Sept. 1, 1851.

Dear Mr. Kelly,

I have read your paper on 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. I cannot but think that it would be advisable to express your views more simply and plainly for uninitiated readers like myself. If I rightly understand you, the sum and substance of your view and argument is to the effect following: — The Thessalonian Christians could not be distressed or affrighted at the thought of their Lord's coming being at hand. It was the chief object of their hope. Nor does the passage in question imply anything of the kind. First, "the day of the Lord," spoken of in it as ■νεστως, is not identical in sense with the παρουσ■α, or coming of the Lord, spoken of in the verse preceding, being only that part of the era of His coming which is devoted to judgment, a previous epoch and act of it being that of His gathering of His saints to Himself. Secondly, ■νεστηκεν does not mean, and may not be explained in the sense of being near, or at hand, but only in the sense it bears elsewhere, of being actually present. Hence, and from these two premises, it is to be inferred that the trouble of the Thessalonian Christians arose out of the idea of the latter part of the era of His coming, that of judgment, having come, and consequently of their having not had part in the previous gathering of His saints to Him.

Supposing this to be your meaning, it of course follows that they thought St. Paul, as well as themselves, to have been similarly overlooked by Christ, and left to the trials of the judgment-day. Is this credible? Is it not enough of itself to set aside the interpretation? But what, then, of the ■νεστηκεν? Is not its proper meaning, "is present."? No doubt, just as παρεστι, and such similar words, mean "is present." But they are words which, in every language that I am acquainted with, are susceptible, if the context requires it, of the meaning, close at hand. I have little doubt that my friend, Mr. Kelly, when looking out from some height in Guernsey [where we both of us were at the time of the correspondence] for the steamer, in which he was expecting a friend, has sometimes, when he saw her steering into port, made use of the common exclamation, "Here she is!" And what would he have thought, had a friend who heard him looked carefully at every part of the ground within twenty yards of the speaker, and said, "She is not here?" "The Master is here"

(παρεστιν), said Martha to Mary, in John 11:28; and yet, adds John 11:30, "Now Jesus had not yet come into the village," that is, the village where Martha spoke to Mary.

Thus our translators seem to me to have been perfectly right in translating the word ■νεστηκεν as they have in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, the day of the Lord there spoken of being clearly that epoch of time which would be marked by two grand events — one of mercy, one of judgment, the gathering of saints to Himself, and the destruction of the man of sin — as may undoubtingly be inferred from comparison of 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1. As to the words, σαλευθηναι ■πο του νοος and θρεισθαι, they are surely most naturally to be explained, not as meaning "frightened," but of that agitation of mind and feeling which would indispose them to the calm and proper discharge of the common duties of life. Compare, in Matthew 24:6, the μη θροεισθε. I see nothing whatsoever in this inconsistent with the looking unto the coming of the Son of God. And I am sure I should feel somewhat of its indisposing effect to the common routine of daily duty, had I the fixed persuasion that the Lord had appointed to take me to Himself on the morrow of the present day, whether by the stroke of death, or by His own personal advent.

Yours very faithfully,

E. B. Elliot.] Is it not singular that a paper which many comparatively unlettered Christians have found clear and helpful should have been unintelligible to, and misunderstood by, a man of Mr. E.'s caliber and attainments? Why was this? In my opinion his own erroneous system of thought, along with the lack of the habit of expecting in the word of God perfect accuracy and nice shades of difference, apparently made not the style only but the subject and the evidence difficult to his mind. It is well to note this, the blinding effect of error, even on a saint, as I do not doubt my friend was. How many suffer thus, as little as he suspecting the true cause!

If the words of the apostle in the text most under examination are to be accepted simply and fully, it is certain that the source of agitation and trouble for the Thessalonian brethren, alleged by the Holy Spirit, was the statement, imputed to the apostle himself, not that the Lord's coming was at hand, but that His day was actually there. This is as unequivocally the sense of the apostle's very precise language, as it is the certain truth of God. He is not conjuring them by that concerning which he was about to teach them, but, on the contrary, he entreats them, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him (which he presents, not as two distinct objects, but as a united idea before the mind by the one article, τ■ς), that they should not be soon shaken in mind ("from their mind" may be literal, but is not idiomatic English), nor yet troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as by us [that is, as if it were by us], as [or to the effect] that the day of the Lord is present. That is, he entreats them, by or for the sake of our blessed hope in Christ, who will gather us to Himself on high, that they should not be soon disturbed, or thrown off their balance, nor yet alarmed by the report, falsely attributed to him and a higher than him, that the day of the Lord, the day of judgment for man and the earth, was actually come. This I believe to be the only possible sense of the verses, which also maintains the force of each clause and word as precisely as it exhibits a wise and worthy aim in the sentence as a whole. Mr. Elliott's view confounds that hope by which Paul is beseeching the brethren with the dread scene of judgment, which had been misrepresented and misunderstood as {if it had} already arrived. The true view sustains the Authorized Version of ■π■ρ, "by," which is not only grammatically tenable but exegetically demanded here, if not elsewhere, in the New Testament. It was not the

παρουσ■α but the ■μ■ρα το■ κυρ■ου, which had been misused; and the comfort of the Lord's coming is employed as a motive and means for counteracting the uneasiness created by the false representation that the day was there. No doubt the preposition may, and does often, mean, "in regard to," or "on behalf of," a little stronger than περ■. But the question is the meaning of ■π■ρ, neither in itself, nor in other constructions, but with such words of entreaty as ■ρωτ■ω as distinguished from ■ρωτ■ω περ■, where the sense of "in the place of," or "instead of," is excluded, as here. To me it appears that the precise meaning of ■ρ. ■π■ρ, in such a case as the present, can only be "by reason of," or briefly "by,"' and, if motive be made more prominent, "for the sake of," or briefly "for."

Now the apostle had been setting out in 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 that retributive hour of God's righteous judgment, when He will render tribulation to those that trouble the saints, and to the troubled saints repose at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and on those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. It is His coming, not to receive the saints, and present them to the Father in His house above, but to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed in that day. It is, beyond question, that day of ever-lasting destruction from the Lord's presence and the glory of His might, the day of the Lord, which was said (on the Spirit's warrant, and not a revelation only, but a pretended Pauline epistle) to have even then set in {arrived}, so that the saints in Thessalonica were shaken in mind (which is the true English idiom, as ■π■ το■ νο■ς is the Greek), and troubled. Clearly therefore the contradistinction comes out more and more plainly. It was not the excitement of a premature hope, but the agitation and fear produced by the rumour, and on quasi-apostolic authority too, that that terrible day had really begun. The apostle beseeches them, by the comfortable hope of the one, not to be soon shaken and troubled by the false cry that the other, the day of judgment on the quick {the living}, was come.

Mr. E. reasons against his supposed necessary but inadmissible consequence, that the Thessalonians must in such a case have thought that they, and Paul too, had been left behind by Christ at the first act of His coming, and exposed to the horrors of the second. But it is entirely a mistake, and his own solely. The Thessalonians had no adequate light up to this second epistle on the relative order of these events. From 1 Thess. they knew of Christ's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18), and of the day (1 Thessalonians 5:1-28); but they may, till they got the second epistle, have thought, as so many Christians do even in our day, and did in all ages, that the tribulation of the last times precedes the translation of the saints, and that His day therefore accompanies, if it too does not precede, His coming. Even Bengel affirms the whimsical idea, refuted by this very chapter, that the appearing of our Lord's coming may happen before His coming itself. Now the nature of the thing, as well as its accompaniments, bear a testimony exactly opposed. For the Lord might come without appearing to every eye, but He could not appear without coming. Just so we read in the first verse of this chapter that He will come and gather unto Himself the saints; whereas it is not His coming, but the revelation or appearing of His coming, which is to destroy the lawless one or man of sin. Such is the true moral order, and proved by other scriptures also, as Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:14. He first receives His own, His friends, to Himself by His coming or παρουσ■α; He afterwards executes judgment on His enemies by the appearance of His coming, τ■ ■πιφανε■■ τ■ς παρουσ■ας α■το■. The glorified saints are with Him when He brings in the day, following Him out of heaven as His hosts or armies (Revelation 19:14), before the judgment of

the beast and the false prophet, instead of being caught up coincidently with it or after it. Hence, when Christ our life is manifested, it is written that then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory {Colossians 3:4} (not translated to heaven then or subsequently).

Plainly then the Thessalonians had not the least suspicion that Christ had come and taken up the apostle or any one else, nor is this at all the delusion which the apostle is refuting, but what was not at all unnatural for any like them ignorant of the mutual relation of His coming and His day. They feared that that day of darkness and clouds had dawned; and the agitating influence of this the false teachers sought to bring on their souls, availing themselves of a pretended communication of the apostle. We can readily understand that the Christians then were troubled by a panic which has often repeated itself since, even to our own day. One sees in the Old Testament the judgment of a city or land (as in Isaiah 13:1-22 or Isaiah 19:1-25) called the day of the Lord on Babylon or Egypt. So might these unscrupulous teachers seek to use the afflictions of the Thessalonians, which even in his former epistle the apostle feared might furnish an occasion to the tempter. And this apparently they did. See (they might have said) what troubles overwhelm us! It is the day of the Lord already begun. The apostle corrects this — first, by the motive of our hope, the Lord's coming to gather us unto Himself; and, secondly, by elaborate proof, not that His "coming" may not be at any time, but that "the day or appearance of His coming" cannot be till the apostasy (for it is much more than "a falling away") and the man of sin be revealed, which that day is to judge. It was now for the first time to be inferred that the coming precedes the appearance of His coming, as it was afterwards still more manifestly shown in Revelation 4:1-11 compared with Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 20:1-15. And this is corroborated by every word in detail, as well as by the general issue. See the violent but ineffectual effort to get rid of the force of ■ν■στηκεν, the word so unfaithfully rendered "is at hand" by our translators, and even so inconsistently with their own rendering of it in every other occurrence of the same form. Indeed Mr. E. is obliged to own its proper meaning to be "is present" But, argues he, so it is with π■ρεστιν, and such similar words. "They are words which in every language that I am acquainted with are susceptible if the context requires it, of the meaning, close at hand." And then he illustrates the case, with his usual ingenuity, from the language of common life, which he endeavours to confirm by John 11:28-30. But it is not true that the meaning of "presence," is interchangeable with mere "nearness" in any language; they are different ideas, and are expressed by distinct words. We have seen that the New Testament occurrences of the word ■ν■στηκεν do not sustain this notion; nor do any in the LXX, any more than the instances in Liddell and Scott's Lexicon, as the Dean of Rochester has allowed to me. It is wrong therefore to give pending, save in the sense of present, begun, if "pending" will bear it. It is time present, not instant. And so of all exact versions now, German or of English, as of Meyer, Dean Alford, Bishop Ellicott, etc. But what strikes one as peculiar is, that Mr. E.'s illustration and use of John 11:1-57 proves nothing, save against his argument. For, according to his own showing, the person or thing had actually removed from the place where either had been, had traversed the space that separated, and had arrived at the place where the person was whom it was proposed to reach, though not to the precise spot on which he stood. To take the case used, my friend would have really steamed from England (or France, as it might be), crossed the sea, and entered Guernsey roads, when one might exclaim of the packet {ship}, Here she is! So in the scripture cited: our blessed Lord had left where He stayed two days after receiving the message, had traversed the way which constituted the distance thence to Bethany, and had reached the locality or district, though not yet in the village.

Now it was precisely the error of those who were then misleading the Thessalonians to say that the day of the Lord had thus come, ■ν■στηκεν. Mr. E. wishes to show that they taught it would soon be coming, or was impending, a sense in which neither π■ρεστιν nor ■ν■στηκεν is ever used in any correct writing, sacred or profane. A vast change is supposed to have taken place in both cases, which it is his thought and aim to deny. There is therefore not the least ground for his reasoning in the text or the illustration. They destroy his own argument, and leave our translators wholly unjustified in rendering ■ν■στηκεν "is at hand." Even if the laxity of common life allowed of our saying, Here he is! when he had not begun to move from a distant land (which is the true way of stating the question, not when he had come to the immediate neighborhood though not the exact spot), how strange that such looseness of language should be transferred to an apostle's inspired repudiation of an error! Nor is there, so far as I am acquainted with the subject, the smallest ground from scripture to affirm that the day of the Lord includes the gathering of the saints to Christ, though Mr. E. ventured to say that clearly it is thus marked. Not so; the day of the Lord brings judgment on man's evil on earth, and is never said to gather saints to Christ in heaven; and the comparison of 2 Thessalonians 2:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:8 proves the difference of "the coming" from "the manifestation of the coming" or day of the Lord. Where are the scriptures which connect the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord? I know of none. It is assumption and error.

Again, it is unfounded that σαλευθ■ναι ■π■ το■ νο■ς and θροε■σθαι have the most distant reference to the excitement of hope, as the ordinary misinterpretation implies; they mean just such disturbances of mind as in Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7. Mr. E. says "not as meaning frightened"; but far better scholars than he say the express contrary. "The verb θρο■ω, derived from ΘΡΟΕΜΑΙ, and connected with τρ■ω; compare Donalds. [Cratyl. sec. 272] properly implies 'clamorem tumultuantem edere' (Schott), and thence by a natural transition that terrified state (ταραχ■ζεσθαι Zonaras), which is associated with, and gives rise to, such kind of outward manifestations" (Bp. Ellicott's Comm. in loc.). To suppose the Christian's joy in the anticipation of meeting the Son of God, the Bridegroom of the bride, to be expressible by the same terms as those of perturbation or alarm which might be produced by hearing of wars and rumours of wars, affliction, tribulation, etc., is not to me the evidence of a sound judgment in divine things, but of the reverse. And I trust the Lord was better to my late friend ere he was called away than to leave him under that lack of peace and happy expectation and rest in His love, which his last sentence discloses. Indeed it is the conviction that this confusion of the day with the coming of the Lord is as destructive to the soul's enjoyment of the Lord, as it is to real intelligence in scripture and notably in the prophetic word, which makes one feel the importance of showing how it wrought even in so pious a soul as the late Mr. E. B. Elliott. Need there be any delicacy now in using his words for the profit of the living?

[Letter II Sept. 5.

Dear Friend,

You ask, with the emphasis of italics to the question, where are "the scriptures which connect the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord?" I should suppose 1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Php 1:6; Php 1:10; Php 2:16, may be regarded as obvious examples in point. It is to the day of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Corinthians are to be preserved blameless. It is at

the day of Christ that the Philippian converts are to be the boast of the apostle Paul. And so on.

Thus I see nothing in your remarks to alter my opinion as to the παρουσ■α of Christ, the day of Christ or day of the Lord being used with reference to the same era in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.

Nor, again, do I see reason from your remarks to doubt of the parallelism of παρεστι and the ενεστηκεν, or of the θροεισθε in Matthew 24:1-51 with the same word in 2 Thessalonians 2:2. And the argument you urge, from the fact of unstable men having been drawn by heretical teachers into heresy, to the fact of faithful believing men, like the Thessalonian Christians, being seduced into grievous heresy, seems to me unmaintainable.

Thus, on the whole, I remain in the clear conviction that the usual view of the apostle's meaning in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 is the correct one.

But, dear friend, I like to dwell on the points in which we agree rather than on those on which we differ. I trust I may be found united with you in "the day of Christ." And in that hope I beg you to believe me Yours very sincerely,

E. B. Elliott.

We leave to-morrow morning. I write this, as I may not find you at home when I call to take leave. I return the books you were so kind as to lend me, with my thanks, retaining what I think you kindly allowed me to retain.]

* * * * * My remarks on the second letter need not be long. Not a single word in a single text referred to by Mr. E. connects the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord. We have in 1 and 2 Corinthians 1:1-24 their manifestation as unimpeachable in that day, and the apostle's joy in them then, whatever the exercises and need of patient grace now. Still less does Php 1:6; Php 1:10 touch the question, which is rather Paul's confidence in God's completing in them the good work begun unto (or, as we say, for, and even against) that day; but not a hint of "gathering" them to Christ then. Again, Php 2:16 is the earnest desire of the devoted servant of Christ that the saints at Philippi should be a boast for him in Christ's day that he had not run nor laboured in vain. In short, the manifestation of our responsible walk and services, and hence the joy and reward of faithfulness will be in that day; but of our gathering to Christ in these texts (no doubt the most apt Mr. E. could find) not a whisper. To my mind the serious thing is the insensibility of such a man to their force. For the same confusion which made him imagine that these texts connect the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord prevented him from even comprehending the bearing of 2 Thessalonians 2:1, as distinguished from 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The argument I urged on Mr. E. from 2 Timothy 2:1-26 must have been somewhat to this effect. It is evident that later on Hymenaeus and Philetus, and the like, had, as to the truth, so far missed the mark as to say that the resurrection had taken place already. They probably resolved it into resurrection with Christ (or possibly "higher life") as a present state, denying the true and blessed hope, and so had settled down into a life of ease, a millennium now, instead of awaiting Christ from and for heaven in suffering and testimony meanwhile. Thus was the faith of some overthrown. And so, in all likelihood, it may have been in Thessalonica. The misleaders were really bolder there, since they alleged the Spirit, nay, a word, and even apostolic letter, for the alarming impression that the day of the Lord had arrived. But it is as easy to conceive a quasi-spiritual or figurative force given to that day as to the resurrection, and

real believers being upset by either. I can only suppose that Mr. E. did not take in the idea; else he must surely have admitted that the analogy is plain, and not maintainable only but rather irresistible, unless I greatly deceive myself.

One thing is certain, that, even among real scholars, not to speak of enlightened Christians, "the usual view" of the last clause of 2 Thessalonians 2:2 is now abandoned generally as incorrect and untenable in every point of view, Mr. E. being one of its latest defenders among men of any weight. The "usual view" had so filled my friend's mind, that he never could get a clear apprehension of the overwhelming weight of proof against it. Another "usual view," endorsed even by Hammond, Bishop Newton, Paley, and others, that the clause before the last means that the Thessalonians were misled through a misconstruction of the first epistle of the apostle is of less consequence but equally mistaken. It was a suppositious epistle, forged to convey the error that the day of the Lord was present. Such is the only meaning fairly deducible from the words, ■πιστολ■ς ■ς δ■ ■μ■ν : and so even Chrysostom, πεπλασμ■νην [not πρ■την] ■πιστολ■ν ■πιδε■κνυον ■ς ■π■ το■ Πα■λου. (Comment. in Epp. Pauli, Hom. iii., v. 465, ed. Field.) As to this point the late Mr. G. S. Faber is quite right, I see, in his "Sacred Calendar," iii. 436, 437. Our proper hope is the Lord's coming to receive us to Himself, and to be with Him in the Father's house. We shall also appear with Him in glory, and reign with Him over the earth. But, in order to appear with Him when He appears in glory, scripture shows that we shall be caught up to join Him above. Then that a very grave work in judgment, but not without mercy, for Jews and Gentiles, proceeds on earth, while we are with Him there, is taught in Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24; Revelation 19:1-21, before He appears, and we with Him, in glory and to judgment.

Chapter 48

04A.00 God's Inspiration of the Scrpitures

Introduction Chapter 1 — Divine Authority Chapter 2 — Apostolic Doctrine Chapter 3 — Its Uniformity Chapter 4 — The Human Element Chapter 5 — Divine Design:

1 — Genesis 2 — Exodus 3 — Leviticus 4 — Numbers 5 — Deuteronomy 6 — Joshua 7 — Judges

8 — Ruth 9 — 1 Samuel 10 — 2 Samuel 11 — 1 Kings 12 — 2 Kings 13 — 1 Chronicles 14 — 2 Chronicles

15 — Ezra 16 — Nehemiah 17 — Esther

18 — Job 19 — Psalms 20 — Proverbs 21 — Ecclesiastes 22 — Solomon’sSong 23 — Isaiah 24a — Jeremiah 24b — Lamentations 25 — Ezekiel 26 — Daniel 27 — The Minor Prophets 28 — Matthew

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31 — John

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04A.01 Part 1

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 1

W. Kelly.

INTRODUCTION. No considerate Christian will question the momentous weight of Inspiration, both in itself and as it bears on every question arising in things divine. It is no disparagement to scripture that we need also a new nature, a purged conscience, and a heart purified by faith. Let us add the Holy Spirit given, as He is now, to know the only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He sent. For this is life eternal, inseparable from the object of our faith, of the Father’s delight, and of the Holy Spirit’s testimony. "He that believeth hath life eternal;" he has life in Christ the Son, as truly as the apostle John, who wrote expressly to the family of God for all, babes no less than fathers in Christ, that they might know that, believing on the name of His Son, they have life eternal (1 John 5:13). When thus assured of a portion precious beyond reckoning, we are in a condition to appreciate the scriptures as becomes children of God. What a contrast between the rich grace that shines in Christ, the personal Word, for every believer to enjoy, and the hesitating spirit among the baptised to appropriate these divine communications! Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! didst Thou not bless every child of Thine with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ? Are they not today for the most part questioning whether they are Thine or not? Are they not in doubt whether their sins be really all forgiven for His name’s sake? And is not this painful uncertainty as plain in the third or fourth century after Christ, as in the eighteenth or nineteenth? And why is it, but that souls then as now were in general as feeble in believing God’s written warrant as in receiving God’s salvation by Christ and His worn? How sad that a saint should even seem to be always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth!

Undoubtedly in God’s mercy there are all over the world simple-hearted believers, in the aggregate a great multitude, who rest with cloudless confidence in the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ; who accept for themselves, and attest for all others that believe, the absolute reliableness of God’s love and Christ’s redemption; who know the Holy Spirit’s presence with and in us for ever. Hidden ones too far beyond our thoughts there may have been, in all ages since our Lord died and rose, to profit by faith; whereas the recognised leaders prove by their remains how quickly and far the christian profession departed from their proper privileges and divine joys. For it would be intolerable to doubt that those who express what prevailed were as real in Catholic times of old, as in Anglican or Puritan times nearer us. Far be the thought! The fall from grace was deep and wide-spread; the truth was clouded with dark traditions of men, ancient and modern. Scripture itself is plain how soon such changes came In even among the best-taught confessors of Christ. And the inspired men, Paul and Peter, John and Jude, prepare us for profound departure without one promise of restoration, still less of progress, for Christendom. These facts accentuate the all-importance of the written word, which then as now is the standard of truth and the sole means of recovery, applied by God’s Spirit to remove obstructions, that Christ might give them light once

more, yea that He should be formed in them.

Thus it is sadly, humblingly, true that God has been dishonoured throughout christian times by unbelief of their best blessings in those who have borne the Lord's name; as, not least of all, we were warned of false teachers among them as of false prophets in Israel. In teachers and taught our own day beholds the bold and growing development of what is nothing less than sheer and systematic infidelity. This assumes the euphemistic name of "higher criticism," and puts forward the plea of fuller inquiries into the literary history of the scriptures. If we listen to themselves, it is in conflict neither with Christianity as a whole nor with any articles of the faith. But it is really a system as imaginative for the process they call the building up of (at least the earlier books of) the Bible, as is the Darwinian hypothesis for excluding God from creating species in the natural world, and for assigning this process to Time, the late Mr. D.'s great god, and to Natural Selection, his goddess. When souls are thus seduced to abandon the divine authority of scripture and to deny its inspiration in any real sense, it is no consolation to feel that deceivers are themselves deceived. Nor indeed is there a fact more notorious, than that the men beguiled to disbelieve God's word readily show themselves the most credulous of mankind,

Take an instance clear and sufficient. In hardly any thing are the "higher critics" more unanimous or jubilant than as to Astruc's theory of Elohistic and Jehovistic documents, and the audacious consequences deduced from that assumption. But if it have any apparent sense as applied to the Pentateuch, how does it bear on Job? How on the Psalms? on Proverbs? on Ecclesiastes? or on the prophets, say Jonah for example? Did then Ezra and Nehemiah (or the inspired writers of these books) compile the annals of their own days from Elohistic and Jehovistic documents? If the theory hung together, to this absurdity it would fairly lead. The truth of God, conveyed by the admirable propriety with which inspiration employs these and other divine names, is wholly lost by such superficial guess-work. But this short introduction is not a suitable occasion to go into the minute and full proofs, on the one hand of the rationalist blunder, and on the other of the divine wisdom and beauty displayed in the inspired choice of the divine designations, in all scripture from Genesis to the Revelation, as well as in the books of Moses.

These considerations make it an urgent duty to survey the subject afresh, and with such a measure of precision and comprehensiveness as grace may supply for guarding souls in this increasingly evil day. The Christian wants divine certainty in his relations with God. Probability is all that man, as man, seeks or can have because he knows not God. But believers have ever craved and ever taken the wholly different ground of divine certainty by God's word. They had it and were blessed in it by faith long before there was a single scripture. Abel knew it, and Enoch, and Noah before the deluge, not to speak of other elders conspicuous in Hebrews 11:1-40 for the various characteristics of their faith. So it is with all that are taught of God. All rest on His word, whatever the special result in each by grace. It wrought long before there was a people of God like Israel. It remained vigorous when, on the temporary ruin of the Jews, God formed the church the body of Christ, calling out of Gentiles as well as a remnant of Israel. Thus every believer as of old, only now with immensely superior privileges, stands on ground of divine certainty, and not on probability however reinforced or strong.

It is here that the Tractarian party proved the unsoundness of their position. So Dr. J. H. Newman lets us know in his "Apologia." Mr. J. Keble, with all his melodious strains, was no better in

principle. They were alike and all along on a plane which inclined to Romanism, the former being more consistent than the latter in going to Rome at last Hence N.'s attempt to supplement probability, "the guide of life" (61, 62), with faith and love within, to give it more force (69). Of natural life it may be so with conscience as the monitor. The question is of our new life in Christ, of which philosophy takes no account. But no assemblage of concurring and converging helps of whatever kind can raise probability to absolute certainty. God's testimony received by faith does, and alone can, give divine certainty. The Cardinal though professedly at the opposite pole of thought, was really in the same quagmire as his sceptical brother, Prof. F. W. N. It is the case with all rationalists, be they superstitious or profane. Their ground is human, not divine. There are found the "higher critics" with any others who renounce God for man. Reasoning may predominate here, imagination and religious sentiment there; as others betake themselves to erudite speculation. But in no case is it the faith of God's elect, even if ensnared believers yield to it. What the word, and now the written word, was given to produce by the living operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart, is divine certainty. But it is exactly what the "higher criticism" tends to destroy, even more directly than do the rank weeds of superstition which choke the good seed.

Such are the two schools which are today struggling for the mastery. They unite, as we have seen, in untiring effort to withdraw men if they can, from simple thorough subjection to God's word in faith. Of this they are alike jealous, and alike they cast scorn on it, though such faith alone becomes man, alone honours God. For it finds the God-given centre in Christ, full cleansing by His work, life's exercise in His service, and its joy in His love and the Father's, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nor is this all. For by one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, and therein have our place and fellowship as worshippers, no less than as saints, one with another. Those on the ground of probability can never breathe this pure atmosphere freely; they have never emerged from the fog of nature. They betray their dark state by their inability, whether natural or religious rationalists, even to understand what is meant by such a scripture as "the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have no more conscience of sins." Yet it is simply the common christian position in this respect (but to both those classes unintelligible), because it is the fruit of Christ's perfecting work, made known to the Christian only, above man's intellect and beyond his conscience, though faith enjoys its divine certainty. Confidence (one may not say faith) in the church can no more impart it, than reliance upon criticism higher or lower. It is the will of God now established, the work of Christ now finished and accepted, and the witness of the Holy Spirit now received in full assurance of faith according to scripture. Hence all joy and peace in believing is as unknown to the gloomy man of superstition, as to the airy higher critic.

GOD'S INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER 1.

DIVINE AUTHORITY.

We open the Bible. Its first words are necessarily either a revelation or an imposture, either God's word or man's guess claiming His authority. A middle ground here is impossible. The first and in extent the greatest of all miracles is revealed. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There is no specific date given. It is expressly indefinite. Many have confounded Genesis 1:3 with Genesis 1:1, with feelings some hostile, others friendly, to revelation Both were inexcusably wrong, because both carelessly overlooked the scripture before their eyes. For these

words of God, even were there no others confirmatory, affirm in ver. 1 the original creation of the universe, then in Genesis 1:2 its chaotic condition. The earth was not created empty and waste when first called into being (Isaiah 45:18). It may have become so often, if able geologists are to be heeded. It certainly was so immediately before the days of man's world began, which commenced, not with creating light, but with its activity renewed after ruin and darkness. "And God said, Light be, and light was."

Thus Genesis 1:2 does not describe God's creation like Genesis 1:1, but a state of utter contrast with it, when total disorder ensued for the earth. Neither the one fact nor the other called for more than passing notice, as being physical and in no direct way the sphere of God's moral dealings with man. Yet was it of moment to have facts of deep interest briefly disclosed, which were entirely beyond the ken of man, lost in contending dreams of eternal matter in the West, and of emanations in the East, illusion and falsehood both of them into which evolution, the fashion of our day, no less surely entices unwary souls. Whatever of detail Genesis 1 may furnish is solely about the formation of the world as it was prepared for the human race; eventually for Christ the Man of God's counsels. It was no speculation of some "Hebrew Descartes" or Newton, but God's account of His own work by His servant and prophet Moses. It is worthy of God, deigning in love to communicate what man could not discover and yet ought to know.

Science is powerless to speak of the beginning of things. So the inductive philosophers own, ashamed as they may well be of all the cosmogonists, Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek, Oriental, or any others. There stands God's revelation, simple, majestic, and complete for His purpose, without even a rival throughout all ages, against which the pride of man can allege nothing but his own errors of haste and misapprehension. How could such a chapter have been written but by divine revelation? Search, ye men of science, ransack all your stores; scrutinise the reports and transactions of the most renowned societies. Did not your wisest own himself but as a child picking up a pebble here and there on the ocean shore? Did not he own reverently this inspired record of creation? But is there not what some foolishly call a "second account" in Genesis 2:1-25? Genesis 1:1-31 reveals simply that which Elohim "created to make," closing with the sabbath He blessed and hallowed (Genesis 2:1-3). Then follows from Genesis 2:4 Jehovah Elohim presenting man, formed specially and in moral relationship to Himself, and so not merely (as in Genesis 1:1-31) the head of creation. Hence it is that here only, not before, we have the garden with every tree pleasant and good for food, and the trees of solemn import to humanity life and responsibility — the last, a moral test applied to a condition of innocence; man exercising his lordship over all the lower creation, yet with no like helpmate; and then woman's peculiar formation out of man. These things and more pertain to God as moral governor (Jehovah Elohim), and therefore demand as they have a new section of scripture with a new and suited name of God.

How quickly the fall brought in death and ruin on man, an outcast from paradise! But grace revealed the Second man, the woman's Seed, to crush the old serpent, the tempter. Clearly then, far from being another and inconsistent narrative, Genesis 2:4 as a new subject begins the moral trial of Adam, and in it his wife too playing so grave a part, in that scene of paradise formed, no less than themselves, to give it the best effect in His wisdom Who put man to the proof.

Hence Genesis 3:1-24 under the same divine title reveals the result, so glorifying to God, so humbling to the creature, yet a needed key to all that followed here below, with assured hope of

the conqueror of Satan in a bruised Saviour to be born of woman. It continues what began in Genesis 2:1-25. In all the Bible there is not, save in Christ's person and work, a fact so momentous as the fall, nor a revelation more essential than Genesis 2:1-25, Genesis 3:1-24. God alone could have given us the truth as there made known. It is monstrous to conceive the guilty pair adequate witnesses of all said and done there. Who then else but God?

There it is, the unadorned truth, still more profound morally than Genesis 1:1-31, in Christ revealing the grace of God to the utmost, God's glory in His person with man's ultimate deliverance, and thus of the highest moment to the salvation, well-being, and happiness of the believer. All comes out in plain facts, such as a child could take in, yet involving principles truer and deeper than any ideas evolved by the most philosophic of mankind Herein lies an essential difference between revealed truth and all its rivals. Take Vedaism, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Lamaism, or aught else in India and the adjacent lands; take Confucianism, Taoism, Foism, in China; take Sabaism, Jovism, Fetishism ancient and modern: can any one of these systems allege a single fact as its basis? The religion of the Bible, Old or New Testament, Judaism or Christianity, rests on distinct realities, not on mere ideas of man's mind.

Whether a partial dealing of a moral nature by law within a particular people, or the full world-wide revelation of grace and truth in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's word was the divine communication of immensely momentous facts. The related divinely inspired writings are precisely those which rationalists, claiming to be Christians, devote their efforts to discredit, dislocate, and destroy, like Pagan philosophers of old. Like fallen Adam, I am born and have lived an outcast from God. Revelation, God's revelation, His word, is the only possible way of making God known to me. Now rationalism has not, more than Paganism or its philosophy, any just sense of the fall, or of sin, or of God's remedy for it in Christ. Here in the earliest revelation we have the fact unmistakeably brought out in its relation to present government on the earth, with light sufficient for faith to higher and everlasting things, as we see in Abel, Enoch, etc. Nor is it otherwise with the law any more than the promises. As the latter was no mere aspiration proceeding from the heart of the fathers by the Spirit, but an objective revelation made to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob; so still more manifestly was the giving of the law by Moses for the sons of Israel. Not the least detail was left to the genius of that great man: everything was presented and regulated by the commandment of Jehovah. So it is in Christianity, wherein is the revelation to us by the Holy Spirit of what is wholly beyond man's eye, ear, and heart; in the written word is the unswerving standard as well as the richest means of communicating all. All is established on sure and infinite facts; for the Incarnation, the Ministry, the Atoning death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, of the Lord Jesus are grand realities. No doubt, now that the believer's conscience is purged, they may well exercise heart and mind, even to the uttermost by the word and Spirit of God. Still they are facts, attested by divine testimony to God's glory through man and for man, to be made good also in man by faith and love, by experience and obedience, by life-service and worship. There can scarce be a stronger contrast than between law and gospel, the earthly calling and the heavenly. But this at least is common to them both, that their groundwork is one of facts, not mere thoughts of the mind; and these facts are communicated to us with the known certainty of God's mind and word, such as the Holy Spirit alone could give.

Hence we may observe there is no formal claim in the opening of the Bible. The great of this world may enter with a flourish of trumpets, naturally if not necessarily. Not so the divine record. Who

could speak of creation but God? or tell it adequately in its relational light but Himself taking His relative name to His people? Who but He in both ways could fully let us know the cause, history, and consequences of the deluge? Who else, what led to the rise of nations, languages, etc.? or to the call of Abram and the fathers who followed of His chosen and separate people? Yet even here throughout we have "Elohim said" and wrought; and so with His name as "Jehovah," wherever suited and requisite. He is an enemy who denies its absolute truth and divine authority.

Then comes Exodus, where the redemption of His people appears first, with the bitter bondage and oppression that preceded and brought judgment on their enemies, and His dwelling in their midst that followed, with the law but not without the shadow of the good things to come. Here accordingly we have His name of relationship specially bestowed (Exodus 6:3). Here yet more abundantly "Jehovah said" and acted. But, whether historically, or when His nature is introduced, it is "God" as such, i.e. Elohim. No man or varying document has the least to do with this, but His own wisdom in the inspired word. The book must be a romance or imposture like the Koran, if it be not God through Moses. The peculiarities of it (such as reserving to Exodus 30:1-38, where it even looks out of order, the altar of incense, the atonement-money, the holy anointing oil, and the holy compound for Jehovah) flow from the deep design of God, instead of the blunder of legends, or the incapacity of an editor, to which the imbecility of "higher criticism" rashly and ignorantly ascribes them. The repetitions, as of the sabbath, etc., which they regard as self-evidence of several scribes, are due to a like divine design; and those only learn and profit who bow to divine authority.

Leviticus is even more manifestly "Jehovah" speaking from first to last, with the least of history in it, but quite as manifestly by divine authority. It deals with access to Him, and hence begins with sacrifices and offerings, and priesthood. Thence it treats of unclean things and state; of the central truth of the Day of Atonement, and of blood reserved to God; then of evil relationships and holy ones; of the feasts, etc.

Numbers is a book too varied for so brief a notice as the present; but it treats of the people's journeyings, and its characteristic moral facts are selected by the inspiring Spirit for God's permanent record, above all the wisdom of the writer or of any man at any time. The apostle in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 declares the typical character of the events recorded, for which God alone was competent, to say nothing of copious and special injunctions to Moses, to Aaron, and to both, or of the wondrous predictions Jehovah spoke through Balaam compelled to bless Israel.

Deuteronomy has not only its task of rehearsal in a way beyond human thought, but is anticipative of their possession of the land, and solemnly insists on obedience to Jehovah's word, and on a covenant distinct from that of Horeb. But we need not say more than express the horror which a believer unsophisticated by the spirit of the age must and ought to feel at the blasphemous denial of the N.T. testimony to Moses as the writer, and of its divine authority.

It would be too much to glance at every book, as we have at those which compose the Pentateuch. But all else in the O.T. as in the New has the same authority of God. Hence the O.T. scriptures are called as a whole by the apostle Paul (Romans 3:2) "the oracles of God;" as Moses is said by Stephen (Acts 7:38) to have received "living oracles" (not dead legends) to give unto God's people. And the Lord Jesus when risen said to the disciples, "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the

law of Moses and prophets and psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44). This covers the entire Hebrew O.T. as the Jews present it to us. And herein the Latin church has proved a faithless guardian by adding apocryphal Greek writings to that Canon, which even Jerome in his Prologus Galeatus to the Vulgate admits to be not properly included. So similar unfaithfulness was essayed in early days by reading publicly uninspired writings, and joining them, as an Appendix, to the copies of the Greek N. T. But even Rome did not commit itself to so gross an imposture as this last. The great apostle in his First Epistle to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:18) quotes Deuteronomy 25:9 and Luke 10:7 as "the scripture." He might have quoted Matthew 10:10 from one an apostle like himself; he was led of God to quote from one who was a prophet, not an apostle. For we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). this stamps Luke as no mere amanuensis expressing Paul's mind, according to the tradition of Eusebius, but as an inspired writer whom the apostle cites when writing in the Spirit. So 2 Peter 3:15-16 shows us the apostle of the circumcision referring in this inspired document to Paul's Epistles as part of the scriptures. Thus we learn the unerring and far-seeing provision of allusion, which might to some seem casual, but is the fruit of infinite wisdom, and weightier to faith than a world of human reasonings. Indeed the intrinsic character of the N.T. is so unequivocally self-evidencing, that only the pride of unbelief in Jew or Gentile can account for one who accepts the Old as divine hesitating about the New as no less.

CHAPTER 2.

APOSTOLIC DOCTRINE,

We are not left to facts however momentous, nor to incidental statements though abundant, plain, and reliable. The N.T. pronounces the most distinct and conclusive doctrine on so all-important a subject For it concerns not man only but God's honour, and the character of His word in both Testaments so called. "For thou hast magnified thy word [saying] above all thy name" (Psalms 138:1-8) Let us weigh a few of these testimonies. The Lord Himself in John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33 prepared the way not for fresh promises, but for the fullest revelation of the truth by the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit. It was indeed to comprehend the power of enjoying every privilege and of supplying every need for the new creation, for the children of God, once scattered, now to be gathered together into one. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself, but whatsoever things he shall hear shall he speak; and he shall declare to you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine and shall declare it to you." He had already announced that the Paraclete or Advocate, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father would send in His name, should teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that He said to them. At Pentecost He came and made all this good.

1 Corinthians 2:1-16 is remarkably full as well as precise. The O.T. left "secret things" belonging to God, which were then unrevealed: so intimated the law (Deuteronomy 29:29); and the greatest of the prophets acknowledged that it was not theirs to lift the veil (Isaiah 64:4). The apostle refers to this last, and contrasts the silence of old with what the Holy Spirit was now disclosing. "But to us God revealed [them] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God. For who of men knoweth the things of the man, except the spirit of the man that is in him? Thus also the things of God knoweth no one except the Spirit of God. But we received not the spirit of

the world but the Spirit that is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God; which [things] also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in [those] Spirit-taught, communicating spirituals by spirituals. But a natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know [them] because they are spiritually examined. But the spiritual examineth all things, while he is examined by no one. For who knew Jehovah's mind that he shall teach Him? But we have Christ's mind" (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

Here in fact is the whole case. God by His Spirit revealed what had been hidden, even His depths, which He only knows. We, says the apostle, received His Spirit that the things freely given to us by Him we may know as they are. The first is revelation of the truth, of His counsels. Next comes the making known to others what God thus revealed: "Which things also we speak not in words taught of man's wisdom but in Spirit-taught, expounding spiritual [things] by spiritual [words]." Thirdly, follows the necessary spiritual condition to apprehend them. For a natural man neither receives nor can know what is scanned spiritually. It is the Spirit of God Who works in the Christian, the last stage, as He wrought in the first and the second. Thus we have God's gracious power by His Spirit, first in revealing divine things, next in communicating them verbally, and lastly in real reception or communion. Thereby have we Christ's mind, beyond even prophets of old. The chief question lies in the word (1 Corinthians 2:13) translated "comparing." As it undoubtedly has this meaning in 2 Corinthians 10:12, it was a natural temptation to understand it similarly here. But notoriously words are modified by their context; and as we have no other occurrence in the N. T., we must search into the usage of the LXX or the like. For the sense of "comparing" is wholly unsuitable to the intermediate process, of which the apostle treats, though it might well form part of that which pertains to the reception or understanding of what was already written. Now in the Septuagint the most prevailing application of the word in its cognate forms is to the expounding or explanation of what God was pleased to reveal (Genesis 40:8; Genesis 40:12; Genesis 40:16; Genesis 40:18; Genesis 40:22; Genesis 41:12; Genesis 41:15), as in vision or dream (Daniel 2:2; Daniel 2:5-7; Daniel 2:9; Daniel 2:16; Daniel 2:24-26; Daniel 2:30; Daniel 2:36; Daniel 2:45; Daniel 4:3-4; Daniel 4:6; Daniel 4:14-17; Daniel 4:21; Daniel 5:7-8, Daniel 5:13, Daniel 5:16, Daniel 5:18, Daniel 5:20, Daniel 5:28; Daniel 7:16).* As however in our text it is no question of a dream or vision to be interpreted, the sense naturally admits of a larger modification, and hence in this instance requires "communicating" or some such equivalent.

* It is also used in Numbers 15:34 with the sense of "determined," or "decided." This accordingly and perfectly falls in with the bearing of the clause and the demands of the context. For the clause is occupied, not with the spiritual man's apprehension of what is propounded, but with the conveying it to him in words taught by the Spirit. They were as to this expressly not left to man's wisdom or ability. Not only divine ideas were seen in the Spirit, but moreover the wording was no less taught by the Spirit. Herein "comparing" has no propriety and is therefore inadmissible. And though "interpreting," "expounding," or "determining" might convey the sense in substance, none of them seems to give it at this stage so unambiguously as "communicating." The connected words also acquire a definite force, free from the liability to different meanings which add nothing of moment. For "comparing" opens the door to vague and uncertain adjuncts; whereas with "communicating" the sense is fixed to "spiritual [things] by spiritual [words]." He had already spoken of the things of God, here designated "spiritual things," and he had also treated of words Spirit-taught; now brought together briefly in communicating "spiritual [things] by spiritual [words]."

"To spiritual men" would be premature in 1 Corinthians 2:13; for he takes up this question only in the verses that follow. His latest Epistle (2 Timothy 3:1-17) gave the apostle the fitting occasion to lay down the distinct and full dogmatic decision of the Holy Spirit on the scriptures. He had himself been raised up, not only as "minister of the gospel" but as "minister of the church," to fill up the word of God, as he tells us in Colossians 1:23-25. To Timothy he writes in view of difficult times to prevail in the last days, men who presented its evil traits being already there to turn away from. For if they had a form of piety, they denied its power. They had their prototypes in those who withstood Moses, and their folly should be quite manifest to all, as theirs too became. But Timothy had followed up Paul's teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions he endured, and the Lord delivered him out of all. But wicked men and impostors shall advance to worse, leading and led astray. "But abide thou in the things thou didst learn and wast assured of, knowing of whom thou didst learn, and that from a babe thou knowest sacred writ that is able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

Here we learn the safeguard to be in no way the church's witness; for therein it is that we see the awful spectacle of a veneered Christian form, yet a moral heathenism, with hypocrisy added, the grossest ways only concealed or withdrawn (cf. Romans 1:1-32). The man of God rests on no Unnamed one, great or small. He was well aware of whom he learnt the truth, even the apostles; as he thoroughly knew what sort of life was his with whom he had the closest intimacy. For what is teaching without practice akin? Here it was maintained in face of persecutions and sufferings, with the marked deliverances of the Lord throughout; as indeed all should expect persecution who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus Thus was manifested a marked difference in the later revelation as compared with the earlier. For its witnesses and instruments were contemporaries, bringing out the truth finally and together by the Spirit after Christ's advent and redemption; as the earlier writers had done their piece-meal work, spread over more than a thousand years, yet with a unity most marked. But was it not the O.T. that Timothy knew from a babe? Unquestionably. Would any one with wicked heart of unbelief thence seek to question or lower the N.T.? Let him learn that the apostle, while upholding God's ancient oracles as "sacred writ" (?e?? ???μμata), is careful to affirm in the most comprehensive terms the divine authority of all, or rather "every," scripture, not old merely but new. For he reserves the due appropriated word, ??af?, which he declares in its every part to be inspired of God, or God-breathed, as is no other writing. It runs through the four Gospels, the Acts, and the apostolic Epistles in this sense alone, singular and plural. The more general sense was expressed by ???μμa, a writing, which might mean a "bill" (Luke 16:6-7), or "letter" in the abstract (Romans 2:27; Romans 2:29, Romans 7:6; 2 Corinthians 3:6), "alphabetic characters" (Luke 23:38; 1 Corinthians 3:7; Galatians 6:4), "epistles" (Acts 28:28), "letters" or learning (John 7:15; Acts 26:24), or "writings" (John 5:47), which needed the epithet ?e??, sacred, etc. to stamp them as scriptures. But ??af? in Greek N. T. usage means nothing else, even without the article here or elsewhere, as our idiom also bears.

"Every scripture [is] God-breathed, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped completely for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Revisers, like some others, take "inspired of God," not as the predicate but as qualifying the subject; and the clause would then run, "Every scripture inspired of God [is] also profitable." But who will say that this is the natural meaning? who can deny that it

involves a twofold awkwardness, but both by withholding the understood copula where one cannot but look for it, and by supposing it where it jars with the flow of the sentence? None of the constructions within or without the N. T. cited by Dean Alford approaches the one before us. One near in some respects is 1 Timothy 4:4, where it would be intolerable to make ?a??? (good) part of the subject. Still nearer perhaps is Hebrews 4:13, where nobody doubts that "naked and laid open" is the true predicate; if so, "God-breathed and profitable" ought to be thus taken here. The truth appears to be that the conjunction ?a? though indubitably genuine was overlooked by early versions, as the Memphitic, Peschito-Syr., and many of the Latin copies, besides the Clem. Vulgate: so too some fathers Greek and Latin. This error necessitated, one may say, the view that "God-breathed" belonged to the subject. Other Latin copies, with the Gothic, Harklean-Syr., Arm. and Aeth., interpreted ?a? in the sense of "also" as introducing the predicate. Taken thus, ?a? is here feeble, and so superfluous that it was easily forgotten; whereas, wherever it is correctly so taken, it has an emphatic or supplementary force, as in Luke 1:36, Romans 8:29; Romans 8:34, Galatians 4:7. It would certainly become those who contend for their construction to produce a sentence where a like severance occurs, or indeed can be, between two adjectives ostensibly connected by a conjunction.

But, if possibly allowed as grammatical, can this rendering be counted tenable on internal grounds? For if ?e?p?e?st?? be treated as part of the subject, it must be taken either as an assumption, or as a condition. If it be assumed that scripture is God. inspired, nothing is gained by those who favour so harsh a construction. The sense is substantially alike, whether you assume or assert the inspiration of every scripture. But if the aim be to understand a condition (i.e. "if divinely inspired," rather than "being divinely inspired)," you are confronted with the acknowledged fact that ??af? in the N. T. is appropriated to scripture and spoken of no other writing. Hence the conditional construction, in order to apply, contradicts the known usage, and would require the wholly unauthorised sense of mere "writing:" "every writing, if inspired of God, is also profitable," etc. If we understand ?., as we must, in the sense of "scripture," and take the epithet with the subject, we gain nothing but a strangely incoherent phrase, yet in substance agreeing with its natural sense: "every scripture, being inspired of God, is also profitable," etc., as in fact Origen long ago took it, but not Athanasius, nor Greg. Nyss, nor Chrysostom, who held as the A.V. The R. V., whether intentionally or not, is ambiguous: "every scripture inspired of God [is] also profitable," etc. If it was not meant to raise a doubt, why was it so left? If it was, is it possible to conceive an object more opposed to the context? For the Spirit of God is furnishing the invaluable and needed safeguard against the difficult times of the last days; and after dwelling among the rest on the fact of Timothy’s privilege in knowing from a babe the sacred writ of the O.T., he crowns all with the universal principle (which applies to the N.T. no less than to the O., and to what might yet be written as well as to what was), "every scripture [is] God-inspired, and profitable for teaching," etc. The apostle gives first, as was most reverent and worthy, its relation to God, the Author of this incomparable boon as of all others; next, its profitable uses for the blessing of the man of God. For as no creature but man in virtue of his spirit can know the things of man, no more can one know the things of God save by the Spirit of God, Who both revealed and communicated them, and enables the believer to discern them, as we have already seen. Scripture teaches us in our ignorance, convicts us of obstinacy or errors, corrects us when shirking or straying, and disciplines us in righteousness inward and outward, that in our stand for God we might be complete on every side, and with equal fulness furnished for every good work. A learned dignitary (in loco) speaks of

"God-inspired" not excluding verbal errors or possibly historical inaccuracies, and those of human transmission and transcription. But is not this doubly a mistake of grave import? It would first make the written word a divine guarantee of untruth, both originally as well as in its dissemination. Next, how he could mix up the two points is hard to say; for clerical blunders have nothing to do with the question of God's inspiration, solely with man's responsible use of its fruit. The former is a virtual denial of "God-inspired," unless the God of truth can lie: if He sanction errata in trifling matters, why not in greater things? But "scripture cannot be broken," said the Lord. Compromise is unworthy of faith. "It is written" was His answer to Satan's temptations, and is the guide and standard of all saints since grace gave scripture. It is not a question of man's spirit, but of God's, Who is beyond doubt able to secure the truth absolutely, as the Lord and the apostles and the prophets everywhere assume and assert. To imply such weakness in man as is beyond the power of God is a feeble, not the full, inspiration, taught in the Bible. But when philosophy is sought as the ally of divine truth, the issue cannot but be vacillating, inconsistent, and misleading. "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God." It is a singularly loose comment on "every scripture is also inspired of God," etc. One can scarce doubt that a rendering so halting and strange tempts to a hesitating interpretation, even though not a whisper be given that they hold any scripture to be uninspired. Yet it is a plain and peremptory utterance of the apostle, galling for a version and a comment of no uncertain sound. In ordinary thoughts and discussion on inspiration it is not always remembered that the apostle claims it authoritatively for "every scripture." This goes far beyond what men uttered from God, moved or borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). For we are taught, not only what the Holy Spirit gave by His living instruments, but that what is written by Him abides now of at least equal divine authority. It is painful to see the readiness of any Christian to allow the compatibility of this divine power with historical or any other inaccuracies, natural enough to man's spirit. But the apostle Paul in the text before us leaves no room for evasion or uncertainty. "Every scripture" is either assumed, as some argue, or asserted as others believe, to be God-inspired. Does He fail to exclude verbal errors? Is He capable of historical or any other inaccuracies? The imputation really leaves God out, as every measure of scepticism does. It dwells on human infirmity and ignorance, which no believer ought for a moment to forget. But God's inspiration of "every scripture" gives to faith the certainty that no such inaccuracies attach to the written word as it came from Him; and this is all that plenary inspiration means. It in no way excludes mistakes in transcription, translation, or interpretation. But it is an abuse of language, calculated to deceive the simple and gratify the enemy, if one allow divine plenary inspiration in word and then annul it in deed. For as God cannot lie, so He does not pledge His inspiration so as to sanction errors ever so small. He used men of God as the vehicle for carrying out His purpose in giving His word; He employed their mind and heart as well as their language and style; but He communicated His own wisdom in fulfilment of His design beyond the measure of the instrument, and in absolute exclusion of mistake. For any then to contend that plenary inspiration admits of "leaving" inspired men to themselves in any respect is really to leave out God, and to blow hot and cold in the same breath. It is openly and absolutely to contradict the apostolic canon here laid down. Not only were the writers moved by the Holy Spirit, but "every scripture is God-inspired." Scripture is no mere accident, nor simply a providential arrangement, where blemishes may naturally be. If it was God's purpose to give us His word, the Holy Spirit wrought to effectuate it in a wisdom, power, order, and end which bespoke Himself. One can understand unbelief blind even to the grace and the truth which came through Jesus Christ, and

seeing only discrepancies and blunders in the Gospels, where spiritual intelligence finds the deepest demonstration of the divine mind, and a perfect result produced to Christ's glory before the eyes of faith. How strange and distressing that any who hear that word and believe Him Who sent the Lord fail to perceive that, of all theories, none is less satisfactory, tenable, or reverent! For it means that the Holy Spirit Who inspired the evangelists recalled facts and words imperfectly to their remembrance, and stamped misleading memoirs with the authority of God's word. What more inexplicable than that there should be no less than a divine Person for such compilations, supposed to be mutually inconsistent as well as defective in small points?

Here is not the place to show, not only how baseless is this unbelief, but the divinely admirable truth which the Holy Spirit set out in these inspired accounts of our Lord as everywhere else in the Bible. It would demand volumes and can be found by those who seriously enquire. But such speculations ought never to have been entertained for a moment. Their source is evil, though good men be ensnared by them. "Every scripture is God-inspired." We are entitled as believers to set one's seal to it that He is true; so is His word. We are bound in simple faith to deny errors or discrepancies in scripture as He wrote it. We may not be able to answer every objection, or to clear up every difficulty which ingenious ill-will or even weakness may muster; for this depends on our intelligence, which may be small. But if we believe the apostle's deliverance on the Bible to be "the commandment of the Lord" (as he claims generally and for smaller things in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40), we are warranted to rest in the peaceful certainty that "every scripture is inspired of God." So our Lord acted with friend or foe. So He taught His own, as He had confronted the great enemy. "It is written" was the conclusive answer to temptation and to question; and if scripture were perverted, "It is written again" is the short and best refutation. What an example for us, so ready to trust in our dialectic skill of defence or in dissecting an adversary's ignorance and error! The simplest believer can reckon on the word and Spirit of God. This honours Him and His word, and is for us the humblest, holiest, and safest ground. In vain then do men argue that there are many things in the scriptures which the writers might have known, and probably did know, by ordinary means; that for some things they must have been supernaturally endowed; and that other things again required nothing less than direct revelation The aim of this is unconsciously to lower scripture, and bring as much as possible within man's capacity. Now no believer need question God's use of means, if He pleases, or rising above them if for His glory. But "every scripture is inspired of God" settles all questions. We have there wicked men's hypocritical words, and their rebellious ones; we have even Satan's temptations and his accusations in scripture; but "every scripture is God-breathed." To present the least fact, to record the simplest word in scripture, was as truly of God's inspiration, as to reveal "the mystery" or to disclose the future glory of heaven and earth. Documents or none, the insertion in scripture was God-inspired: else the apostolic rule were infringed. But as our Lord said (John 10:35), "the scripture cannot be broken." As Jehovah magnified His saying above all His name, so did our Lord take His stand on the written word, the scriptures, as the most authoritative of all testimonies. All scripture, every part of it even, is God-inspired for permanence, and the true end of controversy for those that believe; while such as believe not must learn their sin and folly in the judgment. The question is in no way, whether the writers knew or did not know what they wrote (for both are found abundantly in scripture), but whether they were inspired of God to write it. And "very scripture" is so inspired. This alone makes it God's word, not its known truth or usefulness, but His inspiring it; and this we have in every scripture. Some writers may be sublime and others simple; some may be pathetic and others

severe; but all are God-inspired; and the plain proof is that they are part of the scriptures. In the N.T. we have differences as wide as sever the Epistle of James from those of Paul, and the Gospel of Mark from that of John. But inspired they are equally, as their writings are part of the scriptures. Inspiration of God is a fact, and does not admit of varying degrees.

It is quite within the power of the Holy Spirit in giving God's word to adopt the style of each individual writer. But no effort on a writer's part could make his words to be God's. Even before any adversary the Lord told the twelve to have no anxiety how or what to speak, for in the hour of need it should be given. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:20). How much more was that divine energy wanted and given, when not their vindication was in question, but the communication of God's mind and will for His own and for ever! Indeed it is no more than the certain fact; for every scripture is God-inspired.

Speculation into the "how" of inspiration is a prying into what is not revealed, and therefore unwise and unbecoming. We are not told how God inspired the writers of the scriptures. It is probable that none could know save those who were so energised. Theories "mechanical" or "dynamical," so called, are out of place and explain nothing. As 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 maintains the principle, the necessity, and the fact of Spirit-taught words, so 2 Timothy 3:16 speaks, not of the revelation before the mind only, but of "scripture;" and decides for it as inspired of God. This is the all-important truth conveyed. It is God Himself in scripture removing all doubt about scripture, and even about every part of it. One can conceive no other communication more distinct or conclusive. The language is as plain as its aim is spiritually momentous; and its intimation is of the utmost practical interest and value.

CHAPTER 3. ITS UNIFORMITY.

We have dwelt the longer on the claim demanded by the great apostle for "every scripture," because it really settles for the believer all the questions which the busy mind of man can raise. For we are not now debating with the Atheist or even the Deist, who openly disbelieves a revelation from God, but meeting the difficulties raised among professing Christians, though it may be too often originated by real sceptics. Doubts are more guilty now than in the days of our Lord Who reproached the Sadducees with not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For not only was He come as the True Light to shed light on every man, and to give an understanding that we might know Him that is true, but the entire book of the final revelation from God has been added since by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. And it is in one of these latest communications of divine truth that we have God attesting His own inspiration of "every scripture." This was as it should be in view of man's need, and especially for the safeguard of believers, soon to be left without the living presence of apostles. But from the beginning of revelation God took care that they who read or heard His word should be assured that it was His truth in His power and by His authority, that His people might believe and obey Him. Thus in that last book of the Pentateuch, which it is a modern fashion to imagine of late date, in Deuteronomy 4:2 we read, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God which I command you." As with the Law, so it was with the Prophets: "Jehovah hath spoken," though by Isaiah (Isaiah 1:2); "The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of Jehovah game" (Jeremiah 1:1-2); and so with the others. It did not differ with the Psalms, as their chief writer says, 'The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, and his

word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). The Lord Jesus when here set the scripture in the clearest light, in the simplest way, and on the firmest ground. He repels Satan's temptation with "It is written"; and when Satan uses the word, He answers by its right use, "It is written again." It is remarkable and instructive, that all these replies are taken from Deuteronomy: the book that reveals the obedience of faith when the people should be ruined through failure under the law. He appealed to the earliest history (Genesis 2) as God's word. He also prepared His disciples for those new communications of grace and truth which the Holy Spirit would come to make on His own departure (John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33): these we have now in what is called the New Testament. So the apostles themselves declare (Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, 1 Corinthians 14:36; 2 Corinthians 13:2-3; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 2:1-4, Hebrews 12:25; 2 Peter 3:2; 2 Peter 3:15-16; 1 John 4:6). 2 Timothy 3:16 has been already before us. Apparently "occasional and fragmentary," the writings of the N. T. have a real completeness unmistakably divine.

It is because this divine character of all scripture is not held in simple faith that men, and even pious men, have yielded to human thoughts which dishonour God's word and have opened the door to sceptical evil more and more ungodly As the O.T. consists of the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, so does the N.T. of the Gospels and Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. Its basis is grace and truth come through Jesus Christ, Who on His own departure sent the Holy Spirit as the other Paraclete to be with and in us for ever. Again, the Epistles form quite as characteristic a part of the New Testament as the Gospels, following up those memoirs with the truth dogmatically (which saints could not bear before redemption); as in the Acts we have historically the Holy Ghost's action when personally descended and present.

Hence the contrast is greatest with the Psalms or poetic portion of the O.T.; and it is the Epistles, which to us stand over against them: of all compositions the most familiar and intimate. Therein it is no longer outpourings which anticipate Messiah's coming, sufferings, and reign in Zion, with groans and cries meanwhile; but heart communicating to heart in the Spirit the grace and the glory of the Son of God already come and gone, but about to come again to have us with Himself in the Father's house as well as to appear and reign, as we shall with Him, in that day. No wonder that a new walk (Ephesians 2:10), and a higher, nearer worship, go along with the new relationship most fully brought out in the Epistles. The closest analogue to the O.T. is in the Apocalypse, which alone answers to the Prophets but rises above while it confirms them, completing the whole to the glory of God and the Lamb. The development of all, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, gives occasion to the most delightful variety in God's communications through His chosen instruments. But this only the more strikingly manifests the unity of the Divine Author. "Every scripture is God-inspired." No notion can be more false or superficial than to infer from their variety of matter and manner a difference in the degree of inspiration. Neither the revealed facts nor the revealed doctrine allow an idea so baseless, unreasonable, and dangerous. Scripture pronounces that "every scripture is inspired of God." One can understand cavils or disbelief about its parts, or even the whole where scepticism is extreme; but, for any one who admits scripture to be from God, a varying inspiration is negatived by divine authority. This suffices to prove without further ado the egregious error of the late D. Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, in his Evidences of Christianity (i. 508). "By the inspiration of suggestion is meant such communications of the Holy Spirit, as suggested and detailed minutely every part of the truths delivered. The inspiration of direction is

meant of such assistance as left the writers to describe revealed truth in their own way, directing only the mind in the exercise of its power. The inspiration of elevation added a greater strength and vigour to the efforts of the mind than the writer could otherwise have attained. The inspiration of superintendency was that watchful care which preserved generally from anything being put down derogatory to the revelation with which it was connected." There are no such kinds of inspiration taught in the Bible, which speaks of God's inspiration pure and simple, and predicates it of "every scripture" alike. Dr. W.'s first kind is the only real inspiration, though even it is not fully stated. The other three are not the inspiration of any scripture, but such direction, elevation, and superintendency as His servants look for, and not in vain, day by day. But none of these is true inspiration, which conveys God's mind or will as perfectly as it excludes every error of man.

Doctors Dick (Essay on Inspiration), Pye Smith (Ser. Test. to the Messiah i.), Henderson (Lect. on Inspir. 36 sec.), and others have put forth a similar hypothesis of different degrees in inspiration, influenced partly by the free thinking of modern Germans, partly by a name so respectable as that of Dr. Doddridge (Works v.) of older date. There is modification; for Henderson makes five degrees, while Doddridge states no more than three. But all agree in the hypothesis of differences which oppose the authoritative declaration of the apostle, without the semblance of warrant from any other scripture. To what source then are we to attribute these unbelieving speculations? It would seem mainly to Moses Maimonides (A.D. 1131-1204), from whom B. Spinoza borrowed much, followed in that at least by Le Clerc, as Grotius derived it directly from Jewish channels. In his "Moreh Nebochim" Maimonides conceives eleven "degrees of Prophecy" These the Portuguese Jew, Abarbanel (A.D. 1437-1508), melted into three degrees of inspiration for the O.T., answering to the three divisions of the sanctuary and its court: the Thorah, the Nebiim, and the Ketubhim, the Law, the Prophets, and the rest of the O.T. or Hagiographa. That Moses personally enjoyed the divine Presence, as no ordinary prophet did, is certain: Numbers 12:1-16 and Deuteronomy 34:1-12 are as to this explicit. John the Baptist (and we have our Lord's authority for it) was a prophet, and greater than a prophet. None of woman-born was greater than he; yet he neither wrote a line nor wrought a miracle. But whosoever wrote, inspiration is a fact, and admits of no varying measures. "Every scripture is God-inspired;" and God is equally true at all times and by all persons He employed to write or even speak His word. It was certainly a monstrous position of the Jewish scheme that the lowest in the scale of the inspired should be assigned to the Holy Spirit; for He, as we know, is the divine agent in man of all divine inspiration, and He does not differ from Himself.

Such then is the murky ditch whence the Jews have derived their chief theory on the books of the O.T. Such men abide still in the unbelief for which the branches were broken off from the olive-tree of promise. No other origin perhaps can be assigned to the low and debasing influences, otherwise enlarged, which are in our day working to greater ungodliness among professing Christians. Can any thing be more humbling to one who loves Christ and the church? How all-important to cleave to God and the word of His grace! This, and nothing else at bottom, is able to build us up (instead of leaving us a sport to every wind of doctrine), able also to give us an inheritance among all those that are sanctified. It is the truth, the Father's word, that sanctifies His children. Error, all error, defiles. What error more poisonous, next to heterodoxy on Christ's Person and work, than the dishonour of God's word, the great means of making divine truth known to us? How imminent and far-reaching the peril of tampering with humanitarianism as to scripture!

04A.02 Part 2

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 2

W. Kelly.

Chapter 4. The Human Element.

Nobody doubts that scripture without exception has a human element. In it God speaks and writes permanently to man, and therefore in human language. It were unintelligible otherwise. As the general rule Hebrew was employed in the so-called O.T., Greek in the New. We can readily perceive His wisdom in thus writing by man to man (Deuteronomy 5:22, Deuteronomy 9:10, Deuteronomy 10:4), save in the most solemnly exceptional case: the law with all its variety of meaning in the language of His ancient people; the gospel with all the fulness of grace and truth in the chief tongue of the Gentiles. But God was pleased to do much more — even to work to this end on man and in man, so that the reproach of "mechanical" is unfounded, no less than the setting up of "dynamical" is cold and insufficient. The inspired are through His goodness far beyond being His pen or even His penmen, as it has been said. Their minds and affections He uses as well as their language. There was indeed dictation in certain parts of scripture, as in His promises and His threats, His predictions, His ordinances, statutes, and judgments. Such is the latter half of Exodus, and almost the whole of Leviticus, a great part of Numbers, and not a little even of Deuteronomy, special as its character is. So there was to the Prophets, where they had to search, like their readers, what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point out, when it testified beforehand the sufferings that belonged to Christ and the glories after these; "to whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to you they ministered those things which were now reported to you through those that evangelised you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Peter 1:11-12). In N.T. days, as we learn from 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, men were not to speak in a tongue without the gift of interpretation. If there were no interpreter, such an one, gifted as he was, must be silent in the assembly, because all things there must be done to edifying, whereas even the man’s own spirit was unfruitful. The great thing was to speak with the spirit and with the understanding also. Hence the apostle thanked God that he spoke with tongues more than any of them; but in the assembly he preferred to speak five words with his understanding that he might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. What a rebuke to the childishness which coats on the display of power! What strengthening of holy love that all might learn and be encouraged! This of course was not inspiration, but it furnishes a principle for estimating intelligently the various forms which the Holy Spirit adopted in that work also. Nor can any right mind overlook on the one hand that, where it was God’s power conspicuously and unmistakeably working in a tongue, it holds far from the highest place for the assembly; it was (without the presence of an interpretation) excluded, as having no more title in itself to be there than the performance of a miracle, a sign for unbelievers, not for the faithful. And so they and the like are classed together, the lowest in the scale of these divine gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40). Prophesying on the other hand has the highest value; for he that exercises

this gift speaks to men’s edification and encouragement and consolation; he edifies the church, which the speaker in a tongue cannot do, unless there be also interpretation with it. Thus God gave the better place where His Spirit brought in the distinct element of profit for others. Power, though plainly God’s, is subordinate to spiritual blessing, order, and love. So it is with the fruits of inspiration All have alike divine authority. All are of the Spirit, and in their place and for their end give God’s mind. Scripture says little of the mode in which He wrought in each case; but the little that is said shows that all were not favoured with the same degree of intimacy in the manner, while the utmost precision was taken to affirm that "every scripture is inspired of God." Some may exhibit simplicity, others majesty; some are models of terseness, others are rich and flowing; some are familiar with human life, its difficulties, dangers, disappointments, and snares; others are occupied with the trials of conscience and the affections God-ward. Then again some are historical (as Genesis), but with the momentous aim of giving us God’s mind and principles of moral government as found nowhere else. This indeed is but a small part of its scope, which takes in the germs of almost all that God will do till time melts into eternity, as developed elsewhere by the Prophets. Others, like the Kings, are historical in presenting the conduct of His anointed rulers and of His people under law, where are episodes (rare indeed in men of faith) of kings, priests, prophets; where man’s ways are stated just as they were, and God’s ways thereon as no earthly historian ever gave or could. In all this the human element has a very large place; but inspiration yields God’s word throughout, and thus the Bible is unique.

Take a quite different instance and a book outside Israel directly, yet devoted to solving the problem individually which applies to that people. The book of Job brings before us a godly man set on by the unseen adversary, and suddenly cast down from honour and affluence into such loss, bereavement, and personal suffering as never was allowed to fall on another, yet through causes that looked ordinary. Was God indifferent? On the contrary (and expressly to prove not only to Job but to all others who might be tried here below, that He can overrule even now the enemy for the good of His own), it was He that initiated the entire transaction by His gracious notice of the saint before Satan’s envious and malicious ears. Job needed to judge himself before God as he had never yet learnt, and to bow to God confidingly. The bearing of his friends does what Satan’s cruel wiles wholly failed in; and Job breaks down in impatience, as his friends in misjudgment. Elihu intervenes, when they were reduced to the silence of vexation (but Job still unbroken), and proves that, if the present world be as far as possible from being a reliable manifestation of divine government, God nevertheless carries on His government of souls in a most efficient and unfailing manner. And Jehovah Himself in His majesty ends the controversy by an answer to Job which humbles him in the dust, yet shows Himself very pitiful and of tender mercy; as He also puts to shame and censure the self-righteous friends (who deemed the sufferer a hypocrite), now dependent on Job’s intercession who was blessed doubly more at the end than in his beginning. Here the human element abounds in the most instructive way. It was not that God approved all that Job said, still less what his friends uttered in their pride and self-complacency, to say nothing of Satan or of Job’s wife. But inspiration gives the entire, perfectly to let us know where they all were, and to give us God’s mind and aim from the first and to the last. Only He could have furnished the scene, where sacrificial offering had its due place, and righteous government ruled in the face of all appearances to the contrary. The style of the history too is notable. How touchingly Jehovah is heard in Genesis adapting Himself to the childhood of mankind! "It is not good that man should be alone: I will make a help-mate for him, his

counterpart." "And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Hear too His expostulation when they sinned, and His mercy toward man glorying against judgment in His curse of the Serpent. Hear it with Cain when nursing [he wrath which was soon to slay his holy and righteous brother, yea after that impious murder. What grief at His heart appears over the race in Genesis 6:5-7! What ready recognition of Noah's holocaust after the deluge, as He said in His heart, "I will not henceforth curse the ground any more on account of man." How vigilant for the life of man, whoever might shed his blood! "And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it," not man merely from below! Compare also Genesis 11:6-7; Genesis 18:20-21. So too as to His people it is in Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus 3:7-9 before their deliverance from Egypt.

It is not that divine majesty is lacking. The opening words of the Bible, simple, sublime, and absolutely true, proclaim the mind that inspired, no less than the words of the first day's work which drew out the admiration of the heathen Longinus. But "the philanthropy" of God, as the apostle calls it, could not be hidden from the first before the day of its full display; and this not only in His works and ways but in His word. Only the dullest of readers could fail to observe the varieties of style which pervade both Testaments. From Moses to Malachi each writer preserves his peculiarities intact; and it is precisely the same from the Gospel of Matthew to the Revelation of John. This is a fact patent, in presence of the still more wondrous fact of a mighty purpose flowing from One self-evidently divine wrought out in and by so many different agents with the most marked diversity of position and character, of time and place. It is just the human element maintained and governed by the divine; and so far is there aught inscrutable in this, when we see its admirable result in the scriptures, the believer feels that it is altogether worthy of God and gracious toward man. The difficulty indeed, now that we know it as a subsisting reality, would be to conceive any other mode emanating from Him that could so satisfy His mind and love. Thus is man morally elevated and best enlightened; thus alone is God's glory secured, while His grace has the fullest scope and exercise. We have nothing to reconcile: God has done it perfectly in scripture. It is for us to believe and be blessed, even to true and living communion with the Blesser; a blessing impossible for man save in Christ through the word and Spirit of God. The wonder is deepened immensely when we recall the marked and radical difference of the two volumes, as we may call them, Hebrew and Greek: the one characterised by the law and the land; the other by the gospel and heaven. Yet it is the same living and true God, only now revealing Himself in the Son incarnate, and by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. And therefore it is that the N.T. acquires a human character yet more pronounced and more profound than the O.T. For not only did the Son become man, as He will never cease to be, but through His redemption the Holy Spirit deigns to dwell in the believer as He never did or could before, and acts as a Spirit of communion, not merely as One of prophecy (Revelation 19:1-21). The assembly too or church is God's temple, His habitation in virtue of the Spirit Who dwells there. Yea, as baptised by Him it is Christ's body. Hence the human element shines as never of old, of the deepest interest and with the richest intimacy of grace, and only second in moment to the divine, because in their perfection we know and have both in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the True God and Eternal life; and this we have in Him. But we are also "members of His body"; for "He is the head of the church."

Now the O.T. discloses a state of things under the kingdom of God wholly distinct from that of the gospel and the church, wherein Jew and Gentile cannot be, nor bond nor free, nor male and female, all being one in Christ Jesus. Whereas in the age to come Israel is to be restored and

exalted, Zion to have the first dominion, and all the nations to be blessed, and the whole world set under His reign in manifest power and glory, Who is alike Messiah, Son of man, and Jehovah. And the N.T. confirms the same blessed prospect for the earth and all its families in that day; while it alone reveals the heavenly portion of the glorified, and the church's marriage with the heavenly Bridegroom, sharing the inheritance with Him Who is the Heir of all things. This therefore imparts unequalled ground and occasion for the human element in God's counsels and ways, as it is no less reflected in the inspired communications of the N.T. The Epistles are accordingly the fitting form of God's mind thereon; as the Christian himself is Christ's epistle as well as the apostle's, known and read of all men, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not in stone tables but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Yet the O.T. proclaimed the coming of the New, and that ruin of the chosen people through the rejection of the Messiah which made their own fall necessary, and thus opened the way for Christ's exaltation on high, the call of the Gentiles by the gospel, and the formation of the church in union with the Head by the Spirit come from heaven. Hence too the new volume of inspiration authenticates the new work going on till the Lord comes, but seals the truth of the O.T. which it replaces for the Christian and the church. Yet it assures that the Law and the Prophets are verily to be fulfilled in the day that is rapidly nearing, when Christ shall be hidden no more but appear to gather together in one all things in Him, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.

It is evident that a human element is in one form or another characteristic of inspiration, that it is even more "prophetic" in the New Testament than in the Old, and that it is only second in interest and importance to the divine which is there. But it is a phrase employed to insinuate liability to human error in some respect if not in all; just as men avail themselves of the Incarnation to overthrow or undermine the personal glory of Christ. Such unbelief is in both altogether unfounded and unworthy. Scripture is most explicit in guarding souls from thus dishonouring God's Son or His word; and all the more because appearances afford a handle to such as seek this occasion. For scripture, like the Lord Jesus, is a grand moral test; and those who desire not God's will can readily find reasons against both out of that will which is declared to be "enmity against God." To impute human defect to scripture is to deny its inspiration of God.

1. As an important instance to test the unbelieving cavil, take the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-25. This, pseudo-criticism will have to be a compilation of ignorance and mistake. It is often assumed that Matthew simply adopted the existing Jewish register, Gaps in such pedigrees were quite understood and made no difficulty where the line was sure, and give no real ground for the charge of discrepancy with other lists. Compare Ezra 7:1-5 with 1 Chronicles 6:1-15 for the stem of Aaron. This was open to the inspiring Spirit here as elsewhere, if such were God's will. But the genealogy here has marks of design which we find only in scripture. It opens with marking out the Lord as "son of David, son of Abraham," the beginnings of the kingdom as settled of God for ever, and of the promises. Then it presents from Abraham to David fourteen generations, from David to the Babylonish migration as many, and the same from that migration to the birth of Christ.

It is universally known that three generations are omitted from the intermediate series. Nobody can with candour conceive that Matthew, whose Gospel displays pre-eminent and profound acquaintance with the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, did not perfectly well know that Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah were here left out between Joram and Uzziah. Even an

unenlightened Israelite could not be ignorant of a fact so patent. It was therefore due to purpose, in no reasonable way to oversight or confusion. It was intended to arrange the line with but twice seven in each of its three sections: the beginning of the stock of promise down to the king of God's choice; the course of the kingdom till its utter evil and humiliation in Babylon; and the faithfulness of God notwithstanding in preserving the royal line to the virgin's Son according to prophecy. As therefore some links must be drops to effect this aim, who could be so fittingly omitted as these three descendants of the foreign and murderous Athaliah? The Jews themselves may well have done this in some register of theirs, assuredly not ignorant of what they did, but with moral design. Whether this was so or not, we cannot say, as the registers were lost at the destruction of Jerusalem. But the omission is plain at this point and to the extent of leaving the intended links of fourteen generations. Whatever may have been the motive of the writer, the fact is before all; and the character of the Gospel altogether refutes the imputation that it was lack of care, intelligence, or honesty. If he was inspired to give the genealogy, it is impossible that God could either lie or err. But the proof of divine design appears in other features also. Think of any one on human grounds selecting such women as are here named in the earlier chain! Think of a Jew on his own motion inserting these only in his pedigree of the Messiah! Not a word about Sarah or Rebecca, of Leah or Rachel; but "Judah begot Pharez and Zarah of Thamar!" Certainly it was no accident to drag out a history so scandalous into the light of the N.T., risking the dishonour of the Messiah. And is it "after the manner of men" to blazon the fact that "Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab?" or even that "Boaz begot Obed of Ruth?" And when we come down to "David the king," what can one say of recalling the chief shame that stained his life? "David begot Solomon of her [that had been wife] of Uriah?" An incestuous woman! a harlot! a Moabitess! an adulteress! Never was there such a choice, and in the face of so many admirable and saintly wives passed by!

No; it is incredible that any priest or scribe or lawyer ever drew up as a legal document such a genealogical roll. Further, it is not conceivable that Matthew himself would ever have thought or dared to do it without the power of the inspiring Spirit working in him to this end. It is at first sight as opposed as can be to every natural instinct. Nothing can account for it but the direct and deep purpose of God, Who was pleased to disclose to us the depths of sin abounding in Messiah's ancestry, calmly but expressly singled out, that we may see in His redemption, where sin abounded, grace surpassing yet more through Christ to God's glory. And if the Holy Spirit be the true author, and the result God's word, who and what are they who venture on their petty and unhallowed criticisms?

Again, the same spirit of unbelief objects to the genealogy that it is Joseph's line; whereas what they want is Mary's! Here extreme ignorance is betrayed; for the genealogy needed to satisfy an enquiring Jew was and must be descent from Solomon. This was solely through Joseph. If our Lord had not inherited legally his title, He could not have been David's Son in the direct royal line. And this was given to Matthew, who proves Him to be beyond doubt the Heir through Solomon whose succession Jehovah confirmed with an oath: the true and expected David's Son Who was David's Lord, yet born of the virgin and so marked off from all others, Emmanuel, yet Jehovah, Who should save His people from their sins. On the other hand, Luke's genealogy (which is quite mistakenly counted Joseph's, but can be shown demonstrably to be Mary's*) was essential for the due proof that our Lord was her Son, not legally merely but really, Son of God and Son of man in one Person, and thus "Light for revelation of Gentiles, as well as glory of God's people Israel": so

all this Gospel illustrates. He was truly man: how else had He reached all mankind, or even Israel, as the Saviour? He was as truly God: else He had never revealed Him adequately in His life, nor availed efficaciously in His atoning blood and death, as all the Gospels testify and above all John's. Christ was thus according to the law Joseph's heir, both naturally and supernaturally Mary's Son; above all He was the Only-begotten Son of God through eternity. This last is given by John, who furnishes no earthly genealogy any more than Mark, though for a wholly different reason: John, because He is presented as being God, and therefore far above it; Mark, as becoming Servant of God for every need of man, wherein nobody looks for a genealogy.

*The true way of taking Luke 3:23 is: "And Jesus himself, when he began, was about thirty years old (being, as was supposed, son of Joseph); of Eli, of Matthat, of Levi, etc." Mary was, as even the Talmud admits, daughter of Eli in descent from Nathan. "Being, as was supposed, Joseph's son" is the correct parenthesis. It is natural that Satan should seek to set in opposition two genealogies, Joseph's and Mary's, which are in fact distinct, yet are both necessary for the truth The mistake of most has been through viewing the allusion to Joseph not as parenthetical which it evidently is, but as the starting point of the line which really begins with Eli, Mary's father.

2. The next case we may here review is the inextricable difficulty some critics have found in comparing the Synoptic Gospels, and in particular on the supposition that the writers which succeeded each other had before them the Gospel or Gospels that preceded. The conclusion is that they had a common oral tradition or teaching, while each was left to tell his own story with all the modification incident to human weakness where there was also veracity. Let me cite the late Dean Alford on the example in question, which seemed to him not only typical but peculiarly plain and sure from his frequent allusion to it. "The real discrepancies between our Evangelistic histories are very few, and those nearly all of one kind. They are simply the results of the entire independence of the accounts. They consist, mainly in different chronological arrangements expressed or implied. Such for instance is the transposition, before noticed, of the history of the passage into the country of the Gadarenes, which in Matthew 8:28 ff. precedes a whole course of events which in Mark 5:1 ff. and Luke 8:26 ff. it follows. Such again is the difference in position between the pair of incidents related in Matthew 8:19-22, and the same pair of incidents found in Luke 9:57-60" (Gr. Testament, Prolegg. I. 12, fifth edition). He gives these up as "real discrepancies," complaining on the one side of enemies who would thereby overthrow the truth, and on the other of the orthodox who would harmonize at the expense of common fairness and candour.

Now why is it that one who sincerely loved the Lord and His word felt driven to so helpless a dilemma? Because he failed to hold unflinchingly that "every scripture is inspired of God," and allowed under that standard that the writers were "left, in common with others, to the guidance of their natural faculties!" But this is not divine inspiration. It does not rise above the gracious guidance of the Spirit every Christian looks or ought to look for day by day. If the Dean would confine it to "much variety," i.e. discrepancy in points of minor consequence, he could not resist the demands of others who apply it to any or every statement, be it of the highest moment. He thus surrenders the unwavering standard which faith finds in God's inspiring "every scripture." Is there then any insuperable obstacle in the way of believing that the differing arrangements, being equally inspired, are to be received implicitly as God's word and absolutely true? Why impute the difference to man's weakness? Why not to God's wisdom? One can heartily sympathise with a

believer who says, Here is a difficulty beyond my solution; and so I wait and search with prayer to Him Who gave it by His Spirit for my comfort and instruction. Therefore, as I am sure it is all and equally true, I hope yet (if it please Him) to Bee the apparent discrepancy cleared, perhaps in my own reading, or yet more probably through another believer. For we are members one of another; and thus the Spirit loves to help. Far be it from me to lay on God's word the blame which belongs to my own spiritual dullness. — In the present case, without in the least claiming power of the Spirit to meet every hard question or to answer all possible objections, let me say that the special design of each Gospel (ascertainable by grace from its own contents) is the main key.

Matthew was led of God frequently to depart from the mere order of the facts with the deeper end of the Spirit in setting out the dispensational change from Jehovah-Messiah's presence, and His rejection by the Jews. Luke was led to act similarly in presenting the moral principles which shone in Christ's words and ways as the Holy Thing born of woman, the Son of God, Man on earth among men. Chronology was on these occasions subordinate and vanished before the weightier aim of the Holy Spirit. In ordinary cases it was preserved; and so we may observe it to be all but invariably in the Gospels of Mark and John, the divine design in them not interfering with the simple order of occurrence.

Matthew 8:1-34 opens first with the Jewish leper cured; then follows the Gentile centurion's servant healed. Yet the fact of the leper occurred before the Lord went up the mountain in Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34, Matthew 7:1-29, as is certain from comparing Mark 1:1-45. The centurion's servant was not healed till He came down. Again, Peter's mother-in-law was restored to strength from fever, and of course the crowd of sick and possessed after sunset of the same sabbath, before even the leper, as the same chapter of Mark proves beyond cavil. For in his Gospel we have the day specified and the order of events kept; whereas it is not so in the part of Matthew we are examining, where we have only "and," "and," 'and," leaving the time open, save in the connecting Matthew 8:16-17 with Matthew 8:14-15. Further, it is quite clear from Mark 4:35-41, Mark 5:1-43. that the passage across the lake and the storm which obeyed the Lord's rebuke were on the evening of the day when the Lord gave utterance to the great parables of Matthew 13:1-58; and that the two demoniacs were delivered on the other side after that, Mark and Luke being inspired to dwell on the more desperate case of Legion. There is not even the semblance of discrepancy; because Matthew states the facts without any note of time, and states them in the order suited to give a display of the Lord's power in detailed testimony on earth showing the dispensational change that was imminent. Mark gives them as they happened in His ministry; which enables us to see how hasty are those who set one account against another. The design explains each and all.

It may be added that Luke 9:1-62 appears to indicate that "the pair of incidents" which illustrate Christ's position in Mark 8:1-38 occurred historically after the transfiguration given in Matthew 17:1-27. Hence we have there no note of time in the First Gospel. This cuts off all ground for the charge of "real discrepancy." It is unworthy of a believer that anything of the kind should issue in a wanton insult to scripture, due to one's own haste and ignorance.

3. There is a passage which is constantly adduced by those who contend that scripture itself denies its own divine character and claims no more than diligence in using human means to arrive at authentic history. It is the well-known preface to Luke's Gospel. Does it warrant such an

inference? Does it in the least contradict 2 Timothy 3:16? Is not a Gospel as fully inspired as an Epistle? Are they not alike God's word? And is not the word of God such in reality as in name?

"Forasmuch as many took in hand to set forth a narrative concerning the matters that are fully established (or, believed) among us, according as they who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word delivered to us, it seemed good to me also, having accurately followed up all things from the outset, to write with order to thee, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest fully know the certainty about things (or, words) in which thou wast instructed" (Luke 1:1-4). Can there be a more striking witness of divine design and special character? This Gospel more than any other develops the ways and words of the "man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6): not the Messiah rejected by the Jews, not the Servant of man's need and specially of the gospel, nor yet as the Divine Word become flesh, the Only-begotten Son. Here pre-eminently He is the Son of man among men, and so traced up to Adam, though carefully shown to be the Son of God as no one else. Here have we the beautiful sketch, not only of the Babe just born, but of His youth; here the sabbath in the synagogue at Nazareth, where He read the beginning of Isaiah 61, closing the book (or, roll) exactly where it was fulfilled that day. On their expression of unbelief, He reminded them of Israel's long famine when God's mercy flowed to the Gentile widow of Zarephath, and of the Syrian cleansed when there were many lepers in Israel.

Here we learn more than elsewhere of His praying; here only we find the widow of Nain whose only son He gave, raised from the bier of death, to his mother. Here is given the affecting story of the penitent woman in Simon the Pharisee's house, forgiven, saved, and in peace. Here we read of the many women blessed in various ways whom He allowed to minister to Him of their substance. Here we are told of James and John rebuked for their lack of grace toward certain Samaritans. Here is found the mission of the seventy, and the Lord's call to a joy in heavenly privilege rather than in power over the enemy. Here the Lord teaches Who is my neighbour? by the good Samaritan. Here Mary's good part is declared to anxious and bustling Martha. Here the rich fool is laid bare to rebuke such too as would make Christ a divider of inheritance. Here waiting is shown to be beyond working for the Lord, though His own are called to both.

Here men who prate of judgments are warned to repent lest they all perish alike. Here the great supper comes before us, and man's contempt for God's inviting goodness. Here are presented the combined parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son, here too the Father's love and joy in saving. Here meet us the prudent that sacrifice the present in view of the future; here the light of the unseen shows us Lazarus exchanging extremes" misery on earth for Abraham's bosom, and the rich man his sumptuous ease for torment unspeakable. Here the repentant tax-gatherer is justified rather than the self-trusting Pharisee. Here the Son of man brings salvation to the rich Zacchaeus. And here at the end the rejoicing disciples praise God for "peace in heaven and glory in the highest," as the heavenly host at the beginning ascribed "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." So here only we have the touching assurance to denying Simon Peter of his restoration through the Lord's intercession, and of his subsequent confirming his brethren. Here only do we read of an angel strengthening Christ and of His bloody sweat; here of Jerusalem's daughters warned; here of the converted robber to be that day with Him in Paradise. Here lastly have we the walk of the risen Jesus to Emmaus; here the preaching, unto all the nations, of repentance and remission of sins in His name, beginning with Jerusalem; here His

ascending from Bethany to heaven, while He blessed His own on earth.

Thus we have distinct facts and words indicating a marked design, and doubtless a design far deeper than Luke's mind, though God wrought in his affections and his understanding powerfully, as He did in each of the inspired men. But it was given to him in particular to trace Christ morally and in His grace to man universally. So his preface savours of that design; and he speaks of the motives that animated his writing to another fellow-disciple, instead of plunging into his task without a word about himself or Theophilus. The human element is therefore at its height here as throughout. This is exactly the special character with which God was pleased to invest the beloved physician whom He employed, (himself distinguished with others from those of circumcision in Colossians 4:1-18,) to write to a young Christian who was a Gentile. Hence this Gospel, though commencing with "the Jew first," like the great apostle, breaks quickly forth out of Jewish trammels, and reveals in the Saviour what God is to man in grace.

Just so is it with the preface and introduction and dedication to Theophilus with his Gentile title. Luke contrasts rather than compares his account of our Lord with the composition of others. If the "many" who undertook the work had done it with the certainty requisite, there had been no need for him. The others had drawn up their reports, in accordance with the tradition of those that from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. Nor does he censure them or their accounts. But it seemed good to him also, having accurately followed up all from the first, to write in an orderly way that Theophilus might know the certainty respecting what he was instructed in.

How he had had his full and accurate acquaintance with all this history of infinite interest and importance, he does not tell us, as none of the inspired do more than he. But he does open out his mind and heart in a way peculiar to himself, yet in perfect accord with the Gospel throughout, so as to bear the stamp of the Holy Spirit working in him unerringly to that end. "Every scripture is inspired of God"; and Luke's Gospel no less than any other portion. But if the gracious and godly motives of the writer appear in the preface in a way quite unusual; so the absurdity and superficial narrowness of the critics are evident in perverting that fact, beautifully characteristic, to lower the divine authority of this book of scripture he was employed to write. It is on the contrary an additional and powerful evidence, in passing, of God's inspiring him to do the work in a way beyond the power of man, who fails even to see it when done.

It is unfounded too, as may be remarked here, that Luke says he derived his knowledge from what was delivered by other people, as they did who undertook the accounts alluded to, which were evidently not the Gospels we have. He, like the other evangelists, wrote his Gospel with full knowledge of its exactitude. But it was not the usual way of inspired men to speak of that divine power which gave them, each and all, to communicate the truth in words which the Holy Spirit teaches. The truth shines in its own light, and needs no taper of man that it may be seen. It is light from God, though the blind may not see: only His gracious power can open their eyes.

4. 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 has been appealed to confidently as going even farther, and disclaiming inspiration! This would be strange indeed if true, seeing the Ep. is not only one of the most important of the communications in the N.T. but is opened expressly with the writer's claim of apostolic authority. It is therefore one of those Epistles which the apostle Peter glasses among the "scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Still as it is alleged to prove that the apostles "sometimes candidly admit that they are not speaking by inspiration," we are bound to refute the perversion.

Any such inference drawn from 1 Corinthians 7:6 is wholly baseless: "But I speak this by allowance, not by commandment." The apostle means that he speaks here not as commanding but as conceding. No compulsion was laid on the saints as to the advice given in 1 Corinthians 7:5; but he recommends this to them. He was inspired thus to speak. The mistake lies in the sense of the Lord's permission of him to write; whereas he means that it was not compulsory on them, but for their discretion before the Lord. Compare 2 Corinthians 8:8. But 1 Corinthians 7:10 is also adduced, and quite as much misapprehended: "But to the married I enjoin, not I but the Lord, that wife be not severed from husband." This the rationalist would make a distinction between inspired and non-inspired. Whereas the apostle is drawing attention to the fact that the Lord had Himself settled this question personally; and therefore it was not now left to His servant: see Matthew 19:6, and Mark 10:12. This is made remarkably clear in 1 Corinthians 7:12, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." For the case now in question had not been ruled by the Lord, as shown in the Gospels. Therefore the apostle in the Holy Spirit determines it here by authority given to himself. But it must have been and was from the Lord, though not the Lord deciding in person. For the question is of the mixed marriages that arose as the gospel spread. Then according to the O.T. the Jew was bound to abandon the Gentile. On the contrary, the apostle shows that grace now intervenes. Hence if a brother has an unbelieving wife, and she consents to dwell with him, he is not to leave her; and a woman that has an unbelieving husband who consents to dwell with her is not to leave the husband. Here then if anywhere divine authority was required in an absolute way. Is it possible then, that this decision could be no more than the "human element"? The very fact that the Lord when on earth had not spoken as to this case made all the more conspicuous the authority of the apostle, who under the gospel supersedes what the law demanded of a Jewish man or woman in analogous circumstances of old. God owns no longer the feebleness or the partial dealing of the law. Grace now reigns; the truth is spoken according to God fully revealed; and the apostle, not the Lord in person, was here the spokesman, as the Epistle is the inspired communication, that we might have it livingly here, as we had the other for permanent guidance in the Gospels. Clearly then it is hardly possible there could be a more cogent disproof of the rationalistic aim than the true force of 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 1 Corinthians 7:12 before us. Not only is there not the most distant thought of lowering the character and weight of what the apostle writes, in comparison with the Lord, but the passage brings out in a singularly striking manner the authority conferred on the apostle in consonance with gospel liberty to remove the shackles imposed by the law on the ancient people of God when marriage had been contracted with Gentiles. Not the Lord when on earth, but Paul now by His authority from heaven abrogates the Jewish restrictions, which, without this apostolic word, would have surely clogged the question and hindered the will of the Lord in the church. "And thus I ordain in all the assemblies" (1 Corinthians 7:17). What can be stronger evidence? But there is another case, not as to the mutual conduct of believers in the married state, nor yet about the mixed condition of those so related (a believer and unbeliever), but the virgin or unmarried in the latter half of the chapter. Here the apostle declares that he has no commandment of the Lord but he gives his judgment, as having received mercy of Him to be faithful (1 Corinthians 7:25), which he winds up with the words at the close (1 Corinthians 7:40), "And I think that I too have God's Spirit."

Here is equally certain the absurdity of supposing that the apostle conveys one word derogatory to his own apostolic authority. But this last case is an interesting illustration of what many have failed to see in the ways of God as to His word. Everything written therein is inspired, the latter part of

the chapter just as truly as the former. But as the apostle had shown in the former that the Lord had decided the general rule of marriage, and himself the special case of mixed marriage, so here he was inspired to give for the unmarried not any commandment from the Lord, but his own judgment who was entitled assuredly to form and express one, if ever man could. Yet the intention of God in thus inspiring the apostle was to distinguish this particular case from the Lord's commandment, which in all other unrestricted matters he declares what he wrote to be (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Thus we have in scripture as the rule the "Lord's commandment." But we have here what inspiration carefully distinguishes as a distinct spiritual judgment, given as such from the faithful apostle to the faithful for profit and guidance. By divine design it was not inflexibly bound on the conscience, but set before the saints with the exceeding value of one who laboured more in the gospel than any who ever lived, of one who revealed the church's nature, character, and hopes as no other, even apostle, did. What this exceptional passage is, rationalist unbelief would like to make all scripture; not the Lord's commandment, but the holy view taken of an important question for Christian practice by a most eminent servant of the Lord, and conveyed to us. Only they fail to see that inspiration admits of a godly judgment commended to our consideration, no less than of the words of worldly and wicked men, or even of Satan, where no reasonable man could imagine them to be the Lord's commandment. But they are all alike inspired of God, because they are scripture, and every scripture is so inspired. Now the nature of the case decides that the record of evil counsel, or the counsel of evil beings, cannot be the Lord's commandment. So the apostle distinctly excepts from the category what he gives of his own spiritual judgment. In this instance, it must be perverse not to receive it as such. Still worse would it be to deny to be the Lord's commandment what he wrote without any such restriction. It is the exception that proves the rule. He discriminates his judgment in this particular case to be what it really is, and what God meant it to be. All else is the Lord's commandment. But even a judgment thus characterised as his is scripture; and every scripture is inspired of God.

5. 1 Timothy 5:23 and 2 Timothy 4:13 are a fair sample of texts which unbelief regards as unworthy of divine inspiration. It may be of interest and profit to consider in our measure as believers, why God was pleased to give each of them a place in His word. To the neo-critics such vulgar details, wholly lacking in the theological element, seem beneath the operation of the Holy Spirit for permanent use.

It will be observed that they both are found in the Pastoral Epistles, and in the two addressed by the apostle to the fellow-servant who had his most intimate affection. The Epistle to Titus contains no such tender or familiar communications. This was just as it should be. To Philemon there is again a shade of difference, which is of exquisite moral beauty in its place. All are of the utmost value for that instruction or training in righteousness which God purposed to give by these scriptures. In various forms they each illustrate the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling and working in man, and even in his body now made a member of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15) and a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in him which he has from God. For he is not his own, but bought with a price, and so is to glorify God in his body. This by the way, seeming strange and low in natural or philosophic eyes, led to early tampering with the text by the addition, "and in your spirit, which are God's." But there is no doubt of the genuine text amply attested by the best MSS. and most of the ancient versions, etc. As little should we doubt the general doctrine of the believer's body, as now claimed

for God (Romans 6:12-13; Romans 6:19; Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 4:10-11; Php 1:20). It was no peculiarity of the heathen or Gnostics to pretend holiness in spirit, while giving licence to the body. Scripture leaves no loophole for such antinomianism. The body is for the Lord, and therein dwells the Holy Spirit. God is wise. Man cannot improve scripture, but injures it by his supplements or corrections.

Now it is the gift, the Pentecostal gift, of the Spirit which gives its distinctive character to N.T. inspiration. This is displayed in the Epistles, following up the infinite fact of the Son of God revealing the Father, and accomplishing redemption, sending out the gospel, and building the church as the Gospels tell. It would indeed have been extraordinary if the human element had not been given a new and far richer place than ever, just when God was making Himself fully known and had effected that work in which He is perfectly glorified. Christ is the key to both and the perfect manifestation of both; which indeed could not be, had He not been as verily God as man, and so manifested.

Take the Epistle to the Romans. There the apostle elaborately develops God's righteousness in the face of man's proved unrighteousness; and the holy practice to which the Christian is called. Yet from this immense scope of divine truth and grace the last chapter turns to the most touching salutations of love with an individuality of cordial interest in each beyond parallel; and the more striking because the Epistle is written to all the saints in the metropolis of the world, which he had not as yet visited. Yet there his heart went out into characteristic details of their service, many of them lowly men and women, honoured and loved for Christ's name by him who was alike His, greatest servant and greatest sufferer. Was not this truly divine? Yet where was the human element more conspicuous? It is equally God's word, in which one has well said, Nothing is too great for man, nothing too small for God. As He can afford, so He effectually works in Christ and by His Spirit.

It is not otherwise in the confidential letters the apostle sent to his true and beloved child in the faith. The weightiest injunction is in the First Epistle laid on Timothy; not only as to godly order but also fundamental truth, but along with directions for befitting decision in his public position, tender solicitude for his bodily health and frequent illnesses. So in the still more solemn dangers which the Second contemplates, with the apostle's speedy departure. Timothy's affectionate care in what the apostle wanted at that time is fully counted on, as love ever does. Such episodes would be doubtless entirely out of place in a Bishop's Charge or a Pope's Encyclical; but they admirably bring out the wholly different atmosphere of scripture, and in particular of the N.T. There the Holy Spirit working in man delights in blending zeal for the eternal principles of God's nature and glory in the gospel, and in the church as the witness of His truth, with consideration for an earnest man of God, lest he should yield overmuch to abstemious scruple and forego that liberty in the use of the creature which his bodily well-being required. There, even when the imminent and hopeless ruin of the Christian profession was intimated along with the holy and unfailing safeguards for the most difficult times, the same Spirit does not fail to show that His entering into the least details of life are perfectly compatible with the solemn last words of the great apostle. Do we not find the same principle in the dying charge of the Saviour Himself (John 19:27)?

Here are the passages. "No longer be a water-drinker, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent infirmities" (1 Timothy 5:23). "The cloak, which I left behind in Troas with

Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13). In the first case divine wisdom overrules the morbid tendency of a truly devoted servant. The body is for the Lord, as the Lord is for the body. Hence as impurity is evil, so is asceticism alien, though flesh may glory in the latter, as it might indulge in the former. Christ alone maintains both holiness and liberty; and the apostle was here inspired so to exhort Timothy. A Rabbi, a theologian, might regard such a reference beneath the dignity of a divine mandate for all time. But thus they only betray the empty arrogance of the earthen vessel. Here we have the treasure in it. Here we own the condescension of God's love, as we do the majesty of His truth and the purity of His ways, in the same context, pressed by the awe-enforcing words, "I charge in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, that thou keep these things without prejudice, doing nothing according to prepossession" (1 Timothy 5:21). In the second case, what a lesson for us to read, at such a crisis of the apostle's life, and in delivering his final message in the Spirit to the same cherished fellow-labourer in tones of the deepest gravity, and on truth meant to be the stay of the godly when seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived! He was again a prisoner, already being poured out, and the time of his release come, looking for the crown of righteousness, which the Lord would render to him, and not to him only but also to. all who love His appearing. He bids Timothy use diligence to come to him quickly, but withal to bring with him the cloak left with Carpus in Troas, and again to come before winter (1 Timothy 5:21). Is not this a pathetic glimpse why he wished "the cloak?" God was not unmindful of his need nor of ours. Whether he had no means to procure a new one, or he judged it of God rather to request the old one, have we nothing to learn? Nor are "the books" without guidance to us. I do not believe he meant either "the sacred letters" of the O.T. (2 Timothy 3:15), nor 'scripture" generally (1 Timothy 3:16), but his "books" of an ordinary kind. The apostle was no fanatic, but as far as possible from it, as this testifies, particularly at such a moment. "The parchments" he wished especially. They were wanted for more permanent use, and seem to have been not yet written on. Did he desire them for copying his Epistles, now that he had his departure in immediate view? Oh! the grace of the Lord in giving what is here conveyed, not as a private note but in an Epistle of his, which is among those which the apostle Peter pronounces to be "scriptures." It is the human element of God's word.

6. We may now compare the Second Epistle of Peter with that of Jude. For erudite ignorance loves to set one against the other, lowering one if not both, and denying God's inspiration of the two in any adequate sense. In comparatively early days unbelief worked in the active minds of Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and many more. Nor was this surprising; as they were no less daring in their speculations on Christ's person, and as to revelation generally. It is easy to feel difficulties and suggest doubts. It needs distrust in self and faith in God to await His solving the one and dispelling the other, as far as it may seem good. In every case the positive weight of revealed truth is so great in all the disputed Epistles of the N.T., as against not only the early spurious writings but the best remains of the post-apostolic writers, that to discredit the former is as inexcusable as to accept the latter. Circumstances might be adverse, and influence carry away souls for a season in this place or that. But as those writings which compose the N. T. were in the earliest days received as divinely inspired without any known question, so even in face of a deeply fallen and degenerating state the objections and reasonings of incredulity passed away into their own nothingness. Individuals now and then revived these, until the rage of free-thinking in modern days emboldened men far and wide to flatter themselves that faith in

revelation is well nigh perished from the earth. How little they are aware that such are the precursors of that dark and destructive hour which awaits Christendom when the apostasy shall coma and the man of sin be revealed! Yet this the apostle Paul was given to reveal in one of his earliest Epistles. He furnished the light of God: they spread the darkness of the pit, before that day. The fact is that both these Epistles carry the indelible marks of divine inspiration. We cannot doubt that their writers were familiar one with another, and both with the O.T. as well as the Christian revelation. The facts and the truths of which these Epistles are full were habitually before their souls till the Holy Spirit saw fit to prompt their communication in this permanent form. No considerate believer can wonder that there is not a little common ground of solemn warning and urgent importance. But it is of the deepest interest to trace that difference of spiritual design which God alone ever did or could effectuate. This rationalism quite fails to discern. Yet the proofs of it are intrinsic and even plain, irresistible too in the measure of our faith. So it ought to be in a moral book like the Bible, where mathematical demonstration would be not only absurd and impossible but destructive of its character and aim. No doubt the two Epistles confirm each other, both being perfectly true and occasionally touching the same facts and truth. But they were given of God for the more momentous task of bringing out His mind in distinct ways of the utmost gravity, which one only, perfect for its own purpose, could not have done.

Both Epistles treat of the growing ruin of Christendom, Peter’s as a question of unrighteousness to God, Jude’s of departure from His grace.

We may readily see that Peter’s two Epistles are characterised by the place given to God’s moral government: the first chiefly with the believer, redeemed and begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and passing through the wilderness world as a stranger and sojourner, suffering for righteousness’ sake and Christ’s name; the second, rather on the difficulties created by the rebellious wickedness not only of the world, but of those who bore the Lord’s name falsely and in unrighteousness, with God’s judgment impending, sure, and everlasting.

Jude treats of the narrower scene but profounder evil of ungodly men who crept in privily, turning the grace of our God, and denying the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is more special apostasy, not general unrighteousness as with Peter, but evidently and particularly found in the Christian profession.

Hence in his Second Epistle Peter does not say more of the false teachers than their denying the Master that bought them. They reject the universal title which the Sovereign Master teas by purchase. Accordingly, as the saints received like precious faith with the apostles through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and were exhorted to add the becoming moral qualities, the false teachers are warned of God’s righteous and unslumbering judgment. And the examples chosen are viewed in this light. God spared not angels when they "sinned," nor the old world when the deluge came on the "ungodly," though He preserved with seven others Noah a preacher of "righteousness." And so afterwards He reduced Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, rescuing Lot "a righteous" man; as subsequently Balaam is dwelt largely on who loved "unrighteousness’ wages." In 2 Peter 3:1-18, where Peter predicts the mockers at the end of the days, he vividly sets out the day of the Lord and the total dissolution of all nature on the solidity of which such men build, and God’s bringing in new heavens and a new earth where. in dwelleth

"righteousness."

Jude on the other hand draws attention to the fact that the Lord, having saved a people out of Egypt's land, in the second place destroyed those that believed not. Of this Peter did not speak but Jude, who treats of departure from grace, not of simple opposition to righteousness. Thence when he speaks of angels, it is of those that kept not their own first state. They were apostates. And when we hear next of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is as, in like manner with them, going away after other flesh. Michael the archangel is specified by Jude as in contrast with railing. So a far fuller picture of Christian apostasy is given in ver. 14, Cain and Korah as well as Balaam. In Korah's gainsaying, where apostasy is clear, they are to perish. Again, we have Enoch's prophecy here only on the terrible end; for that holy man in the vision saw the Lord coming judicially. And Jude shows us Him that is able to set the saints exulting and blameless before His glory: the special hope, and not the general blessedness of which Peter spoke so appropriately.

It would be no difficult thing to draw up a detailed comparison of the minute verbal proofs of the different designs which pervade the two Epistles. But this would afford evidence interesting chiefly to the student, and would be quite in place in an exegetic comment of that kind. The aim here is simply to furnish proof, overlooked by those who boast much of erudition, but quite accessible to every believer, that there is not the smallest ground for the cavil of Peter borrowing from Jude, or Jude from Peter. On the contrary there is incontestable certainty from their own words, that the Holy Spirit gave each of them his own distinctive line, both Epistles contributing their very solemn and united testimony, and each in its differences of purpose and aspect of the highest value, to give us the complete truth of God. The more salient features are ample for what is now in hand; the details, if honestly and intelligently followed up, will furnish accumulative confirmation.

7. We may conclude this chapter with a brief examination of the Second and Third Epistles of John. Many years ago I remember Cardinal Wiseman (then Rector of the English College in Rome), in his zeal for Romanism, challenging the Christian as to these two Epistles. How demonstrate from internal facts their inspiration? Why could they not have been written by a very holy and pious man, without any aid whatsoever from that special work of the Holy Spirit?*

*Lectures on the Doctrines and Practices of the Roman Catholic Church (London, Hodson, 1836), Lect. ii. 28. But finding that this was not "authorized," and that an edition was afterwards sanctioned by the author, I quote from it also (Vol. i. 38. London. Joseph Booker, 61 New Bond Street, 1886). "I would ask what internal mark of inspiration can we discover in the third Epistle of St. John, to show that the inspiration sometimes accorded must have been granted here? Is there anything in that Epistle, which a good and virtuous pastor of the primitive ages might not have written? Anything superior in sentiment or doctrine, to what an Ignatius or a Polycarp might have indited?"

Thus it is that the Romanist takes ground similar in principle to the infidel. In his anxiety to exalt the claims of his own sect, which he assumes to be God's church, he denies the intrinsic self-evidencing power of the scripture. The infidel indeed rejects it absolutely, and denies more than man in the case; the Romanist regards the church as the voucher for the written word, so that scripture is thus subordinated to ecclesiastical authority. For the essence of faith is that one believes God's testimony, because it is He that speaks or writes. If one requires somebody else as his warrant in order to believe His word, this is in effect to believe that other warrant, rather than to

believe God Yea, it is to frustrate the very aim and the desired end of faith; for this is to put the soul by believing His word into immediate relationship with God. It is true that He reveals Himself in Christ; but does this hinder? On the contrary He above all promotes and effects perfectly that immediateness of association with God, being God and man in one person. He Whom God sent speaketh the words of God. Through Him, says 1 Peter 1:21, we believe in God that raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory, so that our faith and hope are Godward. If Christ were not God, there would be interposed a barrier to keep the soul away from God; but as the image of the invisible God, and the Only-begotten Son, He shows us not only God in His nature but the Father in the richest gift of His love and in the deepest nearness of His relationship, that we through Him dead and risen may know His Father our Father, and His God our God.

"Never man spake like this man," said those whom His enemies sent to apprehend Him (John 7:46). Yet what can be more striking than His own testimony to the scriptures for which men claim the validating or sealing authority of the church? "How can ye believe, receiving as ye do glory one of another, and seek not the glory that is from the only God? Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for about me he wrote. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words" (John 5:44-47)? Thus, where the Lord is enumerating the witnesses to the Jews why they should believe on Him, He gives pointedly the highest place, over spoken words, to the written word as having a permanence from God peculiar to itself. Not to believe scripture is virtually that God did not and could not make it bind the conscience to receive it as His without the church's authority to stamp it. The church is bound to be a witness and keeper of God's word, and all the more because blessed beyond measure through it; but to set up to be its necessary and authoritative warrant is shameless arrogance and unbelieving profanity.

How then do these two short Epistles carry in their own contents the evidence of God, as they do of 'the beloved disciple?" They are a pair, like those to the Ephesians and the Colossians. Yet have they the genuine mark of originality, in form and wisdom from above, in object and execution. They both insist solemnly on the truth, on love, on obedience; and this because Christ is all, alike to writer, readers, and the saints. The glory of the Father and the Son, the confession of Jesus Christ coming in flesh, is even more peremptorily urged in the Second Epistle than in the Third. Yet the Second is addressed to an elect lady and to her children, the Third to Gaius the beloved. For in the former case the foundation was at stake; in the latter no such peril existed but a turbulent self-seeking man, who opposed the free service of Christ in the truth, whereas Gaius is exhorted to go on as he had begun in its gracious support.

It is well known what doubt exists among the learned,* and from early days till the present to whom the Second was written. And no wonder. God no more meant us to know the name of the lady here than of the sinful woman in Luke 7:1-50 on which so much foolish conjecture has been spent. It is as plain Greek as could be written for "an elect lady," whom with her children the apostle loved in truth. But she was not meant to be named; while the solemn duty laid on any was meant to be perpetuated whenever the like danger arose. Thus, while the injured glory of Christ claimed this service from the apostle, under the touching and lowly title of "the elder," while a lady and her children were the object of the Holy Spirit's inspired injunction (to cut off all plea that they were surely to be spared this painful token of loyalty to Christ), the written word expressly omitted to register the name in such a distressing case and paramount obligation. It is not "the" but "an elect

lady."

’Thus, Capellus, Grotius, de Lyra, Bp. Middleton, Wetstein, Wolff, etc. took Eclecta for the proper name, as Bengel, Benson, Carpzov de Wette, Fritzsche, Heumann, Jachmann, Lange, Lücke, Rosenmüller with the Peschito Syriac, took Kyria (lady), while Beza, Aretas, Baum-Crusius, Corn-a-lap, Doddridge, Lardner, Mill, like the A. & R. Vv Heidegger, Luther. Piscator, Wells, etc. preferred "to the elect lady," some suggesting Drusia, Martha, or the Lord’s mother Mary. Greek and Latin fathers inclined to the church in general; as moderns to a particular one here or there. Even Dean Alford in his third edition gives "lady" in his notes, but in his Prolegomena gives his suffrage for Kyria. T. D. Michaelis suggested the wild idea of elect church assembling on a Lord’s day! His experience, however, must be small, if not familiar with the artifices of heterodoxy in taking advantage of a woman and of young persons. Let us not forget that even those branded as antichrists once seemed as fair and zealous as others. One of the most hideous in our own age began his career as a clergyman with earnest evangelicalism and conversion work in numerous souls. If he called on a Christian household which used to honour him and his work, after that the deadly error betrayed itself, how natural for him to enter on the old terms, and for them to welcome one of whom personally they knew only good!" I am but a woman, not a brother, still less an elder: who am I to sit in judgment on a dear servant of God? And my children so young in the faith, are they to refuse his kindly visit? Surely we do no wrong in showing love, as the poor brother has had to bear such fearful censure from the brethren." No! the elder was inspired of God to cut off any such excuses of weakness, reminding the lady and her children of the infinite worth of Christ, and causing them to wax valiant in fight, as truth and love pointed, and in no way yielding to the enemy. "If any one cometh unto you and bringeth not this doctrine [the truth of Christ’s person], receive him not into the house, and greet him not; for he that greeteth him partaketh in his wicked works."

Wholly different in circumstances, the Third Epistle rests on the same basis of Christ. It is, as in the Second, life eternal shown in the walk of truth, love, and obedience. Gaius was prospering in his soul; so that "the elder" wishes him to prosper, not surely "above" but "about all things," and be in health too, for in such a case it would not be misused. In the work and among the workmen of the Lord disappointments occur. Gaius persevered in loving aid, notwithstanding difficulties and trials. "The elder" rejoiced exceedingly in the testimony borne, not only to his walking truthfully in the truth he knew, but to his faithful identification in love with the labouring brethren, even when strangers, setting them forward on their way worthily of God; and all the more, because for the Name they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentile sort. Nay, the apostle went so far as to say emphatically, "We therefore ought to receive [or, welcome] such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." What grace on the apostle’s part!

Now the nice propriety here is as manifest as in the preceding Epistle. On the one hand, a woman, indeed we might say "a lady" in particular, needs to watch against what her affections might prompt, and what (she thought) might be expected of her. Looking to Christ would guard and guide her, where she had adequate testimony that there wrought the deceiver and the antichrist. In and for His name to shut the door would make the house a fort impregnable for her and her children. Did they not owe supreme allegiance to Him? On the other hand a man is not so lively in his affections and therefore less exposed to yielding thereby; he is apt to confide in his judgment, and liable to shut up his bowels of compassion if he fears being imposed on. But Gaius, being a good

man, persevered in love as he walked in truth; and thus to go on is far more than to begin warmly. Nor must he be cowed by the imperious party-spirited surliness of one in the assembly, like Diotrephes, who loved the first place, prated with wicked words against such as the apostle, and set himself violently against the brethren that went about, carrying Christ's name every where. This was heart-breaking enough; but let him think of one that did good like Demetrius, testified to by all and by the truth itself; even as John did, whom Gaius knew to give a true witness. In these two Epistles then we have an admirable provision of inspired wisdom for individual guidance in "the last time"; as in the First Epistle God gave us the fullest unfolding of Christ in His person especially, but also in His work, when antichrists abound. Where such an evil dares to enter, even a lady and her children are called to act in the most decided manner, lest they might be entrapped into misprision of treason. They are therefore warned not to receive even into a house him that brought not the doctrine of Christ, no matter how fair appearances might be. Christ admits of no compromise; a lady and her children must not shirk their responsibility. But the beloved Gaius is by name exhorted to receive those who did good in Christ's name. Here no delicacy need preserve silence as to his person. As he was doing faithfully and in love, let him not grow weary, but be all the more zealous in gracious consideration of Christ's messengers. He was to imitate not what is evil, glaring as it might be in Diotrephes, but what was good; and this, as he knew it to be of God, he might find in Demetrius. It is well then not to be in despair but to be in our watch-tower, when we prove how many deceivers are (not entered, but) "gone out into the world." But let us rejoice that in the darkest time we are cheered by the love and fidelity of a Gaius and a Demetrius; and as they have apostolic sanction, so also then especially are "the friends" to greet and be greeted. In short we have instruction for a time of exceeding and increasing danger, whom to receive, and whom to refuse. It is invaluable and imperative to him. To the Cardinal all this might seem wild and uncanonical. He ask if this (and much more of which we need not speak) might not be within the scope of a pious and holy man. Divine authority is nil to him without the church's. Alas! ritualism blinds almost equally with rationalism, as both stand opposed to the truth that is according to godliness. But these Epistles strikingly attest, not the absence of the human element, but the power of divine inspiration adapting the truth, with apostolic sanction and a prophetic insight wholly beyond the creature, to the exigencies of each case, one of them fundamental, both of great moment.

04A.03 Part 3

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 3

Chapter 5.

Divine Design.

Among the marks of God’s word, none is more impressive or important than the design which the Holy Spirit was pleased to stamp indelibly on the various books individually and on the entire collection as a whole; and this not only on the O.T. and the N. T. separately, but on both as forming what we, Christians at least, call the Bible. There are faults of transcription in the Hebrew as in the Greek. There are shortcomings and errors of translation in ancient as in modern versions. There are yet more abundantly mistakes in the commentaries from the earliest extant down to our own day. But all these flaws together, though some may congeal the witness of a detail, cannot deface to the instructed eye of the believer (save in a very small degree) the exquisite beauty of the Scriptures, "For ever singing as they shine, The hand that made us is divine." And this is as much above the orbs of the sky, of which one of our own poets used the words, as what is material sinks below the expression of God’s word, mind, gracious affections, and glorious purposes, for His children and His people, and all the nations too, which find their centre, their aim, and their accomplishment in Christ the Son of His love and the Lord of all. That unbelief fails to hear God in His word goes without saying. So Scripture itself testifies; and such is its experience since it was written and diffused in every age, land, and tongue. Nor could it be otherwise with man fallen into alienation from God as a race. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God," says the apostle to the Romans (Romans 8:7). The world by wisdom knew not God," writes he to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:21). Who can wonder when he reads the overwhelming words to the Ephesians (Ephesians 2:1-3)? "And you, being dead in your offences and sins, in which ye (Gentiles) walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we (Jews) all too had once our conversation in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest." "And you, being once alienated and enemies in mind by your wicked works," writes he to the Colossians (Colossians 1:21). There is therefore innate repugnance to God and His word in every child of Adam. Hence the absolute necessity of being born anew, as our Lord assured Nicodemus (John 3:3-5): "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And if they believed not when He told them the earthly things, how would they believe if He were to tell them the heavenly things? For God’s kingdom embraces both, Christ being the Heir of all things, already set on high, as He will soon be manifested Head over them all. But all this, and, yet more, the ground of it in His personal glory and in the efficacious work of reconciliation through His death, are unknown to and scorned by the haughty unbelief of man. This sees in the scripture (say of the Pentateuch, the very foundation of the O.T. and no less maintained as divine in the N.T.) only a patch-work of antique human legends which do not even agree, if not an imposture, at least a romance put together as a whole in Samuel’s or even

Josiah’s day if not later still. But so abominable a fraud is the baseless imputation of old English Deists, burnished up to date by the mischievous ingenuity and the ponderous learning of their modern successors, chiefly in Germany and Holland, to say nothing of their English-speaking disciples.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they and have done abominable iniquity; there is none that doeth good. God looked down from the heavens upon the sons of man to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back; they are together become corrupt; there is none that doeth good, not even one" (Psalms 53:1-3). So it is that those self-styled "higher" but really sceptical critics treat His word. They exclude God from the authorship of the Scriptures. Not one of them honestly accepts the Lord’s ruling by the apostle Paul (2 Timothy 3:16): "every scripture is God-inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness." It is a sentence expressly affirming divine inspiration, not for the writers only but of every whit, even to be written, as Scripture. So he had already spoken of the O. T. in 2 Timothy 3:15, distinguished by a different term so as to lend the greater emphasis; thus he takes in every part of what grace was supplying as God’s latest communication. Of course the word that Timothy knew applies to what was written of old; for the Scriptures, like other boons from God, are committed to the care of His own, ever liable to fail in keeping intact, and duly understanding, and conveying to others, the holy deposit. To remove such human intrusions is the legitimate function of the critic; so that the reader may have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In no other book but the Bible is this found; no, nor in all others put together.

Now the neo-critics start with the preliminary lie that the Scriptures are in no real sense the word of God. They hence deprive themselves and their followers of all confidence in what is written, where no question arises of its primitive text. As they do not truly believe in God’s inspiring any Scripture, so still less if possible do they look for His revelation of Himself in it, either in its wondrous unity, or in each part consistently and perfectly contributing to that grand end; and this throughout the varied dealings of God with man, before sin came in, and afterwards, when there was neither the law of God, nor the government of man ordained by Him; when the promises to the fathers were made, and when the law was given by Moses to their sons; when the Levitical system was introduced, and the shadows of the coming good things accompanied it; when the judges followed till Samuel, and kings were set up; when the prophets became more distinct and pronounced, developing on God’s part what Moses predicted more generally, from the first judgment of Israel, then of Judah’s idolatrous departure and every other from Jehovah, "till there was no remedy;" and times of the Gentiles began by His people becoming Lo-ammi (not-My-people), and the world-power given meanwhile to the Four Empires. Under the Fourth or Roman was sent the Messiah, presented too with every evidence of grace, truth, and power of God in humiliation, but for this very reason rejected by all, even and worst of all by the Jewish remnant which had returned under the Second empire from captivity in Babylon. Thus was fulfilled the word of the prophets, both in God found by Gentiles that sought Him not, and in the Jews losing their place for the time as a rebellious people to whom He had spread out His hands all the day. Compare Isaiah 65:1-2, with Romans 10:20-21.

Hence the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the Only-begotten Son of God, brought out not only the lost and evil state of man, but that of the Jews more guilty still. For in the cross, which was the deepest

proof of their combined iniquity, was accomplished fully by Christ the will of God, in virtue of which we have been and are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10). The gospel of God's grace to all mankind, and the church (the body of Christ in the baptism of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven), are the blessed consequences which required that new revelation of God commonly called the New Testament. This fully confirms the O.T. in every respect as divine, fulfilling it notably in prophecies of Messiah's person, God and man; His unique walk, mission, and service; His death too, not only through man's hatred but in God's atoning grace; His resurrection and ascension; and His return to raise the dead, to restore the kingdom to Israel, to bless the earth and all the nations, having put down the higher or spiritual powers of evil. But the N.T., besides sealing the truth of the O.T., reveals for the Christian and the church the mysteries of the kingdom, showing a state of things quite different from the old, and yet more the mysteries with regard to the church, wholly incompatible with Israel's position either in the past or in the future. This therefore only comes into actuality and view when that people as a whole had for a while forfeited its privileges by adding the cross of Christ to its idolatry. Indeed man's responsibility as under law, and still more widely God's government, run through the O.T., though there is also prophetic testimony to His purpose in Christ. But the New Testament gives us the Son of God come, a man yet the True God and Eternal Life. This brings in the greatest change. It is no longer as in the O.T. God hidden and dwelling in the thick darkness, but God manifested" in Him, Who is Son as none else is or can be, the Word become flesh. His death, as sacrifice for sin, goes farther still: not simply God in man tabernacling among men, full of grace and truth, but the veil rent, sin judged in the cross, and the man, at least believing man, brought to God, all the offences forgiven, himself once and completely purged so as to have no more conscience of sins, and God's Spirit thereon abiding in him for ever. Such is the Christian; nor is it all the privilege which might be said. This gives a nearer, a more intimate, character to the N.T. generally; but divine authority belongs equally to both O. and N. Its authority is because God speaks in both through His instruments. If we do not hear Him, we have no living faith. A tract or a sermon, a parent or a preacher, may be the means of presenting the truth to my soul; but if I have not believed God, my faith is human and worthless. We are thus born of God, receiving Christ, the object and spirit of the word, as the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 3:17 : "Now the Lord is the spirit" (referring to ver. 6, not the letter but the spirit of the O.T.). When men rest on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, they receive the Holy Spirit Who guides into all the truth. Doubtless we only know in part; yet even spiritual babes (1 John 2:1-29) are assured that they know all things. Ere long it is learnt that each book (remembering that such as the two of Samuel, and their continuation in the Kings, etc. go together), has its proper design permeating it, whether in O.T. or in N. Of this its own contents must be the evidence, as will by grace be presented severally ere long. To draw it out fully would demand many large volumes doubtless, even if one had spiritual ability for so serious and difficult a task. Here but a small space can be devoted to the purpose. This means that no more can be attempted at present than a cursory view of the various writings which compose the Bible. Such a sketch however involves the advantage that the proofs which scripture furnishes in each case will stand forth free from those clouds of commentary which so often overload and disguise the text.

There is thus no more striking characteristic of Scripture than the design God has imprinted on its various books. Old or New Testament makes no difference. The poetic portion attests it no less than the prose, the prophetic as clearly as the historical. It is not at all unlikely that the various

writers may have been unconscious of any intention on their part to effect such a result. All the more instructive and sure is it that one animating and directing Author presided over each several part, imparting a special character to it, and at the same time causing all to contribute to the common purpose of revealing His counsels of glory and His ways of grace, while fully making known the weakness or the wickedness of the creature in resisting His will and doing its own. For that such is the fact, not obviously on the surface but indelibly and deeply underlying the entire body of the Scriptures, is the inevitable conviction produced on the Christian by the careful examination of the Bible as a whole and by the intelligent comparison of its component parts.

Evidence to appear consecutively and in due time will be set before the reader, unstrained, clear, and abundant, that the Scriptures are ruled from first to last by a moral purpose which discloses the wisdom and goodness of God rising above the failure of the creature, and especially man's sin giving occasion to the resources and the triumph of His grace in Christ for heaven and earth, time and eternity, for man, Israel, the saints of old, the church, and the nations. Who but God could have intimated so vast and far-reaching an intention from the first writing that ushers in all the books which follow through many generations, not only those composed in Hebrew (with Aramaic in a small degree), but such as after a marked interval appeared in Greek, revealing in that one generation of the N. T. the Son of God come, the gospel, and the church, the latest book being the suited answer to the earliest, manifestly also closing the complete compass of inspiration? That in the Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses we have the firm and ample foundation of the O.T. can be disputed by no reader subject to the truth. They are called the Torah or Law, as this is the institution of God given so fully in Exodus and Leviticus, with supplements drawn out by the journeys of Numbers, and the moral rehearsal of Deuteronomy in view of the entrance into the land of Canaan across the Jordan. The Prophets, early and later, as the Jews distinguished the books that succeed as well as the openly predictive books to which we give that name, attest the growing departure from the law, and hold out the bright vision of Messiah's Kingdom, not only for the restored people of Israel but for all the nations of the earth. Then the hosts of the high ones shall be punished on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. Then Jehovah shall be exalted, and the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Then the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. The Psalms constitute the third division, the leading portion (as in the other sections) giving its title to various books of an emotional and ethic character. Here too we find a class of writings which bear witness quite as strongly as the others to the grand design of God in His word: the ruin of the first man; the blessedness of the Second, even for all those of the ruined race that put their trust in Him (Psalms 2:12). In the Prophets we have formal witness indeed to a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, which shall supersede that of the law; when the promises to the fathers shall be made good in the true Seed.

It would be idle to impute to the N.T. in the least degree any imitation of the O.T. The fresh revelation has the distinctive power of a divine testimony to the Son of God, the Man Christ Jesus, manifested here below and ascended to heaven after accomplishing His great sacrificial work for man to God's glory. Yet one cannot fail, when attention is drawn to the new collection as compared with the old, to find the unmistakable proofs of a common plan, not named by a single writer, but evident when we have all before us. For there is a similar basis of fact historically presented: not the first but the Last Adam with the new creation dependent on Him, and

associated with its Head; and instead of the Law (given alike on a day of Pentecost), the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven to abide for ever. Here only is the "perfection," which was not possible by the law, though this made its need felt and was its shadow or even its foreshadow.

Then, after the Gospels and the Acts, we have the Epistles, which answer and more than answer to the Ketubhim or "writings" of the O.T., and unfold the grace and truth in Christ and His work and offices, with the blessed hope, all bearing on the heart and walk and worship of the saints.

Finally there is the one wondrous book of the Apocalypse preceded by not a little in the Gospels and Epistles as in the analogy of the O.T. Therein all the predictive revelations of Scripture are co-ordinated and completed, not only till the establishment of the displayed kingdom of the Lord Jesus filling the heavens and the earth to God's glory, but right on to the endless issues of all in eternity, when evil is finally and for ever judged, and the new heavens and earth are come, wherein righteousness, instead of ruling by power, can and does dwell unbroken and absolutely perfect, God being all in all.

Thus is there, where much else differs, a very distinct correspondency in the two volumes, the Old and the New, without the least effort after it by any writer in either volume. What could more indicate without a cloud one Divine mind of infinite purity and goodness, Light and Love, communicating in the Scriptures, as He will accomplish in fact, those purposes worthy of Himself and of His Son, full of blessing for all who believe, but of everlasting judgment to those that love Him not and despise His word?

Let us now test the reality of distinct purpose on God's part attributed to His word, beginning with the earliest book of Scripture.

§1. GENESIS. The Bible opens with the creation, distinguishing the beginning when man was not nor our environment of nature, and intimating a state of convulsion for the earth at least, which followed the original act and preceded its formation for the human race (Genesis 1:1-2). The week is then detailed which ushers in Adam, God (Elohim)'s work and rest (Genesis 1:3-31, Genesis 2:1-3). The true commencement of Genesis 2 is in Genesis 2:4, where the name of Jehovah Elohim, or the LORD God, necessarily appears as in Genesis 3 also. For the design was to identify Elohim, the Creator, with Jehovah, the moral Governor, Who established man, not as a living soul merely, but by His inbreathing into him only in immediate relationship with Himself, and set in a paradise planted for him, yet with moral responsibility put to the proof and provision for life if obedient, but if disobedient with death the penalty. Nor this only, but man's relation to his wife, builded out of himself to be his intimate counterpart and so named by himself, is here; as he also gave names to the subject creation of the earth, bird, and beast.

Genesis 3:1-24 shows how man fell through the woman by the wiles of a mysterious foe who availed himself of the serpent as medium, and so acquired to the end the title of "the old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan" (Revelation 20:2). The design here required the same divine designation as in the chapter before, the form of which is all the more apparent from the omission of Jehovah by the serpent and by the woman parleying with the tempter (Genesis 3:1-5). But the solemn sentence of death was not passed on the head of the race, now knowing good and evil, without a previous curse on the serpent, wherein was intimated the blessed assurance of the woman's Seed, bruised in heel, to bruise the enemy's head. Coats of skins were given to the guilty

pair, who knew themselves not the less naked for their fig-leaf aprons. The divine covering for sinners had its source in death; it was grace, but in righteousness.

Thereon follows the essential difference between Adam's sons in Genesis 4. Abel by faith brought a sacrifice. Cain, hard and unbelieving, brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, and, incensed at Jehovah's acceptance of Abel and his offering, slew his righteous brother. What a picture of man's worship! so the close of the chapter is of his world with art and science and pleasures of life to hide that he is an outcast, a vain substitute for paradise. Here accordingly Jehovah's name appears with strict propriety; the exceptional case in vers. 25 only confirms it, as Eve's natural expression, disappointed in her spiritual thought of ver. 1. Yet is Seth the appointed seed that succeeds the slain Abel, and men call on Jehovah's name: so it will be, as it was. In Genesis 5:1-32 is a review of the race down to Noah and his offering. Adam and his sons, long as they might live, died at length. For if Elohim created and made, death entered through sin; but Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him. It was not simple government, but Elohim known and acting according to His nature. On the other hand Jehovah as properly is used in Genesis 5:29 where His moral dealing is in view. Of all those, two men are divine witnesses, respectively of heavenly grace, and of earthly judgment yet with mercy glorying against it.

Then Genesis 6:1-8 proceeds with righteous judgment under Jehovah's name, which is no way inconsistent with "the sons of God" in Genesis 6:2 and Genesis 6:4, as in Job a regular designation; whereas Elohim along is found in Genesis 6:9-22. The expression is as accurate as the design is evident. Relationship was violated; and nature was corrupted; but if judgment must ensue, the Creator duly perpetuates the creature. So in Genesis 7:1-24 Jehovah has respect for Noah and his house too, enjoining glean beasts and birds by sevens, not two as in His name of Elohim; and Noah obeyed in both (Genesis 7:5, Genesis 7:9). Oh, the blindness of pseudo-critics, who fancy inconsistency, when the divine wisdom was as plain in His acts as His design is in His word! What ignorance and folly to account for all this by the imaginary patchwork of tradition! See also the absurdity of an Elohist and a Jehovist in the same Genesis 7:16, where the two motives of divine action meet in Noah subject and kept safe. Truly "all have not faith:" woe to those who believe not! particularly if they profess the Lord's name.

Genesis 8:1-22 conversely has Elohim only in Genesis 8:1-9, but in Genesis 8:20-22 Jehovah no less instructively. This instruction pseudo-criticism denies and destroys, as far as it can, by the childish fancy of different legendists. Truly they labour for the fire and weary themselves for vanity. So Genesis 9:1-29 designedly gives Elohim throughout, save that the special blessing in Shem's case brings in Jehovah his God in Genesis 9:26, whereas in Genesis 9:27 of Japheth is said Elohim only. Conceive the imbecility as well as the unspirituality of supposing here two authors, where so much of the force depends on the One, Who first uttered all by one mouth, then writing all by a single pen in due time! As the end of Genesis 8:1-22 shows the world that was resting for its order on sacrifice, so Genesis 9:1-29 begins with the principle of government committed to man's hand, to which was added the sign of no deluge more. In Genesis 10:1-32 we have the rise of nations divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, from Noah's three sons; and even in those days Nimrod's assumption of despotic power, where alone Jehovah occurs, as right relationship was violated. But in the earlier verses (Genesis 11:1-9) of Genesis 11:1-32 we have Jehovah judging the moral cause for the scattering of men, bent on making themselves a name in one vast republic. From Genesis 11:10 the generations of Shem are traced to bring in "the

fathers," and afterward "the sons," of Israel.

Genesis 12:1-20 presents Jehovah's call of Abram. He had left Ur of the Chaldees for Haran at the end of Genesis 11:1-32. Only when he "went as Jehovah had spoken to him" does he arrive in Canaan. He first has the promises, father of the faithful, as Adam of all mankind. Abram is a pilgrim, with "this land" promised to his seed, and has not a tent only but altars he built to Jehovah. His was the walk and worship of faith. Under the pressure of famine he goes down into Egypt, and denies his true relationship to Sarai; so that she was taken into Pharaoh's house, and he became very rich with the king's gifts. Thus it was total failure; but Jehovah plagued Pharaoh, delivered Sarai, and dismissed Abram, who had no altar in Egypt and returns to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, unto the place of his altar there.

Genesis 13:1-18. Thereon strife among their herdmen leads to the separation of Lot from Abram, who has Jehovah's promise more fully renewed, and consequently builds another altar. But Genesis 14:1-24 shows Lot swept away in the world's wars, as he had already betrayed his worldly-mindedness. But Abram defeats the conquerors who led Lot captive. Then Melchizedek king of Salem blessed Abram on the part of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed God Most High Who delivered Abram's enemies into his hand. It is a picture which closes the first part of Abram's history, the type of the day of blessing, of "bread and wine," not of sacrifices nor of intercession above and unseen, which sustains now, based on sacrifice. Here the distinctive name is Jehovah, but qualified by God Most High (Elyon), the victory of faith when enemies are put down and rival gods vanish; heaven and earth unite in the blessing of God and His own under the priest Melchizedek reigning. How plain yet profound is this typical climax! Who could have designed it all but God? From Genesis 15:1-21 we have a fresh and subsequent order of things personal, rather that public, closing with Genesis 21:1-34, where the question of the heir is solved fully and in various points of view. First we have Jehovah's word coming in a vision, and the seed after the flesh in prophetic detail, and a sacrificial covenant by which the limits of the land are guaranteed. In Genesis 16:1-16 we see failure in the faith so bright in the chapter before, and the carnal impatience which sought it illegitimately, to her sorrow especially who had first suggested it. Not Hagar but Sarai must be the heir's mother. Cf. Galatians 4:1-31. In Genesis 17:1-27 Jehovah (for such is the name here also) appears to Abram revealing His title, specific for the patriarchs, of El Shaddai, God Almighty, and enlarging his name to Abraham, as his wife's was to be Sarah. Yet it is said to be Elohim so talking and saying: so baseless is the fancy of different documents or authors; and so perfect is the design in putting these elements together. Nations and kings were to come of Abraham and Sarah by an everlasting covenant established with Isaac, but with circumcision (expressing death to the flesh) which extended even to the connected stranger. Genesis 18:1-33 gives Jehovah's next appearing in intimate condescension; and the time of the heir's birth is announced, but after this too the judgment just about to fall on the guilty cities which draws out Abraham's intercession. This stopped short of what his heart yearned after; but Jehovah delivered Lot and his daughters, while punishing his wife's disobedience, as in Genesis 19:1-38. with its sad sequel. In Genesis 20:1-18. Abraham again denies his relationship to the mother of the coming heir; but Elohim warns Abimelech who also restores Sarah intact. God's grace alone shines throughout; but Jehovah had judged the deed (Genesis 20:18) in His righteous govern meet. The series concludes with Genesis 21:1-34, when the heir was born, and (soon after) the bondmaid' son was cast out, though preserved in respect for faithful Abraham. But

more now; for Abimelech, instead of reproving, stands reproved; and Beersheba attests the inheritance of the world, Abraham planting a tamarisk or grove and calling on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God (El Olam). The inheritance, wide as it is, may not compare with His grace Who gives all; but it is glorious. Who but One could have indited these communications? Did He leave them like Sibylline leaves to be blown about, and gathered by Elohists, Jehovists, or such like imaginary ghosts? His word is truth.

Genesis 22:1-24 lays the foundation in the Son's death and resurrection figuratively for new and heavenly things; Genesis 23:1-20 is the passing away of the mother, Israel; Genesis 24:1-67 the call of the bride for the risen bridegroom;* and Genesis 25:1-10 indicates other descendants of Abraham endowed with favour, but not to the disparagement of the heir of all; after which the father dies in a good old age. Here the futility of different hands, Elohist or Jehovist, is as manifest as before. Elohim tempted or tried Abraham's faith; yet the angel of Jehovah interposed after the proof that he feared Elohim; and so to the end of Genesis 22:1-24. Neither occurs in Genesis 23:1-20; but Jehovah the God of the heavens and the God of the earth etc. is in Genesis 24:1-67. In Genesis 25:11 Elohim blessed Isaac, yet after the generations of Ishmael (Genesis 25:12-18), Jehovah appears in those of Isaac: what more simple, intelligible, or accurate from one and the same hand? So it is Jehovah yet the God of Abraham in Genesis 26:1-35 even on Gentile lips; and again in Genesis 27:1-46. There we read "Jehovah hath blessed; and Elohim give thee" (Genesis 27:27-28): plain and sure evidence against the variorum hypothesis; and so is Genesis 28:3-4; Genesis 28:13; Genesis 28:16-17; Genesis 28:20-22.

* In Joseph's case we have the type of the bride repeated, but this to mark the fact that it w as when he who became the bridegroom was sold by and separated from his brethren, exalted to a glory by them unknown. The truth needs both figures; and each tale is true and has its own characteristics, as Moses' case has in Exodus 2:1-25.

Now we enter on Jacob's varied experience, hearing no more of Isaac but his death in Genesis 35:28-29, after a life spent exclusively in Canaan as contrasted with Abraham and Jacob. Divine design is evident in the scripture as well as in the fact. Isaac typified the Son who after death and resurrection is the church's Head and Bridegroom in the heavenlies. Compare Genesis 24:3-9; Genesis 24:37-41. Just as strikingly he who was even called Israel knows the greatest vicissitudes, as we see in the remaining chapters of the book. Was this casual? Did it not flow from God's design? It is Jehovah in Genesis 29:1-35 and Elohim in Genesis 30:2-23, yet in the next verse (Genesis 30:24) Rachel says not Elohim, but Jehovah; and thus it is in Genesis 30:27 and Genesis 30:30. The notion of different writers is mere fancy, explains nothing, and hinders all due enquiry into the divine motive for the change of name. See also Genesis 26:4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 25, 29. 42, 49, 50,53; Genesis 32:9; Genesis 32:28; Genesis 32:30; and Genesis 33:5; Genesis 33:10-11; Genesis 33:20.

One cannot wonder that neither name is in Genesis 34:1-31 or in Genesis 36:1-43, Genesis 37:1-36; but it is Elohim, God in His nature, God sovereign in His action, which appears in Genesis 35:1; Genesis 35:3; Genesis 35:7; Genesis 35:9-10; only the revealed El Shaddai, dropped with Isaac save in reference to Jacob (Genesis 28:3), here reappears (Genesis 35:11). Then Elohim is in Genesis 35:13, Genesis 35:155. But Jehovah is the name in Genesis 38:7; Genesis 38:10, where His rights were violated flagrantly in Judah's family; as His marked blessing was on Joseph

in Genesis 39:2-3; Genesis 39:5; Genesis 39:21; Genesis 39:23. What could be more correct? On the other hand Elohim alone suits Gen. 40:8, 16, 25, 32, 38, 39, 51, 52. It is the historic as well as abstract expression; and hence in Genesis 42:18; Genesis 42:28; Genesis 43:23; Genesis 43:29; Genesis 44:16; Genesis 45:5; Genesis 45:7-9; Genesis 46:1; Genesis 46:3; Genesis 47:9; Genesis 47:11; Genesis 47:15; Genesis 47:20-21; Genesis 49:25; Genesis 1:17; Genesis 1:19-20; Genesis 1:24-25; whilst in Genesis 48:14 and Genesis 48:3 it is El Shaddai, and in Genesis 49:1-33. Jehovah as specially due. God, or Elohim, is in contrast with man; Jehovah is His name of relationship; El Shaddai is the proper patriarchal title, as El Elyon is that of the kingdom in figure. But how manifestly we have divine purpose in progressive warning through Esau as before through Ishmael! For Esau was worse, a profane man despising his birthright, which Jacob, however faulty, was far from; but God is faithful in wanderings caused by his unbelief and given with much detail. It is the picture of Israel's sad history, the pledge of their future and blessed restoration to the promised land; as indeed God announced in Genesis 46:4, and predicts in Jacob's last words (Genesis 49:1-33). To this also point the burials there of his body and Joseph's. Nor can one fairly overlook the tale of Joseph, the general hatred on the part of his brethren, the special guilt and special recovery of Judah, the sale of Joseph to the Gentiles and their subsequent evil, Joseph's interpretation of God's mind in his humiliation, his elevation to administer the kingdom over the Gentiles with a wife then given him, and finally his reception of his brethren now penitent before his glory. A plainer type cannot be of God's dealings, much accomplished though some not even yet, all settled and sure if we believe the scriptures in general which teach these truths explicitly elsewhere as to Christ. Is not then divine design throughout the book of Genesis established of God beyond just question? How vast the scope from the absolutely first act of creative energy! How wise the details only when man was to be created! How important to distinguish the fact of the Adamic earth from the relative position of all concerned, and to show how soon and complete was the ruin through sin! Yet do we see immense long-suffering, till the violation of all order, added to man's growing corruption and overspread violence, draws down divine judgment, yet Noah and his house prepared by grace to begin the world, set under sacrifice on the one hand, and the principle of human government brought in on the other. Instead of filling the earth at God's command, the wilful effort to combine and make themselves a name was met by the confusion of tongues, which scattered mankind.

Thus began the nations divided in their lands, everyone after his tongue and his family. Then, when men began to serve other gods, as Joshua 24:1-33 tells us, Abraham was called out of country, kindred, and father's house, separated to the true God as His witness. To him was promised the land of Canaan, and yet more all the families of the earth to be blessed in him. Isaac typifies the risen Son in the heavenly places, with a bride called out from the world to join Him there. Jacob represents the earthly people, to be blessed at length in the kind after bitter experiences in and out of it, the effect of their own faults. In the midst of this history Joseph foreshadows Christ separated from his envious and hating brethren, but manifesting God's wisdom in his low estate, and exalted to the administration of a kingdom of the world. He is thus made known to the Jews, now humbled and owing their preservation to him as all others do; yet was his heart set on the people and land notwithstanding; where the great prophecy of Genesis 49:1-33 shows they are to be at the end of days. Is all this a concourse of atoms? or the certain work of divine purpose?

§ 2. EXODUS.

Very different from the first is the second book of the Pentateuch. Here, instead of the vast variety which meets us in Genesis, we have in the main one great truth developed, with the antecedents which made its necessity felt, and with the most characteristic consequence which ensued in God's wisdom and goodness. For here in a way peculiar to itself we have redemption accomplished for Israel, the foreshadow of an eternal one in Christ, in its foundation, its display, and its effects. The basis one must be blind not to see typified in the Paschal sacrifice; and the displayed power in the passage of the Red Sea: the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The effect is seen in God's tabernacling in their midst. What lends it the greater force is that, multifarious as are the counsels and the ways of God which Genesis presents to us in germ, redemption is wholly absent from its contents. The very word occurs only once toward the close in its general or figurative application to Jacob's life; and thus is quite distinct from that precise sense which the type in Exodus vividly supplies. Can any proof of specific design on God's part be asked more powerful than this, supposing the facts to be made out clearly and without violence? Let us then examine the evidence.

Exodus 1:1-22 opens with the sons of Israel after Joseph's death waxing many and mighty but, under a king that knew not Joseph, bitterly oppressed. The then king of Egypt sought even to destroy the males. This was counteracted at first; but in Exodus 2:1-25 the murderous aim was pressed so far that Hosea could not be longer hid. Him when exposed Pharaoh's daughter found and brought up as her son; who, when not only grown up but going out to see his afflicted brethren, slew an Egyptian evildoer, but finding no right feeling in the objects of his care, had to flee the king's resentment. The time was not yet some; and Moses in Midian protects the daughters of its priest-king, one of whom he marries; and his son "Gershom" witnesses that he was no settler there but a sojourner, who remembered his brethren: so God did His covenant with their fathers as He heard their groans. In Exodus 3:1-22 when "Jehovah" saw that he turned to see the bush that burnt, unconsumed with fire, "Elohim" called to him (Exodus 3:4). How irrational as well as unspiritual to imagine more than one writer! Jehovah is relative name, Elohim is God in nature. Compare Exodus 3:7 and Exodus 3:14, where He adds "I AM THAT I AM" as the name to assure His despairing people, and sends Moses and their elders with the petition to let them go. Then in Exodus 4:1-31 Jehovah gives two signs and even a third for his mission, and makes Aaron to be his spokesman when hesitating, as once too precipitate. So Moses bids his father-in-law farewell, and with wife and sons returns to Egypt, but not without a solemn reminder of a neglected duty for both husband and wife. Aaron meets him at Jehovah's command on the mountain of God, and the people bow and worship when they heard. Next in Exodus 5:1-23 they lay Jehovah's message before Pharaoh, who scornfully flouts it, and cruelly aggravates the burden of the Israelites under penalty; so that they suffer more than ever, and Moses pours out His plaint. But Jehovah (Exodus 6:1-30) assures him that He would act so that Pharaoh should drive them out of his land. And here He formally inaugurates "Jehovah" for Israel, in contradistinction from the patriarchal revelation of "El-shaddai" (God Almighty), as the pledge of also bringing them into the promised land. But the people hearkened not for anguish, as Moses told Jehovah, when He bade him speak to Pharaoh. Both Moses and Aaron He charged with the same errand. Thereon follows a remarkable genealogy, as in Genesis; but as each there has its own character, so has this, which, starting with Reuben and Simeon, stops at Levi and his sons, giving prominence to "Aaron

and Moses" (Exodus 6:20-26) in natural order first, but lastly (Exodus 6:27) in spiritual power "Moses and Aaron." Is this then man's folly, or God's wisdom and design? For men have not been wanting to blow on it in their ignorant presumption. Let them learn His mind and give thanks.

After the preliminary sign in Exodus 7:1-25 the plagues follow God's demand refused: — 1, The river which they gloried in and adored was turned to blood for seven days at the time when even a red appearance never occurs; 2, Frogs swarmed so as to torment then in their houses, beds, ovens, everywhere; 3, The dust became lice or some equally noisome insect on man and beast; 4, So did flies swarm yet more grievously, but none in Goshen; 5, A deadly murrain overspread Egypt, but not Israel's quarter; 6, A boil broke out on all in Egypt man and beast; 7, Hail followed, and fire mingled, and thunder, without example in that land; 8, Locusts beyond parallel; 9, Darkness for three days that might be felt; 10, The first-born slain of man and cattle from the king to the slave, but Israel untouched (Exodus 8:1-32, Exodus 9:1-35, Exodus 10:1-29, Exodus 11:1-10).

Then came redemption by the blood of the lamb, Exodus 12:1-51. Without this, as Israel's ground before Jehovah, He could not go with a people sinful and degraded. But where He saw the blood, He would pass over (Exodus 12:13). On His own estimate of that blood, which pointed to the one efficacious sacrifice, He acted; as they at His word bad sprinkled it on the door-posts of each house. Pilgrims now, they fed on the lamb's flesh with bitter herbs (repentance) and without leaven (the emblem of corruption rejected). There is no type of redemption so clear and comprehensive. Who but God could have given it? or would have put it here, the most suited time and place in all the Bible? Israel, not the priest yet, was separated to Jehovah by it; and this marked by their first-born of man and beast, as well as by the feast of unleavened bread (Exodus 13:1-22) continually, in remembrance of the slain first-born of Egypt and judgment executed against all their gods. Exodus 14:1-31 completes the picture: redemption by power, which brought Israel dry-shod through the waters of death when they engulfed the flower and forces of Egypt. The song in Exodus 15:1-27 celebrates their salvation and their enemies overwhelmed, but Jehovah's holiness glorious. But they pass through a desert world, where the bitter waters need the tree cast in to sweeten them; but where they come to springs and palms in all fulness for refreshment by the way. The sabbath, figure of rest, is marked by the manna that typified Christ; as the living water, i.e. the Spirit, was given from the smitten rock (Exodus 16:1-36, Exodus 17:1-16), followed by conflict with the enemy, where victory depends on the continued intercession of the Mediator. This series of grace closes (Exodus 18:1-27) with the type of the orderly government of the kingdom; where the Gentile worships and eats bread with Israel, confessing Jehovah greater than all gods. From this reign of grace to glory we turn in Exodus 19:1-25 to law accepted as the condition of blessing and finding themselves under curse, instead of owning their sinfulness and pleading the promises. All is changed to menace of death, to thunder, lightning, and thick cloud; to trumpet's sound exceeding loud, and a voice of words more awful still, so that Moses quaked. Then the Ten Words were spoken; and national judgments were given afterwards (Exodus 20:1-26, Exodus 21:1-36, Exodus 22:1-31, Exodus 23:1-33). Blood sealed this covenant on the ground of the people doing all the words Jehovah had spoken: death was the solemn sanction of all; and Israel's elders eat and drink in God's presence. But Moses ascends higher to receive the tables of stone, and abides on high forty days and nights. In Exodus 25:1-40 Moses is directed that the Israelites should bring Him a heave-offering, as their heart prompted, of all the requisites in precious metals

and stones, in dyes, skins, wood, oil, fine cotton or byss, incense and aromatics, for the priesthood and the sanctuary, with all the parts and vessels of which He would show the patterns. They represented heavenly things, as we learn in Hebrews. Of these the ark is first with the mercy-seat and the cherubim in the holiest; then in the holy place the table, and the lamp-stand. Thus did Jehovah provide for manifesting Himself in His dwelling in the midst of His people. For to this grand effect of redemption are we now come. The ark was His seat in relationship with Israel, but in. truth as the Judge of all; there divine righteousness was attested. For on the day of atonement the blood was sprinkled upon it once, before it seven times. Christ Who alone glorified the Father in living obedience glorified God about sin on the cross. But there was also in the supporters the witness of judicial authority that would make Him respected. The table with its loaves set forth divine nourishment in man, as the lamp-stand divine light in the Spirit; of both which Christ is the fulness and perfect witness.

Exodus 26:1-37 presents the tabernacle itself with its curtains, boards, bars, and veil which severed the holy place from the most holy. Christ too was the true tabernacle or temple, though it had a wider application too. Next in Exodus 27:1-21 we have the copper-laid altar of Burnt-offering, and the court of the tabernacle with the requirement of oil for the light. This altar represents God's righteousness in Christ, as far at least as man's sin thoroughly judged, but in grace to the sinner, where he is and can come before Him freely. To rationalistic eyes it seems unaccountable disorder that the command for the consecration of the priesthood should be given in Exodus 28:1-43, Exodus 29:1-46. It is really divine wisdom; for thus is separated that part of these patterns of the heavenly which relates to God's manifestation of Himself to man, from what brings out the presenting of man to God in the sanctuary, though some may partake in a measure of both. But there is a true distinction; and the priesthood is the transition, as they were the medium which represented Israel therein. Aaron and his sons represented those of the heavenly calling in the grace of Christ minutely displayed and throughout those two chaps., as is plain enough to every instructed believer. Then in Exodus 30:1-38, the due place for it, comes first the altar of incense, as the type of Christ in intercession for the saints, a continual sweet savour, on the horns of which too the atoning blood was put. Next came the atonement-money, the same half-shekel for every one rich or poor; then the laver of copper for purifying Aaron and his sons; the holy anointing oil also for them; and the perfume of aromatics holy to Jehovah. All these are types of what Christ is for us; not the manifestation of God to us, but the means needful for our being presented to Him. But who could have initiated this but Jehovah? Then in Exodus 31:1-18 comes the qualifying of the workmen by Jehovah for the construction of all; the sabbath too here again appears as the sign that God's rest is His people's hope; and Jehovah gave Moses the tables of testimony.

Below, how sad the contrast! The people of Israel corrupted themselves away from Jehovah; and Aaron helped them in it. Hence Jehovah bids Moses go down to his people, corrupt as they were, and offers to make of him a great nation. But Moses pleads, and not in vain. Yet when he saw the golden calf and heard their songs, he shattered the tables in his indignation and summoned those that stood for Jehovah. When the sons of Levi responded, he called on them to consecrate themselves in His name, and they slew about 3,000 men. The same Moses turns to Jehovah in intercession the next day, and offers to be blotted out for them. But God, accepting his mediation, modifies the terms by His long-suffering goodness while still leaving them under His law, and bids

Moses lead them on with His angel going before. It is thus no longer law, pure and simple as at the first, but now a mixture of grace with law, to which 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 refers as a ministry of death and condemnation, even though Moses' face shone as only on the second time (Exodus 33:1-23, Exodus 34:1-35). It is at this time too that Moses left the camp and pitched the tent outside, calling it the tent of meeting, whither went every one that sought Jehovah, anticipating the tabernacle that was to be established. There God revealed His merciful name on that separation from corruption. In Exodus 35:1-35 Moses again speaks of the sabbath, and enjoins the heave-offering on all the willing; to which they answered promptly. He told them once more that Jehovah called Bezaleel and Aholiab in chief to the work. In Exodus 36:1-38, Exodus 37:1-29 it proceeds with abundant zeal, set out in detail, not only there but in Exodus 38:1-31, Exodus 39:1-43, "as Jehovah commanded Moses." Is this true? If any one bearing the Lord's name dare to say it is false, it is well that Christians should know with what they have to do. Exodus 40:1-38 tells of the tabernacle set up and of the priesthood consecrated according to the command of Jehovah, all anointed. The cloud then covered the tent and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. How true is the book to the divine design of showing redemption, and the worthy end of God dwelling in the midst of His own then realised in type, as the effect of redemption!

§3. LEVITICUS, As scarce a book in the O.T. consists so much of the express words of Jehovah, so none gives fuller evidence of divine design from first to last. One great theme governs as in Exodus; but it is approach to God in the sanctuary, not redemption as there. The title we employ like most is vaguely if at all appropriate; for from its nature the priesthood are essential and prominent, not the Levites who figure here but little. The Jews do not attempt distinctive titles, but name the books from the opening word in each.

It is Jehovah speaking, not the Ten words from the darkness on the top of Sinai, but out of the tent of meeting in the midst of His people, to lay down the conditions of their relationship with Him. Hence His relative name to Israel is used throughout, and only in the later chapters from Leviticus 18:1-30 have we occasionally 'your" or "thy" God added to it, or connected with it. Hence not a shadow yields room for the dream of an Elohist, senior, junior, or in any wise. It is Elohim in relation with His people, and therefore "Jehovah" calls, speaks, and commands throughout. Even the historical episode of Leviticus 8:1-36, Leviticus 9:1-24, Leviticus 10:1-20 is all and only Jehovistic, and so is the briefer one in Leviticus 24:10 to the end of the chapter. But it is the more untrue and illogical to make this fact depend on a special writer; for the writer, though giving uniform predominance to "Jehovah," identifies Him as surely with "thy" or "your" Elohim.

Access to Jehovah then is the design of this book, as redemption is of Exodus; access to Him in the sanctuary, as individuals or as His people, according to the law. Not only are the means defined, which required sacrifice and offering, with the priests duly inaugurated, but the duties and state of the people, as well as their privileges, with those of the priestly family. Then follows the ruin which disobedience and apostasy must entail; yet would He in judgment remember mercy, and the covenant with their fathers, anterior to the law and dependent on promise. Also the vow of devoting persons, beasts, or land should result, on Israel's failure, in Jehovah's rights, when Christ as both Priest and King will order all to His glory. Not Moses, nor any other mere man, left to himself, was capable of a design so profound, and of evidently prophetic character; but if Moses was inspired to give what Jehovah spoke throughout, all is plain and holy and true. Rationalism may impute departure from original integrity and other faults suggested by the pettiness of man's

mind; those who do so must take the consequence before Him Who is its Author. Let us look into the details as they stand. The book opens with the basis of all access to Jehovah, sacrifice and offering. As not the first man but the Second is His object, He begins with the Burnt-offering (1), the Meal-offering (2), and the Peace-offering (3), and only then enters on the Sin-offering and Trespass-(or, Guilt-)offering (4 - 6, 7), with the laws of each (Leviticus 6:8-30, Leviticus 7:1-38). Such is the divine institution: when application comes, as with the priests (Leviticus 8:14, etc.), the Sin-offering precedes, or with a leper, the Trespass-offering (Leviticus 14:12, etc.). Who but God could so order? The first three oblations are alike Fire-offerings of sweet savour to Jehovah. They represent the positive excellency of Christ as offered upon the altar, in death as in life man holy, and for communion; together they form the first communication from Jehovah. Offerings for sin follow in Leviticus 4:1-35, with a transition of mingled character in Leviticus 5:1-13, after which to Leviticus 6:7 we have the Trespass-offering fully; and the regulations, which deal mainly with the question of eating or not, are given to the end of Leviticus 7:1-38. From the Trespass-offering in Leviticus 5:14 are no less than seven distinct but connected communications from Jehovah. In Leviticus 8:1-36, Leviticus 9:1-24 is given the institution of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. Here we find another, and if possible brighter, witness to the unique excellency of Christ. For the high priest alone, as typifying Christ and duly attired, was anointed without blood (Leviticus 8:10-12), and at the same time the tabernacle with all therein. He to Whom Aaron pointed was entitled to the energy of the Spirit in person and inheritance; and He is Heir of all things. No mortal would ever have so thought or spoken of himself; only Jehovah Who inspired Moses. His sons also, duly attired, required the Sin-offering; and as Aaron personally was a sinner like them, all laid their hands on the victim's head (Leviticus 14:1-57), and Moses put of its blood on the altar, and thereon burnt the fat and the rest of the body without the camp. Then the ram for a Burnt-offering was duly offered; but that for consecration had its blood put by Moses, first on Aaron's right ear, thumb, and toe, then on his sons similarly. After the rest of that rite was completed, Moses took of the anointing oil and of the blood, and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and their garments with his. On the eighth day the glory of Jehovah appeared, the plain prefiguration of what will be for Israel when He shall sit and rule upon His throne, not for heaven only but manifested for the earth. Leviticus 10 is the affecting history of the failure of the priesthood at once, even Eleazar and Ithamar only spared by intercession. Next are the chapters that refer to discernment of food clean and unclean (Leviticus 11:1-47), and priestly dealing with defilements natural (Leviticus 12:1-8), also typifying sin and its cleansing (Leviticus 13:1-59, Leviticus 14:1-57), and others occasional (Leviticus 15:1-33).

Then comes the momentous Atonement-day (Leviticus 16:1-34), the fast of the sacred year, on which all hung for priests and people, the high priest acting for both in access to God. How any believer can fail to own that Jehovah alone could have designed it, not only for the time then present, but as prophetic of the first coming of Christ and His work, and even of the still unaccomplished second coming when it is applied to Israel's pardon and spiritual restoration, is strange indeed. The N. T. interpretation is unmistakable in Hebrews 9:1-28 more particularly. The Christian blessing is identified with Aaron and his house, in virtue of the one offering for them in the sanctuary. When the high priest comes out will be the application of the scapegoat, but on the ground of Jehovah's lot, to the repentant people. To regard Azazel, the living goat sent away associated with the slain one, as a demon or evil genius, is a monstrous perversion whether of ritualists or of rationalists, blind to the full efficacy of Christ's atoning work and to the hopes of the

Jews. The two goats figure one Christ offered to Jehovah for propitiation and substitution. But who beforehand could have anticipated the truth? This is followed by communications to guard priests and people from the dishonour of Jehovah, in the matter of blood, and especially against eating it (Leviticus 17:1-16); in natural relationships against impurity (Leviticus 18:1-30); in the maintenance of holy ways and comely practice, far from profanity (Leviticus 19:1-37); and especially in abhorrence of heathen and unnatural abominations (Leviticus 20:1-27): all, as became a people in holy nearness to Jehovah, and separated from the peoples to be His. Leviticus 21:1-24 insists on a still higher sanctity on the part of Aaron's sons, and especially of the high priest, in view of their access to the sanctuary; and Leviticus 22:1-33 adds other disqualifications even if but transient. Then the people are joined with the priests in the caution against a blemished offering, and due heed claimed for Jehovah's injunction as to times, etc.

Leviticus 23:1-44 presents the Feasts in which, especially in the greater ones, Jehovah gathered all the males around Himself as their centre. Here the prophetic character is yet more marked than in the great Day of Atonement; as in it there is plain historical sequence, so that it is easy enough to distinguish the fulfilled from what remains to be so, when the Lord returns in power and glory. Now who is, who could be, competent for these things? Only Jehovah, Who spoke to Moses concerning these "set times" of drawing near to Himself. The Sabbath has this speciality of being revealed before the Feasts proper, as it will be accomplished at their close, when the true sabbatism will no longer "remain" but be realised for the people of God (Leviticus 23:3). It alone recurred week by week. The Passover is the foundation of all blessing as it prefigures Christ sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7), the head or beginning of months (Leviticus 23:5). In immediate sequence is Unleavened bread for seven days, the feast we now celebrate, not with old leaven nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth (Leviticus 23:6-8).

Then comes the Wave-sheaf on the next day after the sabbath, the clear type of Christ risen from the dead; for Whom therefore was no Sin or Trespass-offering, but Burnt and Meal-offerings with the Drink- offering thereof (Leviticus 23:9-14). And the Feast of Weeks follows, seven weeks complete from the day of the Wave-sheaf, or fifty days till the morning after the seventh sabbath. It is Pentecost with its two Wave-loaves of fine flour, but with leaven: not Christ now, but they that are His, and therefore the leaven. Here then not only have we a Burnt-offering, with oblation and Drink-offering, but a Sin-offering. For it is short sight to deny the old man in believers; it is their joy that by Christ's death the evil is annulled to faith. This new oblation to Jehovah has His injunction appended, not to reap or glean so as to clear the field's corners, but to leave for the poor and the stranger. It is a provision for those who are to follow the souls who now believe, during the age's completion (Leviticus 23:15-22).

Next is announced a new speaking of Jehovah to Moses. It is a fresh testimony, a memorial of blowing of Trumpets. This new Feast, like those that succeed, are all in the seventh month; and this on its first day. It is Jehovah summoning His ancient people from their sleep — from their "graves" as Ezekiel calls it figuratively. Compare Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2. The Christian call is past; the Jewish appeal will then begin and go on. Grace is preparing a people for Jehovah on earth, as now under the gospel for heaven. On the tenth day is the day of the Atonement, when Israel no longer unbelieving but repentant shall afflict their souls, and mix up no works of theirs with His work, long despised, now understood and honoured. It is the application of the cross of

Christ to their souls, deeply feeling their sins and His grace. The fifteenth day opens the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles seven days to Jehovah: a complete cycle for them when "glory shall dwell in their land," as we have in keeping the feast of Unleavened bread. Only an eighth day follows, which points to the glory in resurrection connected then, the heavenly things of the kingdom with the earthly. Compare John 3:12, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:20.

Now who was capable of such a living, comprehensive, all-important scheme of divine dealings from the beginning? Look at it from the purpose of rest couched in the pledge of the sabbath, till that day which shall display the Heir of all things centring in Himself all creation, heavenly and earthly, not only reconciled to God by His blood, then applied in power, and ourselves reigning with Him, being already reconciled by faith, as Israel will be "in that day" with all nations joined and no more at enmity. Christ is the One on Whom all turns: if received, life, peace, holiness, blessing, with access to God and to His glory; if rejected, wrath and indignation, tribulation and distress, when the vanity of present things and the carnal show of man can no longer hide the truth. What could imaginary Elohists or Jehovists avail to put together such a wondrous plan? All is simple, and only so, if Jehovah spoke to Moses, and Moses wrote of Christ. And who or what are they who blasphemously deny it? For He has testified to it.

Leviticus 24:1-23 furnishes the solemn contrast of Israel according to purpose and as they are through their unbelief. In the one aspect shines the light of the Spirit through the High Priest during the dark night of their slumber; and the twelve loaves, with the pure frankincense, are on the table as a memorial for heron and his sons to eat (Leviticus 24:1-9). In the other we see the actual state under the "son of an Israelitish woman whose father was an Egyptian," blaspheming the Name and cursing. "His blood be on us and on our children" was their cry; as Blood-field (Aceldama) is their land to this day. So do they bear their sin (Leviticus 24:10-23). In Leviticus 25:1-55 we have the sabbath of the land every seventh year, and the hallowed year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year proclaimed on Atonement day. What affecting regulations in view of the trumpet which will usher the people of Jehovah, long outcasts for their sins, into the land which He will make theirs! for it is His, as He will prove against the mightiest foes. Let Gentiles beware who intrude. As this is prophetic, so is Leviticus 26:1-46. Israel made and worshipped idols; Israel rebelled, despising their nearness to Jehovah; Israel braved His chastenings; Israel brought waste on their cities, and desolation on their land. But away in exile shall they confess their iniquity and accept its punishment from Jehovah Who will remember His covenant with their fathers and remember their land. Mercy shall glory over judgment; and Jehovah’s end is that He is full of tender compassion and pitiful. The last chapter (Leviticus 27:1-34) brings in the priest again, but Moses’ estimation. There may be vows of persons or beasts (not of the first-born, already Jehovah’s), of house or land; but if all fail or be lost through man, God’s rights abide. All was gone before God, when Christ was worth no more in Jewish eyes than the price of a slave. Yet will He retrieve all for them, having glorified Jehovah in all. Is this a human book?

§ 4 NUMBERS. The Fourth Book of the Pentateuch is inadequately described by the title given in the versions generally. Nor is the usual Jewish expedient of the first words better rendered, "And spoke;" others say what is given later in the verse, "In the wilderness," which fairly presents its scope. For, as we have seen in its predecessors, this book has no less impressed on its contents a worthy divine design, which we as Christians are enabled by the Holy Spirit to apprehend and enjoy, in a way impossible to the Israelites or even to Moses its writer. "Now all those things

happened to them as types; and they were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). This to the believer is decisive authority, far from excluding the book of Exodus, but fully extending to Numbers. The history, as far as it goes, is thoroughly reliable; but the typical instruction, as we are taught, was the aim and motive of the Holy Spirit. And this it is which accounts for repetitions and a seeming disorder in parts, which is the best order for the truth intended by the divine Author. If the Neo-critics had only reverent faith to learn, they would be kept from a wholly ungrounded pretension to judge what is above their powers, and might apprehend the goodness and wisdom of God's revealed mind to their blessing for evermore. The book contemplates, as does none other, the desert journeyings of Jehovah's people, the walk in the wilderness. Hence here only are the people numbered (Numbers 1:1-54), and arranged (Numbers 2:1-34), at the beginning; and for an equally important reason they are numbered again toward the end. As service attaches to this condition, here we have (not in Leviticus) necessary prominence given to the Levites who are separately numbered, and their tabernacle duties (Numbers 3:1-51, Numbers 4:1-49); whereas in the preceding book, which treats of access to Jehovah, the priesthood has that prominent place. Hence too the preservation of the camp as a whole, and of each individual, from defilement is here fully provided (Numbers 5:1-31); as is the converse case of special devotedness in its various forms (Numbers 6:1-27, Numbers 7:1-89). The High Priest lighting the lamps next appears in Numbers 8:1-26 morally connected; and the consecration of the Levites. Gracious consideration follows for any unintentionally unclean, that they too might not be debarred from observing the fundamental feast for all the people, the Passover (Numbers 9:1-23). Hence here is the great and common call to guide the journey and the encampment according to the commandment of Jehovah. Nor was there "the cloud" only, but the silver trumpets for special occasions (Numbers 10:1-36). Yet when their first march was ordered, grace interposed beyond prescription, and if Moses leaned on Hobab, the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting-place for them. What a God of all consolation for the earthly pilgrimage! And Moses could now in the Spirit suitably speak when the ark set forward, and when it halted.

Such is a brief review of the first division of this book. Could any mere man that ever lived have conceived and adjusted such an introduction? Were this the fitting occasion to enter into the details, for instance for carrying the tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary in Numbers 4:1-49, the typical force would add incalculably to the impiety as well as absurdity of fancying such ill-omened sprites as Elohists, Jehovists, and Redactors, where every thing points to the One Divine Spirit Who employed Moses to write, not for Israel only, but for all that fear God at all times. The literary mania of Jew or Gentile (one is ashamed to say of professing Christians) is a suicidal and destructive sears of Satan when it sits in rationalistic judgment on God's word. It is blind to that manifestation of God in Christ here portrayed in the holy vessels, etc., and their respective coverings, only here found, only here suited, whether for the day that now is, or for that which is to come for His people on the earth. Further, "holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for evermore." The desert journey is just the responsible scene for maintaining it; and therefore is Numbers 5:1-31 in its precisely right place, whatever be the objection of shallow and reckless speculation. So is the counterpart in Numbers 6:1-27 of Nazarite separation to Jehovah: special defilements, and special devotedness, closing with the blessing of Jehovah on Israel pronounced by the entire priesthood.

Then, as we have said, follows the free-will offering from the twelve chiefs of the tribes, given to the Levites according to their service (Numbers 7:1-89), the dedication-gift of the altar. And the Voice from above the mercy-seat speaks, in Numbers 8:1-26, first of the candlestick, a striking figure designedly here, whatever rationalist presumption may say; then the Levites purified and set apart for Jehovah's work. That the sons of Israel laid their hands on them is a wholesome hint for ritualists to ponder. Jehovah gave them to Aaron and his sons for ministry. The Passover fitly comes at this point as uniting all Israel in the feast of redemption, with a gracious provision here only for such as were hindered by uncleanness from a dead body (Numbers 9:1-23). The direction by the cloud is next given. The sounding of the silver trumpets opens Numbers 10:1-36; then the first move with its deeply interesting accompaniments already noticed. Various subdivisions may be observed within this first division; but we must first forbear. The second general portion opens with the moral history of the people in their journeyings. They murmur, and Jehovah judges but hears the prayer of Moses. They lust after flesh, weary of the manna; all fail, even Moses and Joshua in a measure; and Jehovah smote the people severely (Numbers 11:1-35). Envy shows itself in Miriam and Aaron; but Aaron confesses, and Miriam stricken with leprosy is healed at Moses' cry (Numbers 12:1-16). As unbelief let in these evils on the way, so in Numbers 13:1-33, Numbers 14:1-45 we see as to the hope. The pleasant land is despised through fear of the sons of Anak. In the same unbelief, instead of allowing self-judgment, after a carnal mourning, they went up without a word from Jehovah and were cut to pieces, as far as Hormah by the Amalekite and the Canaanite hill-men. How marvellous and opportune the grace, which there and then drops these evil ways of Israel and their inevitable chastenings, to instruct them (Numbers 15:1-41) what to do when come into the land of their habitations which Jehovah gives them! To offer Fire-offerings to Him with the Drink-offering of joy! To offer Him the first of their dough as a Heave-offering throughout their generations! Let us admire also the provision for sin unwittingly (only the gospel could meet worse evil): the presumptuous sin dealt with by a death which all joined to indict; and the fringe of blue to promote remembrance and obedience. What man of his own notion would have ventured such an episode? No wonder that unbelievers cavil, because they know not God. Numbers 16:1-50 is the culmination of the sad story here in the gainsaying of Korah, with other chiefs. The worst part of the rebellion lay in the ministry arrogating the priesthood; which, as Jude declares, has its answer in the apostasy of Christendom. Jehovah decided by consuming fire; and, when the assembly murmured, by the plague that destroyed more than 14,000.

We may consider Numbers 17:1-13 as introducing a fresh division, where the power of priestly intercession is shown in the fruitful rod of Aaron, living after death, alone able to lead the failing people through the wilderness. In Numbers 18:1-32 the relative place of priests and Levites is explained. Aaron and his sons bear the iniquity of the sanctuary. How far is this from human, earthly, ambition! Theirs were the hallowed things to eat. The tithe was for the Levites, not for the priests save a tithe of the tithe given by the Levites to Aaron. As these chapters are by divine design in their exactly right places, so in Numbers 19:1-22 the Red Heifer is here alone given; for it alone suits this boon as the special provision for the defilements of the wilderness in general and in this place of grace particularly. The standard for every Israelite is the holiness of the sanctuary. The blood was put in its completeness of efficacy, as the basis needing no renewal; the ashes mixed with living water were applied to the unclean. It is the remembrance of Christ's suffering by the word in the Spirit. In Numbers 20:1-29 Miriam dies; and the people, wanting water, contend

with Moses. Jehovah being appealed to directs Moses to take the rod, and speak to the rock which should give its water. Here Moses and Aaron quite fail to represent Jehovah's grace. For instead of speaking with Aaron's rod of priestly grace, Moses smote the rock with his own rod of power. The waters flowed; but Moses and Aaron were doomed to die outside the land, as they did. Edom, we are told, opposed the direct way; and Israel turned from them as akin however hostile. Aaron dies on mount Hor, and Eleazar succeeds.

Numbers 21:1-35 appears to begin a new series. King Arad's coming out against the Israelites is said by Dr. Perowne (Smith's Dict. ii. 581) to be "clearly out of place." But the comparison of Numbers 33:40 confirms the assurance that it certainly is in its true place. Only the supplied "when" of the A.V. is a mistake; this is not written. But now the Canaanite made head, till Israel vowed to Jehovah to deal with the accursed race as He adjudged. Yet after fresh impatience and murmuring against the bread from above, they are smitten by the enemy's deadly sting, and find the only remedy in what figures Christ made sin for us. Then comes joyful refreshment in the well dug by the staves of their chiefs; and Sihon and Og assail them to their destruction, leaving their possessions to Israel. On the plains of Moab, with only Jordan severing them from Canaan, Satan makes a new and final effort to thwart Jehovah by cursing His people. But the false prophet was compelled to bless in repeated strains of unequalled beauty, before which the odes of Pindar and Horace are as inferior as their heroes and the occasions of their laudation. They are not only prophetic but Messianic throughout, indirectly and directly. Elohim, Jehovah, El Elyon, and El Shaddai are used with perfect propriety, but so as to expel from the field of spiritual intelligence the flimsy rag of Astruc wherewith rationalism seeks to cover its nakedness. Poor as His people are in themselves, here God gives His mind and purpose about them: separateness, justification, beauty, and glory (Numbers 22:1-41, Numbers 23:1-30, Numbers 24:1-25). Never did such thoughts grow out of the heart of man; and God will verify them all in His time. The day is at hand. In Numbers 25:1-18 we see Balaam's will in corrupting the people, but Phinehas avenging it and staying the plague. Then in Numbers 26:1-65 is renewed the enumeration of the people; and Numbers 27:1-23 has daughters secured in the coming inheritance; while Jehovah bids Moses, in view of his decease, lay his hand on Joshua to lead the people in. Numbers 28:1-31, Numbers 29:1-40 follow the analogy of kindred insertions, and treat of what Jehovah calls His bread, His offerings at the set times, not as Leviticus 23:1-44 did in picturing the course of dispensations but viewed intrinsically and as displaying the worship rendered by His people on earth. Then in Numbers 30:1-16 we have the secret of man's or Israel's failure, and the way grace takes to surmount it and deliver the weak. Next is the holy war to execute Jehovah's vengeance on Midian, with (not Joshua the soldier, but) Phinehas the priest for leader and the alarm-trumpets in his hand. The victory is complete, and the seducers destroyed. But Numbers 32:1-42 indicates the fact, so sadly natural, that whole tribes prefer their inheritance outside the Jordan: still they fight as Jehovah's people against the enemy. Then comes the interesting list of the journeys as far as God was pleased to relate them in Numbers 33:1-56; and in Numbers 34:1-29 the borders of the land on the other side of the Jordan, to fall by lot to the nine and a half tribes of Israel. This leads to the cities of the Levites (Numbers 35:1-34), who had no inheritance in the land, and to the provision for him who might have slain unwittingly: a striking figure of what grace will yet reckon to the repentant remnant of Israel. Numbers 36:1-13 guards the security for heiresses from disordering the inheritance by passing out of the proper tribe.

If it be objected that not a little of this book refers to the land of promise, not yet possessed by the people, as adverse to the character of pilgrimage, the answer is that the looking onward in assured hope is precisely what is needed to cheer those who pass through the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness. The thing objected to is therefore in perfect keeping with its divine design. So we saw in the riband of blue only given in Numbers 15:1-41, like the water for separation in Numbers 19:1-22, however differing in character; for the one recalls the light of heaven to those walking on earth, who also specially need the means of purifying from the defilements of the way. How superficial are the critical censures of unbelief! how deep and precious are the helps of the divine word to faith!

04A.04 Part 4

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 4 § 5. Deuteronomy. The last book of the Pentateuch is as definitely marked as each of its predecessors. It alone was written in view of Israel’s crossing the Jordan and entering on the land of their inheritance. It is therefore wholly different from Genesis which has a primary character, and is all but universal in its range, the word of Him Who knows the end from the beginning. Neither does it converge on redemption from Egypt, like Exodus; nor on access to Jehovah, like Leviticus; nor yet on pilgrimage through the wilderness, like Numbers. The title in the A.V. follows the Latin Vulgate, as it the Septuagint, but is at least nearer the mark than in the other cases; for the book largely consists of a special recapitulation of the law. Only we must allow for the divine affluence of scripture; which, when interpreting a vision, or a parable, or even a particular symbol, not merely repeats but adds very strikingly.

If we believe the book (and he is God’s enemy who does not), Moses spoke and wrote on the eve of his approaching death. This could not but impart a peculiarly earnest and solemn tone. Ethic, affectionate, and expostulatory elements predominate beyond what we find in any other of the five books. As Moses says, in closing the brief preface of Deuteronomy 1:3-5, he began to declare or expound this law. Obedience is urged continually, and the spirit of it in the heart. It is the people as a whole therefore, who are in general addressed directly throughout, on their responsible tenure of the land. Typical teaching is comparatively rare, moral abounds, not without prophecy at the close especially. "The priests, the Levites" only appear for specific reasons, and Levites also as such. But the people are regarded as under the moral government of Jehovah their God in the land; and this accounts for its characteristics. Those born in the wilderness had been uncircumcised, and so disqualified for the privileges of Israel. This was no longer to be tolerated. Israel must henceforth take their normal place of obedience in Jehovah’s land. So the book urges anticipatively.

Deuteronomy 1:6-46, Deuteronomy 2:1-27, Deuteronomy 3:1-29, Deuteronomy 4:1-49 is an introduction, in which Moses first sketches in the rest of Deuteronomy 1:1-46 the journeying from Horeb to Kadesh, with the previous choice of rulers to judge, and the subsequent one of the spies, their rebellious unbelief, and its punishment. Then in Deuteronomy 2:1-27, Deuteronomy 3:1-29 we have their final advance, after long abidings and marches in the wilderness. They were not to meddle with Edom, Moab, or Ammon. When Sihon and Og opposed, they slew them and their people, taking all they had as spoil on that side of Jordan, and giving their lands and cities to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, who were as eager to possess at once even outside Canaan, as Moses pleads in vain to go over and see the good land. Deuteronomy 4:1-49 turns shameful Baal-peor into an appeal to obey Jehovah’s word, neither adding nor diminishing; as they alone have Him so nigh with His statutes and judgments, heard His voice, yet saw no similitude. Therefore were they called to abhor every image and created object, lest Jehovah should expel and scatter them among the idolatrous nations. But even there are they encouraged to turn and obey Him. The chapter closes with three cities chosen for the manslayer in the country beyond Jordan taken from the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. Such a refuge was due to Jehovah, Who would not tolerate the shedding of man’s blood on the one hand, nor on the other allow

mischance to be dealt with as murder. Where His people dwelt, even though outside their proper barrier, His rights must be respected. We may observe how distinct is the setting of these refuge cities in Numbers, where they are given within the portion of the Levites, and in view of the decease of the anointed priest: a typical connection of which Deuteronomy here shows no trace, but has its own appropriate reason. What a testimony to the divine inspiration of both! What we have had hitherto suits no book but the one that has it. From Deuteronomy 5:1-33, Deuteronomy 6:1-25, Deuteronomy 7:1-26, Deuteronomy 8:1-20, Deuteronomy 9:1-29, Deuteronomy 10:1-22, Deuteronomy 11:1-32 are given the general moral principles on which Israel were set before Jehovah. Deuteronomy 12:1-32, Deuteronomy 13:1-18, Deuteronomy 14:1-29, Deuteronomy 15:1-23, Deuteronomy 16:1-22, Deuteronomy 17:1-20, Deuteronomy 18:1-22, Deuteronomy 19:1-21, Deuteronomy 20:1-20, Deuteronomy 21:1-23, Deuteronomy 22:1-30, Deuteronomy 23:1-25, Deuteronomy 24:1-22, Deuteronomy 25:1-19, Deuteronomy 26:1-19 are rather the special terms in statutes and judgments made with the people. In Deuteronomy 5:1-33 Moses repeats the law according to the Horeb covenant, made not with their fathers but with them; as was said just before in the face of Beth-peor to impress their danger, but in the land they had won to cheer them. Similarly to the fourth commandment is annexed, not the recall to creation as in Exodus 20:1-26, but the remembrance of His deliverance from Egypt Who now commanded its observance. Deuteronomy 6:1-25 is a homiletic application of the first commandment, as Deuteronomy 7:1-26 is of the second. Deuteronomy 8:1-20 impresses the whole from their wilderness experience of God and of their own heart with Canaan in view. Deuteronomy 9:1-29 reminds them of their weakness, though assured of victory by Jehovah’s grace, and of their grievous sins and rebellion, of Moses’ own indignant smashing the tables though inscribed by God’s own hand, yet of his deprecating divine wrath; so that he came down after other 40 days and nights with freshly written tables for the ark, as he states in a parenthesis of Deuteronomy 10:1-22 from Deuteronomy 10:1-9, the more singular for containing another parenthesis in Deuteronomy 10:6-9. For if Aaron died at a later day, Levi "at that time" gained a good degree by devotedness, and Jehovah gave the tribe an honoured place of service. Obedience therefore is insisted on most touchingly; and in Deuteronomy 11:1-32 love too in presence of His wondrous ways of mercy as well as judgment, and this to their enjoying the good land. He repeats therefore in conclusion the all-importance of keeping Jehovah’s words, they and their children, as in Deuteronomy 6:1-25, that they might be blessed and their foes put down, instead of reaping a curse on their disobedience.

Now there is no place in the Pentateuch, nor in all the Bible, where such appeals are so suitable as in the last words of the prophet and legislator. The very repetitions are not vain but deeply pathetic, and only despicable in the eyes of men as stiff-necked as those who kicked against them of old. It was the adaptation of the law to the new need of the generation about to enter and possess Canaan; but no language is clearer than its claim to be of Moses. If this be untrue, the book is an imposture; if true from Jehovah, what are they who undermine and defame it? This design accordingly governs the enactments. They regard Israel as if in Canaan. This determines which reappear, and which do not. It has nothing to do with later times or various authors; nor is there real discrepancy with the previous books. For Jehovah’s land is required for His people obedient and true to His relationship, eschewing false gods and images, with one centre to His name for their sacrifices, and their offerings, or either; yet with leave to kill and eat flesh (not the blood) within all their gates (Deuteronomy 12:1-32). For the same reason, prophet or dreamer that

enticed to other gods must be put to death; so must be the nearest relative that enticed, however secretly; and if a whole city were thus drawn away, it must be devoted to destruction, as a traitor to Jehovah (Deuteronomy 13:1-18). As sons of Jehovah they must adopt no foreign custom, nor eat unclean food, but were to truly tithe corn, wine, oil, and first-fruits, bringing them or their value to Jehovah's central place. Even another tithe at the end of three years is claimed for their homes, and for the Levite and the sojourner, the orphan and the widow, besides that carried to the holy centre (Deuteronomy 14:1-29). For the people would thus be shown in immediate relationship with Jehovah, while His sanctuary had its place also. What a witness of the book's divine design is this added tithe, here only in the Pentateuch, where alone it could be! It is the people's joy in fellowship with Him Who not only redeemed and kept them, but gave them the land, the Levites etc. (who had none) being graciously prominent. Deuteronomy 15:1-23 follows this up by release of a debtor by a neighbour at the end of seven years, and by a call to constant liberality, as a people blessed of Jehovah. For which reason also the hallowing of male firstlings from herd and flock is here pressed for Jehovah's centre; but if a defect existed, to be eaten within their gates as hart or gazelle.

Deuteronomy 16:1-22 is so weighty a proof of the same design, that it claims a little farther notice. It enjoins the three feasts of the year which gathered all the males to Jehovah's chosen place in the land, and not empty but according to His blessing given them. It is not the full typical circle of God's ways as in Leviticus 23:1-44, nor the witness of God's worship yet to be rendered on the earth as in Numbers 18:1-31, Numbers 29:1-40. In Deuteronomy 16:1-22 we have, first redemption, then the liberty of grace, and lastly, after the harvest and the vintage, the "whole joyfulness" of glory. Yet even so only the seven days are here, because it looks not beyond the blessing of Israel in the land, the scope of Deuteronomy. The close from Deuteronomy 16:18 takes up the means of sustaining the people in righteous order and in abhorrence of idolatry before Jehovah. Deuteronomy 17:1-20 first commands integrity of conscience in sacrifice, then joint clearance of disloyalty to Him; and if any had recourse to the priests, and to the judge in those days, with meekness to bow to that decision. This loads to the question of a king, who from them was to be chosen of Jehovah, to avoid fleshly and worldly ways, and to write a copy of the law for his personal guidance. Then we have the priests, indeed the whole tribe of Levi (Deuteronomy 18:1-22) with their dues. Next are denounced for Israel, the heathen abominations for which the Canaanites were dispossessed; and the promise of the great Prophet from their midst is given. Acts 3:1-26 is conclusive authority that Christ is meant; and so is Acts 7:1-60 : both Peter and Stephen attesting that Moses so said to Israel. The same principle applies to Deuteronomy 19:1-21. They when possessing the land were to separate three more cities of refuge for the unwitting slayer: the murderer must surely die. Landmarks were not to be removed, and testimony guarded. In Deuteronomy 20:1-20 we see how the fear of Jehovah controlled war, both within and without. It was not a rival to be got rid of, but the abominable races who in fact held the land, to be destroyed by and for Israel to whom the land was divinely given. But Deuteronomy 21:1-23 presents moral truths of interest in the man found slain, the captive woman, the child of the hated wife, and the rebellious son: if these refer to Israel in the land which Jehovah will have hallowed, and to inconsistency judged, the close (we know) points to Him Who became a curse in infinite grace to deliver the people and bless the land: the contrast of all who defile it. On the other hand Deuteronomy 22:1-30 fosters gracious and even delicate feeling, forbids mixture of principle, punishes impurity, and protects the weak innocents against brutality. Again, in Deuteronomy

23:1-25 relation to the congregation of Jehovah is guarded, making a difference, and the seemliness even of the camp maintained; the runaway slave shielded from oppression; prostitution and its gain scouted, and interest too from a brother; vows established; kindness enjoined as to vineyard or field, but selfishness forbidden. In Deuteronomy 24:1-22 divorce was allowed under law; but the Lord brought in better things under grace. Many and various ordinances follow keeping flesh in check to the end of Deuteronomy 25:1-19. This is closed by the unique worship in Deuteronomy 26:1-19 where the Israelite in possession of his inheritance puts the first of his fruits in a basket, goes to the chosen place, and says to the priest that shall be in that day (for Deuteronomy is the anticipation of faith), "'I profess this day to Jehovah thy God, that I am come unto the land that Jehovah swore to our fathers to give them." Then the priest takes the basket and sets it down before Jehovah's altar. And the offerer says, "A perishing Syrian was my father, and he went down to Egypt" etc. "And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground, which thou, Jehovah, hast given me." This set before Him, the Israelite worshipped: else he was free and called to rejoice in all the good which Jehovah had given him and his house, "thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is in thy midst." Can any thing be conceived more Deuteronomic? Or more distinct from the preceding books? To call these specialities inconsistent with foregoing observances is absurd and wrong. Are critical eyes evil because Jehovah's eye is good? Hope and its accomplishment call out gratitude and generosity, as in the tithes of the third year, a characteristic institution beyond the ordinary Levitical tithes and its tithe to the priests. It was the festive and overflowing joy of the people before Jehovah when put in possession of His land. Amos (Amos 4:4) alludes to it ironically, because the people were steeped in transgression which tainted all; Tobit (Tob 1:7-8), though of no divine authority, relates the fact, as does Josephus (Ant. iv. 8, § 22). It is worship, not intermediary in the sanctuary but direct, personal or household. But the priest in the sanctuary remains none the less; to set the one against the other is only rationalistic shallowness and ill-will. The joy of communion with Jehovah's manifested goodness is provided for in the new order of things assured. The chapters which follow are in the exactly right place. Deuteronomy 27:1-26 and Deuteronomy 28:1-68 are supplemental, and each where it should be. They express the sanction of the law. First, on passing Jordan into the land, great stones were to be set up and plastered, with "all the words of this law" written on them; an altar of kindred nature also for Burnt-offerings and Peace-offerings. But a most solemn sign followed: six tribes told off to bless on Gerizim; six to curse on Ebal. Yet, whatever might be the fact, the chapter gives the Levites loudly proclaiming to all Israel nothing but the curses. Such is the basis of the apostolic word to the Galatians (Galatians 3:10), "As many (persons) as are of works of law are under curse;" not merely those who transgressed, but all on that principle, like the Galatians bewitched. Spiritually, it was no use to tell us of the blessings on Gerizim. Deuteronomy 28:1-68 speaks, not of the personal curse, but of governmental blessings or curses and therefore temporary; whilst Deuteronomy 29:1-29 applies all to the conscience: only the last verse refers to the secret or hidden things belonging to Jehovah. This is of the deepest interest. The things revealed were as to the law; but there were secrets in divine purpose, only alluded to prophetically till the rejection of Christ, when they too were revealed. Deuteronomy 30:1-20 illustrates this, if we compare with it the apostle's words in Romans 10:4-9.

Moses then in Deuteronomy 31:1-30 announces Joshua, not himself, as their leader over Jordan under Jehovah; and exhorts them to be courageous and strong in His going with them. "This law," it is definitely said, Moses wrote, and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, and to all the

elders of Israel, with the command (at the release of every seven years, when all Israel met before Jehovah at His chosen place) to read it in their ears, men, women, children, and even the stranger within their gates. Then Joshua receives his charge at the tent of meeting and, as Jehovah directed, Moses wrote that day a prophetic song, His witness against the sons of Israel. Indeed "this book of the law" too was to be put by the side of the ark for the same purpose. For Moses well knew their rebelliousness, and the evil to befall them at the end of days; but he rejoiced that Jehovah's purpose is unfailing and irrevocable.

Deuteronomy 32:1-52 begins with the song, before which Horace's lyrics are flat and Pindar's froth. Its holy grandeur has no equal. Its prophetic insight justifies the present grace to Gentiles (Deuteronomy 32:21) during the hiding of Jehovah's face from His ancient people, and His future vindication of Israel when humbled and believing (Deuteronomy 32:35-42); and then will be the fulfilment, not inchoate but complete, when the nations shout for joy [with] His people, or speak aloud their praises, as some Jewish versions say, and in substance the Vulg. but not the Sept. Yet all point to the glorious future. It is utterly groundless that the stand-point is other than Moses then took whether on Jehovah's side or on the people's, though anticipating, as indeed is the aim of all Deuteronomy, their entrance on their predestined inheritance. Alas! they disobeyed and became idolaters; but Jehovah abides, and will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will make expiation for His land, for His people. After a few words more from Moses to the people, Jehovah bids him go up Nebo, and when he had seen the land, to die. But this was not before blessing the sons of Israel in Deuteronomy 33:1-29. His blessing is in view of Jehovah's government of His people in relationship with Himself in the land, the key-note of the book. In this way it differs from Jacob's in Genesis, which is historic and prophetically complete. Yet there is no inconsistency, but each true to its own divine design. What triumphant fervour in both the exordium and the conclusion! and what critical shortsightedness in thinking that it was not suitable to the prophet Moses in Deuteronomy to say, "He thrust out," "and said, Destroy," and "Israel dwelleth" or any other form in Deuteronomy 33:27-28!

There is no need whatever to take Deuteronomy 34:1-12 as written by Moses before his death. Others followed inspired like him. But, as to the contents, Jehovah buried the dead law-giver; and Jude tells us what none had revealed till then. Satan would have turned a willing people to idolize him dead, whom living they strove against. No man knows his sepulchre unto this day. The testimony to the blessed man of God, as in Numbers 12:3, better suits the successor to whom it was given of God.

§ 6. JOSHUA. The book of Joshua is closely akin to the last book of the Pentateuch, which it immediately follows; but it has its own proper design impressed by God. It is no longer the mediator, no longer the apostle and high priest, but typically the power of Christ in Spirit leading His own in conflict with spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies. The book does not prefigure the personal presence of our Lord appearing from heaven, when He takes the inheritance of the universe in power and establishes the undisputed reign of His glory at the end of the age. Joshua represents the intermediate action of Him Who, dead, risen, and ascended, works by His Spirit in His saints to realise their heavenly title and inheritance in the face of their not yet extirpated enemies. What can be clearer than that Ephesians 6:12 warrants, as well as suggests, this as the just application?

It is not heaven now entered individually after death, nor the enjoyment of God's rest when we are all conformed to the image of His Son and are with Him in the Father's house; but our death and resurrection with Christ, and sitting in the heavenlies in Him, with our consequent responsibility to wrestle against the world-rulers of this darkness on high, who strive to hinder our laying hold of our heavenly blessedness in Christ. If the popular Puritan allegory expresses evangelical shortcoming (to say the least), the Romanist and even the Catholic view is still darker. Both ideas betray the loss in this respect of the due and characteristic privilege of the Christian and of the church, developed specially in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

How inimitably Joshua 1:1-18 prepares the way necessary to God's design! On Moses' death, Joshua is called to "arise and go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give them." For the people redeemed from Egypt the wilderness was not Jehovah's purpose, only His way. Compare Exodus 3:8; Exodus 3:17, Exodus 6:4-8, Exodus 13:3-5, Exodus 15:13-17. The Jordan sets forth our death and resurrection with Christ, as the Red Sea does Christ's death and resurrection for us. Energy and courage were imperative and unswerving adherence to the word. So it is for the Christian; he is set free, yet bound, to obey God. In Joshua 2:1-24 how bright the accompanying grace to a hitherto worthless and despised Gentile! Salvation to her, and even to her house, was attested by the scarlet line. She believed Jehovah, and this likewise in the midst of His people, before a blow was struck in Canaan. Then in Joshua 3:1-17 came the wonder wrought in Jordan when it overflowed all its banks: the ark of the covenant was borne in by the priests, and the waters fled before it, till all Israel passed over on dry ground. It points to the new position with and in Christ for the heavenly places, as the Red Sea prefigured our justification by His death and resurrection, needful even for our pilgrimage through the wilderness. The latter was out of Egypt, as the former into Canaan under Joshua. We died with Christ and were raised together with Him; and therefore should we mortify our members that are on the earth (Colossians 2:1-23, Colossians 3:1-25). So we see the full witness of life out of and over death in the memorial of the twelve stones of Joshua 4:1-24 and the circumcision of Israel in Joshua 5:1-15 at Gilgal, when, and not before, the reproach of Egypt was rolled off. Thus "the old things passed away; behold, new things are come; but the whole, of the God that reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). The passover was kept as the Lamb's death. Next, the resurrection food, the old corn of the land, took the place of manna. In fact and in spiritual force this could only be now. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:16. As in the wilderness, we eat the manna, and we celebrate His death; but as heavenly (for "all things are ours"), we feed on Him risen and on high.

Thus, after the vision not of the unconsumed bush for the desert, but of the Captain with drawn sword for Canaan and holiness in His presence, we have in Joshua 6:1-27 the first and greatest lesson of Jehovah in Jericho's fall: absolute subjection on man's part; the means seemingly unmeaning or absurd; but Jehovah the real accomplisher, as Joshua learnt of Him and told the people before the siege began. But man as he is was faithless; soon the wickedness of Achan brought defeat on Israel who failed to enquire of Jehovah before assailing Ai. That sin must first be sifted out and judged. Even then self-confidence is rebuked in Joshua 8:1-35 : for all must march even against so small a place, and a special ambush be laid, and a signal appointed by Him be obeyed, when victory comes. But the land was owned as Jehovah's according to Deuteronomy 21:22-23, and by the altar of Ebal which proclaimed Israel's responsibility to obey. Gibeon in

Joshua 9:1-27 disclosed that the chiefs failed in vigilant faith; for Israel was then deceived into an oath to spare a race whom Jehovah had devoted to destruction. But Joshua 10:1-43 shows a mighty discomfiture of the hosts that gathered against Gibeon, when sun and moon, or rather Jehovah, hearkened to Joshua's voice, who passed on, smiting the whole country, the mountain and the Negeb, and the lowland, and the dopes, and all their kings. He let none remain; but he utterly destroyed all that breathed, as Jehovah the God of Israel commanded. There was no more doubt of their wicked abominations than of his divine warrant to execute judgment. Thence is the return to Gilgal, whence he went up: there, was the memorial of death and resurrection; there, the mortification of the flesh. When weak, then are we strong. A new combination by the king of Hazor (Joshua 11:1-23) only brought the word of Jehovah for a complete victory to Joshua till the land had rest from war. Joshua 11:1-23 rehearses the conquest and the land acquired.

Yet the second half of the book tells us how imperfectly man's part was done. The failure was assuredly not in Jehovah, but in His people: so it ever is. Caleb received his portion, but not even Judah made good his lot by dispossessing the enemies of Jehovah. Ephraim and half Manasseh did no better. On these details, so full of interest to those who will re-enter and never more leave the land, one need not dwell now. Who but God could have given us such a book, on the surface so simple, but with depths beyond man's plummet? So Caleb was not forgotten, neither were Zelophehad's daughters; nor did Joshua show favour to the sons of Joseph, but faithfulness. At length also he rebuked the slack tribes, in order to taking possession by lot, as we learn in Joshua 18:1-28, Joshua 19:1-51. The cities of refuge were appointed (Joshua 20:1-9) on this as on that side of Jordan; and the Levites received their forty-eight cities with their suburbs (Joshua 21:11-45), and the two tribes and half were sent away (Joshua 22:1-34). But they built an altar before crossing Jordan, which roused the alarm of Israel, who sent Phinehas and other representatives to remonstrate. On disclaiming any thought save of a witness between them and their God, that they too had portion in Jehovah, peace prevailed. In Joshua 23:1-16, Joshua 24:1-33 are two charges of Joshua, the first more general, the second more detailed and emphatic, in which the departing leader set blessing and warning before them, but not a word about his own achievements in either. In the latter he reminds them how Abraham was chosen out of an idolatrous house; how Egypt was plagued, and Israel brought out; how the Amorites opposed and were effaced; how Balaam was forced to bless; how the nations in Canaan were delivered into their hand. Then he puts their danger from all false gods, avowing fidelity to Jehovah from him and his. On the people declaring their loyalty, Joshua owns his just fears, whilst they repeat their allegiance; and a covenant was thereon made in Shechem. The book closes with the death and burial of Joshua in the hill-country of Ephraim: so Joseph's bones had been laid there too, and Eleazar's also, each in its own quarter. Not only was the book of Joshua of the highest interest and importance to Israel as the evidence of Jehovah's accomplishing in power what His mouth had promised; but it sets out to the Christian the present privilege of realising our spiritual blessing in the heavenlies as in no other part of the O.T. If the types in the first half reveal the mighty work of God in Christ risen and ascended, the second speaks most practically to our souls also. It was written by one who "passed over" Jordan that day (Joshua 5:1); but it was and must be by God's unerring hand and mind and love, let unbelief rail as it may.

§ 7. JUDGES. Is this book less marked by the finger of God? Here it is not slackness but growing failure, and grievous forsaking of Jehovah; and Bochim succeeds to Gilgal, so that He sold them

into heathen hands. Yet it attests His ear open to their cry, and deliverers raised up in answer. It is the book beyond all others of revivals on God's part, when to His mercy His people appealed out of their misery from their shameful sins. Historically and morally the book could only be where it is; the divine design is exactly suited to the facts. To Judges 3:7 is an introduction, as Judges 17 to the end is a dark yet needed appendix. Joshua's death did not hinder Jehovah's blessing when He was looked to by Judah, and for Simeon too. Othniel's early story is repeated. Yet did they all like Benjamin fail in energy: so too did Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. Nor was it felt, till Jehovah's angel (Judges 2:1-23) came up from Gilgal to Bochim with the dread word that He would not drive out the accursed race whom they had spared. Thus they sunk lower and lower, as each deliverer died. Tears cannot do the work of faith. The evil was within and against Jehovah. Humiliation came from heathen without, instead of self-judgment by the word. Their first oppressor was Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, till the Spirit of Jehovah wrought in Othniel, and the land had rest for forty years. Then came the dominion of the Moabite Eglon, till Ehud was raised up, and the land rested eighty years. Shamgar followed for deliverance from the Philistines (Judges 4:1-24). Again Jabin of Hazor mightily oppressed Israel twenty years, when Deborah was used by God to subdue the Canaanite through Barak; and they sing Jehovah's praise in the noble ode of Judges 5:1-31. On fresh evil Jehovah delivers Israel into the hand of Midian; but when they cried to Him, Gideon was raised up to be a saviour. But what lessons of faith to make the weak strong in Judges 6:1-40, Judges 7:1-25, Judges 8:1-35! Yet never were the people lower morally. And so it came out openly when Gideon died; and retribution fell on Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Judges 9:1-57).

Afterwards as we read in Judges 10:1-18 came Tola, and Jair with his thirty sons; but when Israel sank into the worship not only of other strange gods but of those of the Philistine and the Ammonite, Jehovah sold them into the hands of those neighbouring peoples; and their cry arose, and His soul was grieved for their misery. Jephthah (Judges 11:1-40) the despised became their leader, on whom was the Spirit of Jehovah; and Ammon was subdued. But the haughty men of Ephraim, graciously answered by Gideon, met a severer judge in the Gileadite; after whom came Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (Judges 12:1-15). A worse relapse brought a stern and nearer chastening from the Philistines. Here therefore the deliverer was a Nazarite: separation to Jehovah was the condition of suited mercy, Yet Samson was weak enough morally, and his work more individual, and rather prowess physically, than in any previous case. His strength lay in maintaining the secret of Jehovah; and when he gave it up basely, he became as another man for a while, but his vision gone, till God visited the vain-glory of the Philistines with a disaster at his hands greater in his death than the victories of his life (Judges 13:1-25, Judges 14:1-20, Judges 15:1-20, Judges 16:1-31). The tale of Micah in Judges 17:1-13, Judges 18:1-31 is not in chronological order, but here given after the history, to lay bare the lawlessness in religious matters which prevailed in the days of the judges; as that in Judges 19:1-30, Judges 20:1-48, Judges 21:1-25 lets us see the frightful demoralisation in those days, and the calamities it brought on Israel, when Benjamin was all but extinguished as a tribe. How marvellous the grace which turned their shame to profit, both in self-judgment from God, and in recovery of fraternal affection! Who but Himself could or would thus have lifted the veil off His people for good?

§ 8. RUTH.

It is not our task to search into the motives which led the later Jews to take the book of Ruth from its place, as indicated in our Bibles as well as in the Septuagint (the Greek Version rendered long before our Lord came), and class it with the Lamentations, Canticles, Esther, and Ecclesiastes, as the five Megilloth, part of the Khetubim or Hagio-grapha. Following Judges and preceding the books of Samuel, it is just where it should be. It falls within the days of the judges, and most fittingly points on to the Beloved whom Jehovah chose to be His anointed, coming to the throne when Saul fell. But what a contrast with those old anomalous days, especially with the horrors of the appendix! The Holy Spirit here brings before us from within that period a tale of surpassing beauty, in particular of her whose name is the title. The death of Elimelech ("whose God is King") left Naomi a widow, the type of Israel. Her two sons also died, and she returns from among strangers to the land of promise, hearing that Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread. Only did Ruth cleave to her. So it will be after the people's sins and desolations: a remnant will return, after Lo-ammi had been long written. This is vividly typified by the Moabitess daughter-in-law; but meanwhile Naomi owns herself as yet Mara, not "my pleasantness" but "bitterness." But come back to Bethlehem, they meet with Boaz ("in him is strength"); and Naomi, encouraged by his kindness and character, instructs Ruth to claim her Levirate title. Another, who represented the nearer claim of the law in flesh, refuses to take the inheritance with Ruth; while Boaz represents the risen Heir, and as the kinsman-redeemer accepts the widow to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And out of their union sprang Obed, father of Jesse, father of David So it will be in the last days, when the godly remnant will be owned in grace by the Redeemer, before the kingdom is established in power and glory. Types of the Kingdom will soon appear in the books that follow this: personally in David the warrior king and in the son of David, the man of peace, both needed to give an adequate view of the Messiah in relation to Israel. That these anticipations of Holy Writ are true can readily be proved to men of faith. All men however have not faith; but if the words are of God from first to last, if they will be surely fulfilled in the grand events of the latter day, what can one think of the spirit, aim, and state of those who, bearing the Lord's name, strain every nerve to darken and destroy these living oracles, reducing them to legends haphazard and of varying merit, but really denying that God wrote them by His inspired servants, that they might be worthy of all acceptance?

§ 9. 1 SAMUEL. The wisdom of God is no less apparent in these four books, which are parts of the same design. They open with the failure of the priesthood, as distinctly as the people had failed both in the wilderness and in the land. "By strength shall no man prevail." Since sin entered, and death through it, grace alone avails, as in Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-28, 1 Samuel 2:1-36), and expressed in her prayer-song, and by the man of God prophetically to Eli in the marked change of even the faithful priest walking before Jehovah's Anointed for ever. Thus was the King foreshadowed in sovereign grace, before the evil heart of unbelief wearied of Jehovah, and would have "a king like all the nations." Hitherto the high priest was "the anointed." Soon was there to be the anointed King before whom the priest would walk, which finds its complete realisation only in the Lord Jesus. The word of Jehovah meanwhile calls Samuel, to whom He revealed Himself for all Israel (1 Samuel 3:1-21); and the ark abused by selfishness passes to the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:1-22). But if this was Ichabod for people and priests, the enemy and their idol were forced to bow before the vindicating judgments of Jehovah, only too glad to send the ark away with their guilt-offering (1 Samuel 5:1-12, 1 Samuel 6:1-21). If the men of Beth-shemesh indulged in profane curiosity, a yet more severe blow befell those who ought to have known better. To Kirjath-jearim is

the ark brought, and abides there twenty years. It never returns to the old order, and only enters its due place when David's son set up in peace the picture of glory, which still awaits the people under Messiah and the new covenant. When Israel lamented, Samuel calls them to repentance and gathers them to Mizpah where his prayer rises because of a counter gathering of the Philistines, who were driven out into their border (1 Samuel 7:1-17). But if Samuel judged in faith, he could not make his sons judges beyond the name, when Israel, revolting from them, revolted also from Jehovah (1 Samuel 8:1-22); and He putting aside Samuel's indignation, gave them a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath, as says Hosea. This episode occupies to the end of the book; but within it is the tale of him who was made the type of the true Beloved, His king, to sit on His holy hill of Zion. Saul was the chosen, higher than any of the people, according to the heart of Israel (1 Samuel 9:1-27), saluted as king, by all save some base fellows (1 Samuel 10:1-27), and achieving a crushing victory over the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11:1-15). Samuel, acknowledged to have been faithful, warns them of their responsibility, but assures them of his continued intercession (1 Samuel 12:1-25); whereas Saul after two years is heard summoning "the Hebrews," as a heathen might say who believed not that they were Jehovah's people (1 Samuel 13:1-23), and offered the burnt-offering in his disobedience. Jonathan wrought with God, his father Saul only spoiling the victory and only kept by the people from making Jonathan the victim of his superstition (1 Samuel 14:1-52). Samuel let him know, on his fresh disobedience as to Amalek, that Jehovah rejected him from the throne of Israel (1 Samuel 15:1-35).

Jehovah in 1 Samuel 16:1-23 takes the initiative, and has Jesse's youngest son anointed by the prophet. Meanwhile he is sought to soothe with the harp the king troubled by an evil spirit. Then follows his victory over Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:1-58, with Jonathan's love, and Saul's jealous hatred, Merab given to another, Michal to him as a snare, but only proving Jehovah to be with David who escaped the king's murderous hand (1 Samuel 18:1-30, 1 Samuel 19:1-24). In 1 Samuel 20:1-42 Jonathan, slow to believe his father's ill-will, renews his covenant with David, who becomes now an exile, and receives the show-bread from the priest with Goliath's sword. This brings death on the sons of Aaron at Doeg's hand (1 Samuel 21:1-15, 1 Samuel 22:1-23) and gives occasion to many a psalm of plaint and praise, as David hides in Keilah, Ziph, and Engedi (1 Samuel 23:1-29, 1 Samuel 24:1-22). Nabal's folly is as plain as Abigail's faith in 1 Samuel 25:1-44. But if David's generosity puts Saul to shame at Hachilah (1 Samuel 26:1-25), his faith breaks down in 1 Samuel 27:1-12, and an interval in no way to his praise follows in Ziklag. Saul seeks the witch of Endor, when Samuel's soul appeared, not her familiar spirit, and tells him the approaching doom (1 Samuel 28:1-25). David is refused as an ally by the Philistine lords, and returns to find Ziklag burnt, and the families of him and his men captive (1 Samuel 29:1-11, 1 Samuel 30:1-31), but defeats the Amalekite spoilers, as the Philistines smite Israel, Saul, and his sons on Gilboa (1 Samuel 31:1-13) § 10. 2 SAMUEL, The second book (2 Samuel 1:1-27) opens with David's resentment at the stranger who falsely taxed himself with the slaying of Saul to please him, and with a genuine lament over the fallen house. In 2 Samuel 2:1-32 at the word of Jehovah he goes to Hebron, and reigns over Judah seven years and a half. For two years reigns Saul's son Ishbosheth over Benjamin and Israel generally, through Abner's influence, with whom Joab contends. David only had title from God who let the hindrances pass, without the least sympathy on his own part with the guilty instruments (2 Samuel 3:1-39, 2 Samuel 4:1-12). In 2 Samuel 5:1-25 all the tribes come to him in Hebron, and anoint David king, who reigns in Jerusalem over all Israel thirty-three years more. The stronghold of Zion falls; and Tyre sends gifts. In vain the

Philistines gather against David, who enquires of Jehovah, instead of going at once in the confidence of prowess and old victories. Again they come; but David only acts as Jehovah commands. Still the ark remained in Abinadab's house; and David desired its presence (2 Samuel 6:1-23). But he did not enquire, nor did he search the scriptures, how it should be done. So it ended in death, as it began in error. And the ark was carried into the house of Obed-edom for three months of blessing to all the house. Tidings of this awakened the king to the homage of faith; and the ark was duly carried into the city of David with joy. It was not yet the temple, but the provisional tabernacle beyond which David could not go. The rest of glory was reserved for Solomon, type of Christ in peace, as David was of His wars. All this appears clearly in the prophets who came afterward; here its analogue comes historically; but who could have done either but the Holy Spirit? David is not viewed as a priest on his throne, but acts by grace as a servant, and so thoroughly as to rouse the fleshly anger of Michal, who pays the penalty of her contempt.

How proper did it seem as we read in 2 Samuel 7:1-29 to build Jehovah a palace as the king had done for himself! But Nathan the prophet is corrected by Jehovah the same night: David's son, who shall be Jehovah's son, is to build that house; and his house shall be established for ever. So it shall be in the most glorious way. If this be the truth, who but God could have so revealed? and how perfectly in keeping with the divine design in this book! David could no more build the temple than Moses could enter the land. Hence we may note his subduing the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, etc., in 2 Samuel 8:1-18 He typifies the warrior still. The man of peace shall build. Christ will answer to both in the fullest perfection. David's grace to Jonathan's son shines in 2 Samuel 9:1-13. But 2 Samuel 10:1-19 shows how the type fails; 2 Samuel 11:1-27, how far he fell shamefully; and 2 Samuel 12:1-31, how the sword should never depart from his house in Jehovah's moral government. What a rebuke was Amnon's lust in 2 Samuel 13:1-39! What another was Absalom's blood-guiltiness! Nor was this all. For if through Joab Absalom returns (2 Samuel 14:1-33), his rebellion breaks out, as 2 Samuel 15:1-37 shows, and David's flight in 2 Samuel 16:1-23. Ahithophel comes to nothing in 2 Samuel 17:1-29; and Absalom perishes by Joab's hand in 2 Samuel 18:1-33. Touching is the king's sorrow; but he returns in 2 Samuel 19:1-43. Sheba's rebellion ends with the traitor's death, but not without Joab's guile and cruelty in 2 Samuel 20:1-26; as 2 Samuel 21:1-22 gives the striking proof that Jehovah punishes in king Saul's house perfidy toward even the accursed Hivites of Gibeon.

Then how remarkably comes in here David's song of deliverance from all his enemies and Saul too (2 Samuel 22:1-51)! followed by his "last words" in 2 Samuel 23:1-39 when he long reigned, but also had the grief that "his house is not so with God;" and though he could say the covenant was all his salvation and desire, yet "He maketh it not to grow." Judgment must intervene; which Christ alone could execute perfectly. Who but God could have so written? even as He will accomplish all in its day. Then follows the roll of David's worthies on the one hand, and the plague that devoured the thousands (2 Samuel 24:1-25), about whose numbering he sinned in the pride of his heart, in painful contrast with Him Whom he foreshadowed so much. But even there mercy glories against judgment at Jerusalem, and the threshing-floor of Araunah becomes the site of the altar to Jehovah, the meeting-place of reconciliation for His people for ever.

Directly and indirectly we thus see that the books of Samuel are God giving man's choice of a king superseded by the figure of the true Beloved, reducing His enemies to subjection; as the Lord will when He comes in power and glory at the end of the age, before He reigns in peace.

§ 11. 1 KINGS. The first book of Kings pursues the history of the kingdom, not only to the division under Rehoboam, but to the death of Jehoshaphat and the reign of Ahaziah. A design similar to 1 and 2 Samuel pervades it and its successor. So in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate they are together entitled the Four books of Kings. But they essentially differ from all other annals, in that prophets in this case were the historians: a character which rationalism does its utmost to doubt, darken, and destroy, but in vain. Only Christ stands, and will, in every relation in which the first man failed; and as king it will be displayed power and glory on earth as in the heavens. Who but an unbeliever cannot discern a greater than David in Him Who, delivered from the strivings of the people, is made Head of the nations?

Here we have the type set in responsibility, blessed and a blessing in the measure of fidelity, and bringing in ruin through unfaithfulness till there was no remedy. But Jehovah cannot fail nor His Anointed, as the consummation of the age will prove to a wondering world. These books testify what the kingdom was in its decline and fall with the assured promise of the "morning without clouds," when judgment clears the way for His reign Whose right it is. Such is the divine design of all four: in the first two, David's history in this point of view; and now Solomon's, who is seen established on the throne, the more for Adonijah's rebellion, in which fell crafty Joab, and later, Shimei, with Abiathar the priest (1 Kings 1:1-53, 1 Kings 2:1-46) in God's righteous government. Though affinity with the Gentile has its expression in 1 Kings 3:1-28, and Solomon was blessed with wisdom and much more, a feebler faith appears in his cleaving to the brazen altar and the great high place in Gibeon, as compared with David's appreciation of the ark. But the splendour of the kingdom was great, the peace maintained, Israel prosperous and glad, the Gentiles filled with his fame, and subservient to his glory (1 Kings 4:1-34, 1 Kings 5:1-18). Then follows (1 Kings 6:1-38, 1 Kings 7:1-51) his building in seven years the temple of Jehovah, himself but a shadow of Him Who is to sit and rule, a priest on His throne, according to Zechariah 6:1-15; his house in thirteen years, and that of the forest of Lebanon, with the porch of judgment, and a house for Pharaoh's daughter. In 1 Kings 8:1-66 at the feast of Tabernacles he dedicates Jehovah's house in prayers, to which Jehovah answers (1 Kings 9:1-28) in language only to be fulfilled in Christ's reign when His world-kingdom is come (Revelation 11:15). And the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-29) prefigures the Gentile powers coming to the brightness of His rising Who is far greater than Solomon. But darkness falls on the king in 1 Kings 11:1-43, and prophecy tells of approaching judgment. So it is with the first man.

Under his son Rehoboam it comes in part and soon; for Jeroboam rebels with the tribes of Israel, leaving Judah. Rehoboam must bow to the word of God (1 Kings 12:1-33). Prophets rise into marked prominency, and especially in Israel now apostate and idolatrous; as Jeroboam was made to feel (1 Kings 13:1-34, 1 Kings 14:1-31), though he adheres to his sin. Abijam follows Rehoboam in evil; Asa shows piety, but trusts in a Syrian alliance to his sorrow (1 Kings 15:1-34). The godly Jehoshaphat succeeded, though he too failed in allying with Ahab and Ahaziah. At this time was the ministry of Elijah the prophet and of Micaiah (1 Kings 17:1-24, 1 Kings 18:1-46, 1 Kings 19:1-21, 1 Kings 20:1-43, 1 Kings 21:1-29, 1 Kings 22:1-53). But we need not dwell on the details, of wondrous interest and instruction though they be.

§ 12. 2 KINGS.

Ahaziah fights against Jehovah and perishes (2 Kings 1:1-18). Jehoram is no better. Where the king, as in Israel then, was not a link of relationship with God, but rather a witness against Him as being idolatrous, the prophet was so in extraordinary grace. But now Elijah was to be caught up, yet not before Elisha is called, as it were from that ascension, and hence has a character of grace as marked as his in righteousness who retired to Horeb, confessing that all was over as to Israel. Jericho is relieved from the curse, though the mockers are punished (2 Kings 2:1-25). Moab fights in vain (2 Kings 3:1-27). Miracles of mercy abound, even to deliverance from death and to the outside Gentile (2 Kings 4:1-44, 2 Kings 5:1-27); so that the baffled foe comes no more. The famine yields to unexpected plenty (2 Kings 6:1-33, 2 Kings 7:1-20). Israel will yet be restored (2 Kings 8:1-29), whatever humiliation may be even for Judah, whatever changes in Israel (2 Kings 9:1-37, 2 Kings 10:1-36). Judah seemed menaced with the destruction of the royal house: but a branch is hid, the pledge of sure blessing (2 Kings 11:1-21) at the end, and of judgment preceding. The Syrians meanwhile oppress both Judah (2 Kings 12:1-21) and Israel (2 Kings 13:1-25), though dying Elisha helps the king who failed in faith to consume the foe. The pride of Judah's king received its humiliation (2 Kings 14:1-29); and Jehovah relieved the bitter afflictions of Israel.

Then the Assyrian is bought off by Menahem, during the long reign of Azariah (or Uzziah) over Judah (2 Kings 15:1-38). But Pul is followed by Tiglath-Pileser who sweeps into captivity the north of the land. In Jotham's time the kings of Syria and Israel begin to act against Judah; but in the days of Ahaz, wicked as he was (2 Kings 16:1-20), Jehovah pronounces the failure of their confederacy. Yet later, in the reign of Hezekiah is Samaria taken, and Israel as a whole carried away (2 Kings 17:1-41), according to Jehovah's judgment of their apostasy; whereas the Assyrian Sennacherib has his blasphemy punished by an unexampled blow from Jehovah in one night, as he was slain afterwards by his own sons in the house of Nisroch his god (2 Kings 18:1-37, 2 Kings 19:1-37). The trustful son of David typified the final fall of that power, when Messiah shall reign, great even unto the ends of the earth (Micah 5:1-6). But his rising as it were from death is followed by vainglory before the ambassadors from Babylon; when the prophet announces Judah's captivity to this power, not to the Assyrian (2 Kings 20:1-21). The revival in that day no doubt gave rise to fond hopes; but it is succeeded by the enormous wickedness of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-26), and his imitating son, Amon. The pious fear of Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-20, 2 Kings 23:1-37) was but a brief stay of the impending ruin, which was hastened by the iniquity of those summed up in Matthew 1:11 as "Jechoniah and his brethren." Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar might contend for a little while; but the divine design had long been uttered. Out of Egypt Israel was called; into Babylon Judah must go (2 Kings 24:1-20, 2 Kings 25:1-30), and now, utterly corrupt and apostate, became the slave of the patroness of corruption; till all her graven images were broken to the ground, and the avenger said of Jerusalem, She shall be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. This however was but providential.

Grace only can really meet the need to the divine glory, crushing all the power of Satan; though for the earth God will be glorified in Israel. This Christ takes up in Isaiah 49:1-26 where He substitutes Himself for the utterly ruined people; while His rejection and atoning death become the pivot for deliverance and righteousness, power and glory. What design so worthy of God, so blessed for man and Israel? And this it is which runs through the four books just surveyed. All the wit of man would have failed to conceive or express the ways of divine government here traced. God alone was capable of forming such a moral already accomplished in the realities of that land under the

sway of kings (for the most part failing and judged), but with ample foreshadow of overturning, until He come Who alone is worthy, to Whom the kingdom will be given.

§ 13. 1 CHRONICLES. That there is a purpose in the book of Chronicles, now divided into two, distinct from that which runs through the preceding books of Kings, is unquestionable. No "And" connects their beginning, as before. But the Septuagintal title of ?a?a?e?p?µe?a, "Things deficient or omitted," fails to describe it adequately. A great deal is repeated though not without characteristic differences, while very much is fresh with notable omissions of a markedly homogeneous kind. The introductory genealogy from man's existence on the earth ought to have shut out the notion of a mere supplement, and prepared for a special design of God; Who here points out, in the midst of general ruin, His sovereign mercy and blessing bound up with the house of David and the tribe of Judah, whatever His chastenings because of their sins. They were a spiritual retrospect, like Deuteronomy, which also is not in continuity with its predecessors, though to the believer undoubtedly of Moses, as the Chronicles in all probability of Ezra, both admitting of a little inspired addition to complete them. But there is no such ground to insist on Ezra here, as on Moses there, who claims the book with unusual precision; so that one must accept this, or treat it as a fraudulent romance and risk the consequence both now and before the judgment-seat of Christ. The so-called first book parts into two sections, 1 Chron. 1-9:34, and 10-29. In the nine chapters constituting the preliminary section we have the principle long after formulated by the apostle Paul, not first the spiritual but the natural, then the spiritual. Even the general genealogy of 1 Chronicles 1:1-54 is governed by this divine purpose. That of the sons of Israel from 1 Chronicles 2:1-55 follows the same rule. In 1 Chronicles 3:1-24 are named David's sons, born in Hebron and in Jerusalem, Judah thus occupying the space from 1 Chronicles 2:3-55, 1 Chronicles 3:1-25, 1 Chronicles 4:1-23, the sons of Simeon following who were allotted there and were specially associated as in Judges 1:1-36. How Reuben, the firstborn, lost the primacy which sovereign grace gave to Judah, though the birthright passed to Joseph, we read in 1 Chronicles 5:1-26; and Reuben's war with the Hagarites, which leads to a brief notice of the Gadites and Manassites, his neighbours. Then comes the incomparably fuller view of the Levites and Aaron's sons in the long 1 Chronicles 6:1-81; as those of Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali, the other half of Manasseh, Ephraim, Asher, curtly follow in 1 Chronicles 7:1-40. But Benjamin reappears particularly in 1 Chronicles 8:1-40 to bring in Saul, his forefathers and descendants. Dan and Zebulun are not even noticed. 1 Chronicles 9:1-44 sketches the circumstances on the return from Babylon, when some of Israel, but especially the saved and the royal tribes came back, in and near Jerusalem.

We may regard the history opening with Saul and his house in 1 Chronicles 9:35, but hastening to his sad end on mount Gilboa, with the Holy Spirit's moral comment on it in 1 Chronicles 10:1-14. Thereon, for here too the spiritual was after the natural, follows the true king of Jehovah's choice, not in Hebron only but Jerusalem; Zion taken; and his worthies named in 1 Chronicles 11:1-47, 1 Chronicles 12:1-40. Then we have the ark with the failures that first hindered in 1 Chronicles 13:1-14, while David was blessed when he was dependent on God (1 Chronicles 14:1-17); but at length he honoured God in due order and reverence for the ark to the joy of all but Michal (1 Chronicles 15:1-29) Yet was its place only provisional, whatever the blessing and praise on that day (1 Chronicles 16:1-43). David's son was to build Jehovah's house (1 Chronicles 17:1-27), and his thanks rise higher still in the assured and everlasting blessing of his own house.

David’s conquests and prosperous reign through Jehovah’s favour appear in 1 Chronicles 18:1-17, and the Ammonite king insults him to the ruin of himself and his allies (1 Chronicles 19:1-19, 1 Chronicles 20:1-8). David’s terrible fall in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba is left out, as well as his tribulations before he reached the throne; not so in the pride that counted Israel, which drew from Jehovah pestilence, arrested at Oman’s threshing-floor, Mount Moriah, thereon bought by David as the site for Jehovah’s house (1 Chronicles 21:1-30, 1 Chronicles 22:1-19). The sanctuary then becomes actively his concern, and his charge to Solomon to build it, and to the princes of Israel to help.

Then in 1 Chronicles 23:1-32 David divides the Levites for their services, and in 1 Chronicles 24:1-31 the sons of Aaron into their twenty-four courses, as in 1 Chronicles 25:1-31 the singers and musicians into a like number. The doorkeepers and other officials are seen arranged in 1 Chronicles 26:11-32. Then in 1 Chronicles 27:1-34 we have the civil officers for every month, and heads of tribes, and the royal controllers in their several places. In 1 Chronicles 28:1-21, 1 Chronicles 29:1-30 the king repeats his charge before all the chiefs as to Solomon and the house to Jehovah’s name, with its inspired pattern and his ample store of material, stirring up pious generosity in the men of means, and blessing Jehovah before all with sacrifice abundant. Solomon is again made king, with Zadok priest. And David’s close is touchingly recounted, with Solomon reigning in his stead: the twofold type of Christ, as we have seen in Moses and Joshua. The episode of Adonijah, etc., is only in the Book of Kings.

§ 14. 2 CHRONICLES. The continuation begins with Solomon in the same aspect as David. It is the figure of the kingdom. How blessed when the Great King reigns, with Whom is no failure, but blessing to the full! Solomon’s faults, like David’s, it was not the point to name, save where otherwise it was required. "Jehovah his God was with him and magnified him exceedingly." But the brazen altar was before him as before the people, rather than the ark, David’s delight. He asked wisdom of God, and received also riches and honour beyond all (2 Chronicles 1:1-17). But the house of Jehovah engaged him rightly, and the king of Tyre helped him, and all the strangers in the land served (2 Chronicles 2:1-18). This is described in 2 Chronicles 3:1-17, 2 Chronicles 4:1-22 and the assembly on its completion, with their hallelujahs when the glory of Jehovah filled God’s house (2 Chronicles 5:1-14), for indeed He only is Elohim: so little have diverse documents to do with the terms. And Solomon’s prayer goes up with blessing in 2 Chronicles 6:1-42, and the fire came down from the heavens as answer in 2 Chronicles 7:1-22. It was the feast of Tabernacles, as well as of the altar’s dedication, kept with joy and gladness; and Jehovah appeared to Solomon, but not without solemn warning. The Gentile gives gifts (2 Chronicles 8:1-18), and Pharaoh’s daughter has her separate house; and his fame spreads far and wide, so that Sheba’s queen comes with her precious things and proving his wisdom (2 Chronicles 9:1-31), as indeed all the kings of the earth owned it.

Next Rehoboam fools away all but Judah and Benjamin, and Israel rebelled against David’s house (2 Chronicles 10:1-19); but here the contrast with the preceding books is striking, for we have no account save of what adhered loyally and in faith. Even Rehoboam bowed to the man of God sent to prohibit his avenging Israel’s defection (2 Chronicles 11:1-23); yet afterwards (2 Chronicles 12:1-16) forsaking the law he was chastened by the hand of Shishak. Abijah, who succeeded and had more faith, inflicted a severe blow on Jeroboam and Israel. So with Asa in 2 Chronicles 14:1-15, before whom Ethiopia’s myriads fell, and who was blessed in hearing Oded the prophet, 2

Chronicles 15:1-19. But relying on Syria against Israel (2 Chronicles 16:1-14), he was smitten of God by a lingering death. The bright reign of faithful Jehoshaphat follows in 2 Chronicles 17:1-19, 2 Chronicles 18:1-34, 2 Chronicles 19:1-11, 2 Chronicles 20:1-37, yet with the blot of joining himself with the idolatrous kings of Israel for state purposes to his shame more than once. Of Jehoram and Ahaziah there is only evil to say in 2 Chronicles 21:1-20, 2 Chronicles 22:1-12; and the wicked Athaliah seemed to have extinguished the lamp of David's house; but not so: Jehoiada, the priest, conceals the heir in the house of God six years. In 2 Chronicles 23:1-21 we read how the young king got his own again, and the murderous usurper came to her death. But Joash too forgot his debt to Jehoiada when his son Zechariah was slain by the people at the king's command; and he too (2 Chronicles 24:1-27) publicly and personally came to grief. Amaziah had a mixed career according to his behaviour and ended ill, 2 Chronicles 25:1-28; and Uzziah reigned well and long, but he also transgressing in pride became a leper judicially till his death, 2 Chronicles 26:1-23.

Jotham did better, as we read in 2 Chronicles 27:1-9, but Ahaz ("that is that King Ahaz") walked in the ways of Israel's kings, and spite of calls of grace (2 Chronicles 28:1-27), sank lower and lower. His son Hezekiah was simple and strong in faith, as we see in 2 Chronicles 29:1-36, 2 Chronicles 30:1-27, 2 Chronicles 31:1-21, 2 Chronicles 32:1-33, and honoured in the overthrow of the Assyrian. Yet he got lifted up at last; though here again the Spirit omits the details of his sickness, and his vain display before the ambassadors from Babylon, both only touched on in the Chronicles. The horrors of Manasseh's reign are shortly given, and also his repentance and restoration after captivity; Amon's evil follows in the same 2 Chronicles 33:1-25, but punished by his own servants who were themselves punished. In the midst of Judah more and more corrupt, how marked is the tender conscience of Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:1-33), with boldness for Jehovah's honour and hatred of idolatry and heed to the word of God! so that the passover was kept as not before since Samuel's days (2 Chronicles 35:1-27). But fighting without divine direction he fell before the then king of Egypt. The evil under Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and the profane Zedekiah brought on the destruction of the kingdom, of Jerusalem and the temple, with the captivity of the remnant in Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:1-23). "There was no remedy." After seventy years Cyrus the Persian according to the word of Jehovah proclaimed the return and the rebuilding of His house at Jerusalem.

§ 15. EZRA. This book has its own design from God, manifestly distinct from that of Kings as well as Chronicles, even if the style of the latter did not point to the same writer, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given." In fact however the book before us was joined, not with the Chronicles, but with Nehemiah, though this was by the governor's hand, long designated together "the Book of Ezra," and it would seem, only late in the fourth century after Christ separated as we now have them. Ezra was not the witness of the facts in Ezra 1-6, as he was of those in the remaining four; but there is no sufficient ground to doubt that he was inspired to give us all. The overthrow of Babylon was an event of signal moment, not only in itself and its immediate consequences, but yet more as prefiguring the judgment of the Gentile dominion from the God of heaven on the actual apostasy and ruin for the time of Jehovah's people. This is made plain in Isaiah 13:1-22, Isaiah 14:1-32 where, as none ought to doubt that it predicts the catastrophe that befell the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride by the Medes, etc., so none should overlook that "the Burden" does not stop short of the final downfall of the power which "the

golden city" began. Then will Jehovah have compassion on, not on a mere remnant of Judah chiefly, but "on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land," and "they shall take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors." This book of Ezra was of the utmost importance to show the divine account of the intervening provisional state in which they waited for the Messiah, and the fulfilment to the utmost when they are completely restored to the land, under the new covenant, and have the true David and David's Son reigning over them in power and glory. They are meanwhile Lo-ammi (not-My-people); they are (not "were") bondmen of the Gentile power. Compare Ezra 9:9, and Nehemiah 9:36 which makes the correction certain. Yet Cyrus had proclaimed more than liberty to return and even a charge to build Jehovah His house in Jerusalem according to prophecy. Withal he returned the captured vessels, gold and silver, by Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah (Ezra 1:1-11); and the children of the captivity went up (Ezra 2:1-70), every one to his city, upwards of 42,000 genealogically reckoned, besides their servants male and female. Most appropriately they set up, not first a wall, but the altar, and offered Burnt-offerings, and kept the feast of Tabernacles (for it was the seventh month), with other dues to Jehovah according to His word, before the foundation of the house was laid. When it was laid before their eyes, greatly wept the old, loudly shouted the young (Ezra 3:1-13). But the adversaries were on the alert, first pretending a friendly alliance, next accusing the returned remnant to Cambyses (=Ahasuerus), and as he evidently would not oppose his father's decree, then to Smerdis (=Artaxerxes), who lent them his ear; and the work ceased (Ezra 4:1-24) But the prophets, looking to God, re-awakened their zeal by their prophesying (Ezra 5:1-17); and the work went on, notwithstanding the opposition of influential antagonists, before the fresh letter to Darius Hystaspis brought out his decided confirmation of Cyrus' original proclamation. The house was finished in his sixth year, and its dedication kept with joy; and remnant though they were, shorn of their chief ornaments, they embraced all Israel in faith and subjection to the word; as in due time they kept the passover duly purified and joyfully, though owning the Gentile king in the bondage to which God had reduced them because of their departure from Himself (Ezra 6:1-22).

After these things, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, Ezra the priest went up from Babylon, and with him other Israelites of all grades by the king's favour, and with free-will offerings, and authority for all Ezra wanted for the house of his God, and instruction and judging of the Jews: a witness alike of divine mercy through the Gentile, and of the abnormal position of Israel (Ezra 7:1-28). The genealogy follows in Ezra 8:1-36 of Ezra's companions, their fears, yet faith, and safe arrival. But this faithful servant of God, when he learnt the affinity of those already in the land with the Gentiles, sat down grieved and overwhelmed until the evening oblation; then he poured out with tears his humiliation to Jehovah (Ezra 9:1-15). There Shechaniah confessed for the rest (Ezra 10:1-44); and they agreed to put away the evil at a solemn assembly of all by proclamation. So too it was done, though not without resistance; for the sin was widespread, even among the priests § 16. NEHEMIAH. Not less distinct is God's design in the book of Nehemiah. But it is their civil policy, not their religious position. Both must be according to God, but in the lowly estate that became captives returned from Babylon. Pretension in either would have dishonoured God; but obedience is ever imperative: no ruin absolves from its obligation. In this book we have his own touching account of the grief that filled him even at the Persian court in Artaxerxes L.'s twentieth year, when he heard of the great affliction and reproach under which the remnant lay, the wall even still broken down, and the gates burnt with fire. So he gave himself to mourning and prayer to

the God of heaven. Still He was God and would hear supplication (Nehemiah 1:1-11). The great king perceived his sadness, though a forbidden thing there; and his cup-bearer, not without fresh prayer, made his request to build the city of his fathers' sepulchres, which was granted, to the vexation of new adversaries. But Nehemiah saw all with his own eyes, though by night; and only then laid his purpose to build the wall before the chief men, who were cheered and strengthened accordingly, whatever the scorn and despite of their neighbours (Nehemiah 2:1-20)

Great things were far from Nehemiah, but jealousy for God and persevering love for Israel in their utter weakness and shame. Nehemiah 3:1-32 is the deeply interesting account of their labours in detail from the high priest down to the least. If nobles failed here, even a ruler's daughter repaired elsewhere. Great was the anger and indignation of Sanballat; bitter the contempt of Tobiah; but Nehemiah prayed and set a watch, and they built with swords girt on, and the trumpeter by the governor (Nehemiah 4:1-23). What mortification and anger, when he heard of Jews exacting usury of their brethren, and even enslaving them as the issue! So he put them to shame and redressed the wrong; as his own unselfishness rebuked them (Nehemiah 5:1-19). Then we see him in Nehemiah 6:1-19 escaping the snare, as before the violence, of the foe; and the wall is finished, in spite of treachery in priests, prophets, and nobles. The genealogy of the returned captives under Zerubbabel here appears in Nehemiah 7:1-73 in connection with his re-peopling Jerusalem and building houses in it.

Next in Nehemiah 8:1-18 we are told, as the seventh month was come, all the people gathered, and Ezra read the book of the law; and when the people wept, they were exhorted to good cheer; for a day that is holy to Jehovah does not call for gloom. But obedience is of all moment always; and so they judged all previous departure, as they had not done since Joshua's time. Nehemiah 9:1-38 shows them fasting shortly after, as becomes them, with a true repentance: so in Ezra's case before. Nehemiah 10:1-39 gives the list of those who sealed the covenant of separation from strangers and of confession of sins from the Tirshatha downwards; as in Nehemiah 11:1-36 we have those who devoted themselves to reside in Jerusalem and its suburbs. Again, Nehemiah 12:1-47. furnishes the names of the priests and the Levites that had first returned, and those descended till subsequent days. The dedication of the wall follows.

Nehemiah 13:1-31 brings us down to the time when Nehemiah came again from the Persian court in the two and thirtieth year of the king (Nehemiah 13:6). Then a fresh effort was made to separate Israel from the strange multitude, the house of God was purged from impurity, the sabbath vindicated, and mixed marriages put an end to. For even the high priest's son was guilty and repulsed by Nehemiah.

04A.05. Part 5

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 5 § 17. Esther.

More striking still is the special divine design here, of which the omission of God’s name is an essential part. It was intended to mark that, when the people, already Lo-ammi, were in such circumstances among the Gentiles that His name could not be named, His secret providence on their behalf comes out unfailingly. This is so sure and manifest, that no detailed proof is required. Yet deep religious feeling is latent throughout, as in the Jewish horror of the Agagite, the fasting of Esther, and the feast of Purim. It was indeed what people call an "invisible church" to the utmost. The Septuagintal addition, we may add, brings in God’s name to the destruction of that silence which so embarrasses Canon Rawlinson and most persons. When the people were in such a state that God could not own them, He unseen, unnamed, cares for them. How could He acknowledge a daughter of Israel married to the great king? The book looks at the dispersion, as Ezra and Nehemiah did at the returned remnant. It is thus unique as well as invaluable throughout its ten chapters. As a type, it shows us the Gentile bride set aside who failed to display her beauty, and the Jewish one established in her stead. The enemy may rage in a last effort of destructive malice; but all ends in his own ruin and that of his instruments, but to the joy of Israel and of the nations under righteous rule throughout the vast dominion. How will not Christ administer the kingdom to the glory of God the Father!

§ 18. JOB.

Having thus surveyed the historical parts of the O.T. with a view to the question of divine design, it remains for us to apply the same research into the poetical books, at the head of which in the English and many other Bibles stands that of Job. No sufficient ground appears for doubting that it rightly opens this fresh division of O.T. scripture. Even those free handlers of the Bible (who admit the impossibility of fixing the date of this book precisely, but would like to bring it down to Jeremiah’s age) allow the weight of Ezekiel 14:14-20 for the true personality of the patriarch, his known righteousness, and the proved value of his intercession. The internal evidence of the book points to patriarchal times and manners; the religious observances, and even the idolatry which was spreading, though (like adultery) an iniquity for the judge, all confirm the bearing of his age. On the other hand the prologue and the epilogue naturally imply that the writer of the book was not earlier than Moses, though recounting the great debate which supposes God not so known. Indeed not a few of weight have been impressed by the similarity of its narrative to the book of Genesis.

This, however interesting in a literary way and otherwise, is quite subordinate to its inspiration. Nor do the neo-critics, though self-sufficient and scornful because of their inability to appreciate Elihu’s speeches, fail to see the transcendent superiority of what Jehovah says here, as compared even with the grandest strain of Isaiah on a kindred theme. What then is the design of the book which proves God to be its author? What place does it hold in the Bible peculiar to itself, worthy of Him, and needed by man?

Here in the midst of the sacred writings of Israel stands a book, which no Jew of his own motion would ever have written or could even have conceived. For it authoritatively reveals the deepest interest of the true God in a man outside the fathers or the sons of the chosen race, a son of the east in the land of Uz, "perfect and upright, one that feared God and abstained from evil." Who can wonder at the outbreak of the early rationalism clearly as in Maimonides? Jewish pride would like to see in Job no more than a fictitious personage. Yet if even an inspired romance were really possible, the difficulty would remain. For the case presented is as overwhelming to Jewish narrowness, as it must cheer any soul on earth that knew it. The curtain is drawn (Job 1:1-22) for the occasion from the unseen world, that the believing reader may know that God initiates the unparalleled trial about to open for the good of Job, and challenges the ever active Adversary. "Hast thou considered my servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth" etc. Satan imputes a selfish motive for Job's piety; and all belonging to him is left for the evil one to blast. This he at once willingly executes by natural means: a lesson of great value, nowhere else in the O.T. taught so clearly. Satan fails. In the midst of family joy and his own piety messenger follows messenger, of Sabean and Chaldean raids, of lightning and tempest, which swept from Job all his oxen, sheep, camels, and children; but Job blessed His name as to all, and sinned not. The Adversary reappears with the sons of God on high (Job 2:1-13) and, challenged yet more, he obtains leave to touch Job's bone and flesh, apart from his life: not that this would have really made a disadvantage to Job; but it would hays hindered the end of the Lord. Even when a mass and a spectacle of suffering, with his wife tempting him, Job cleaves to God, and Satan vanishes. But God carries on the trial; for the hindrance was not yet reached, and Job's self-complacency might and must have been enhanced by his patience in sad adversity, had all stopped there. So his three friends come, each from his own place; and their sympathetic grief brings out Job's passionate cursing of his day (Job 3:1-26), and desire for death to close his trouble. He is being laid bare and humbled in his own eyes before God, as he never had been before. His friends, though pious men, knew still less of God and of themselves than the afflicted and now complaining saint. They each and all come out in their own thoughts, farther from the truth God was teaching than Job; for they assume the adequacy of present results as the criterion of God's estimate of man. Now there is a providential government, which overrules evil, and which does good according to God's nature; but His word reveals only at the close righteousness governing, and later still righteousness dwelling when all things are made new. Meanwhile God makes all things work together for good to those that love Him, humbling them, pious though they be, with what they are, and giving delight in God and submission to Him. We thus learn ourselves as well as God. In this sketch it is not called for that we analyse the discussion that ensues. Suffice it to say that there are three series of speeches: from Eliphaz more grave and courteous; from Bildad more formal and severe; and from Zophar more suspicious; to each of whom Job replies respectively. The third time, Zophar, the least weighty and the most violent, is silenced. But Job took up his parable again, as if for him also, unless indeed we may not better regard Job 27:1-23, Job 28:1-28 as more general, and Job 29:1-25, Job 30:1-31, Job 31:1-40 as a closing summary which contrasts his bright past with his dark present, whereon he then confidently appeals to God. It is anything but a religious drama, or epos, or philosophy, as it has been called. It is a divinely given disclosure in a living saint's case for the instruction of man at any time (independently of special position as of Israel in particular), though for his correction too as peculiarly needing it. There we have a saint in the relationship with God which faith forms, exposed to the conflict of good and evil.

Thus, as we discern Satan's enmity here below behind second causes and his accusation on high, we may also know God's gracious interest all through as before heaven. Not only is thus proved the failure of any righteousness on our part as a standing before God, but the necessity for such a daysman (or mediator) as the Lord Jesus, perfect God and perfect man. But the intervention of Elihu is of the greatest moment, however people may disparage it who do not enter into the truth or feel their personal need of it. For he speaks as the requisite interpreter, "one of a thousand," and while exposing the rashness of Job and the inability of his friends to solve the difficulty, he furnishes the key: — God uses trial and suffering for the blessing of souls. This he shows in Job 33:1-33 as to man generally, to deliver him from going down to the pit; while in Job 36:1-33 it is to open to instruction the ears of the righteous, who might be sadly wrong and fall. This was much for the good of souls. But more was vouchsafed; for Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind (Job 38:1-41, Job 39:1-30), not by argument nor even by instruction, but displaying the witness of His majesty and power, so that Job was constrained to say, "Behold, I am of small account: what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth: once have I spoken, and I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no farther" (Job 40:3-5). Jehovah answers again out of the whirlwind, by presenting two creatures, behemoth and leviathan, to enforce Job's sense of powerlessness, and the folly of his presumptuous words, so that he again confesses (Job 42:2-6), "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be hindered. Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore I uttered what I understood not, things too wonderful for me that I knew not. Hear, I beseech Thee, and I will speak. I will demand of Thee, and inform Thou me. I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor [myself] and repent in dust and ashes."

It is an unintelligent objection that when Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are censured, and owe their pardon to Job whom they had wholly misjudged, Elihu does not appear. He had done his good work: Jehovah alone must be exalted. And the captivity of Job was turned when he prayed for his friends; and Job got twice as much as before. Typically it applies to Israel when the time comes for His mercy to the erring people, then blessed more than at the first. But meanwhile for souls from the day it was written what an unfolding of the divine ways with those that fear God! They, because they are His, must learn the folly of their own heart, and confide submissively in what He is, not only in Himself and His work, but this in His ways toward them. That still higher and deeper things appeared in Christ on earth, and by the Holy Spirit when He went up on high, is true; but such divine and heavenly communications in no way set aside the immense worth of the book before us, the design of which is unique in the Bible. kind who but God Himself could have given it?

§ 19. THE PSALMS. The special character of the Psalms is undeniable. In no part of scripture is the design of God more evident. This is the more notable, because of the variety of writers concerned, and the profound arrangement of their contributions, not superficially according to source or time, but by a distinct and divine purpose which governs the due place of no less than 150 several pieces, some alone, others in groups, all falling under five large sections, each with its own scope and its marked conclusion. Of these the first comprises Psalms 1-41; the second has 42 to 72; the third contains 73 to 89; in the fourth are 90 to 106; and the last gives us 107 to 150, where the end comes without any form of expressing it as before. The first section, as one may gather from its contents, presents prophetically the general principle of the godly discriminated

from the wicked among the Jews. Yet they are still together for the city and the sanctuary; and the covenant name of Jehovah predominates accordingly. In the second, on the contrary, the godly are a remnant who are severed from the multitude with whom they used to pass along to the house of God, as its opening intimates They are sorrow-stricken and ask Elohim to do them justice against an ungodly nation. Here accordingly, as deprived of public and common covenant privileges, they fall back on what God is in Himself, and the abstract name predominates. A striking proof of this appears from comparing Psalms 53:1-6 with Psalms 14:1-7. The third section, which has the divine names more mingled from Elohim to Jehovah, opens and goes through with the introduction of Israel as object of divine goodness, but such only "as are of a pure heart," with all the nations jealous and hostile coming under judgment. The fourth division, after an appropriate exordium, strikes the note of a psalm-song for the Sabbath, and is filled with Jehovah reigning when He again brings the First-begotten into the inhabited earth; and here with the covenant name we find also the Most High and the Almighty. The last part celebrates Jehovah in the redemption of His people from the oppressor’s hand, and their ingathering out of all countries, east, west, north, and south. It furnishes a believing and moral review of all that had passed, the virtues of the law written thenceforward on Israel’s heart, and an affecting series of songs of degrees, followed after due interval by an ever swelling chorus of Hallelujahs, universal and lasting while earth endures. As the history of man and of Israel is but the history of sin and ruin, but on God’s part from man’s fall were given communications of grace in prophecy and promise, so we have in the O.T. this beautiful and central book whose undercurrent is "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them." Here we have the Holy Spirit providing inspired effusions from the heart and for the heart in sorrow and in joy, that the expression might have a divine savour through mercy and in truth, for His people passing through vicissitudes beyond all others, more favoured yet more guilty, in respect not only of the law, but of the Messiah, but at length brought out of all guilt as well as distress unequalled, repentant and meek, into the over-abounding joy of grace and the everlasting glory of the kingdom, when everything that has breath shall praise. The Psalms therefore obviously and assuredly have the prophetic bearing which is stamped more or less plainly on all scripture. But they have the peculiarity of expressing the heart’s feelings to God, produced by the Holy Spirit in poetic form, when holy men passed through grievous trials, as for instance David particularly, far the most fertile writer of Psalms. But we have the Lord’s authority and that of the inspiring Spirit that an infinitely greater was the object of God, in some of them personally, in all of them His Spirit. This accordingly gave rise in the saints thus tried to the richest exercise of heart and conscience; which the Holy Spirit produced and clothed in appropriate language for others in similar or even deeper trials, especially those in which the Jew will be involved at the consummation of the age. Deepest of all are those which none but the Lord Jesus could adequately feel and express, such as Psalms 8:1-9, Psalms 16:1-11, Psalms 22:1-31, Psalms 40:1-17 etc. Many are the Psalms on the other hand which anticipate the glory which is to appear, and the triumph not in heaven only but here below for Him Who was rejected and put to shame and by none so bitterly as by His brethren after the flesh. In the Psalms therefore, beyond every other part of the written word, we have the divinely inspired expression of the hopes and fears, of the dangers and falls, of the confessions and recoveries, of the self-judgment and the thanksgivings, of the praises and the blessings, of God’s people. We have the outpouring even of the Lord Himself, alone in atoning for sin, associated with others in governmental affliction, and leading the praise where and when this could be. Who but God could have supplied all this with a

vast deal more, and beforehand? Who could have combined the experience of man's trembling and agitated heart, with the consolations of divine grace suited to his state, in a form worthy of God and a bearing for all time, even for that when the groans of creation shall be changed into the joy of the earth in unison with the heavens, and the field shall exult, and all the trees of the forest sing for joy, when the floods shall clap hands and the mountains chant together? For Jehovah will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. The order of the Psalms was a final act of divine inspiration as certainly as the substance of every several psalm. There is an exact propriety in the succession, which in no case could be disturbed without loss, and thus forcibly attests the finger of God. The titles, where given, are significant of a deeper mind than man's, though naturally unintelligible to such as look only for what lies on the surface. The absence of a title has its meaning, though it may not always be the same.

Thus Psalms 1:1-6 and Psalms 2:1-12 have no title, not only to link them together, but this at the start as the preface to the first section and indeed also to the entire collection: one laying down the character of the godly man before Jehovah, whose hope is in Messiah; the other, the titles of Christ, as Jehovah's Son and King anointed for His holy hill of Zion, as surely as He will crush the nations and their kings in His day. From Psalms 3:1-8, Psalms 4:1-8, Psalms 5:1-12, Psalms 6:1-10, Psalms 7:1-17 it is not the godly alone, nor Christ alone, but the Spirit of Christ in the godly. It is not Christ personally, but in His Spirit setting forth great moral principles. Thus in Psalms 3:1-8 it is faith in Jehovah, howsoever many be hostile; in Psalms 4:1-8 Jehovah sets apart the godly to Himself and hears him; in Psalms 5:1-12 it is confidence of blessing through Jehovah's righteousness for the righteous; in Psalms 6:1-10 he bows in distress before Jehovah in the sense of His just displeasure and pleads for mercy; in Psalms 7:1-17 he looks for His judgment falling on the wicked. Psalms 8:1-9 closes the group by passing from God's purpose about Christ to His suffering in fact as Son of man, and even now highly exalted in a wider glory, as in result Jehovah's name excellent in all the earth.

Again, Psalms 9:1-20 and Psalms 10:1-18 plunge us into the latter-day crisis as the time to which in general the psalms apply, not the period of the gospel and the church. Hence the issue is judgment executed on the quick (hostile heathen and wicked Jews), not the rapture of the saints glorified to heaven. They are a pair, and regard the enemies without and within. And they are followed up by a connected series up to Psalms 18:1-50 which express in Psalms 11:1-7, Psalms 12:1-8, Psalms 13:1-6 the experience and feelings of the godly in those days. Psalms 14:1-7 contrasts the character of the wicked and the righteous in view of that day; and Psalms 15:1-5 replies to the challenge, Who shall dwell with Him then? Then in Psalms 16:1-11 and Psalms 17:1-15. Christ is seen as taking in grace His place therein, and in righteousness; whereas Psalms 18:1-50 identifies strikingly Messiah with His people from the deliverance out of Egypt at the outset till the Abiding One, when He becomes head, not of the church as now, but of the nations at the end of the age.

Next, one can scarce fail to see, come the divine testimonies of creation and the law in Psalms 19:1-14, then in Psalms 20:1-9 of Messiah answered in the day of trouble, and glorified in Psalms 21:1-13; whilst Psalms 22:1-31 is Messiah made sin and so forsaken to God's glory, resulting in grace flowing out more and more widely, if not then so deeply, till all the ends of the earth turn to Jehovah, and His righteousness is declared to a people that shall be born, on the ground of Messiah's doing. For after all, as we read in Psalms 23:1-6, Psalms 24:1-10, He as Jehovah

guards His sheep when evil reigns, and will Himself be owned as Jehovah King of glory in the kingdom and house of Jehovah.

Then commencing with Psalms 25:1-22, Psalms 26:1-12 we have confession of sins and integrity of ways united in those that are His, emboldened by His sacrifice to own the truth and pursue holiness: a fresh start for the psalms to come. Whom should such a one fear? says Psalms 27:1-14, and (whatever the distress) Jehovah is his shield, Who will judge the wicked according to their deeds, as in Psalms 28:1-9 Hence the challenge in Psalms 29:1-11 to the sons of the mighty to own Jehovah, as every one in the temple says, Glory! Psalms 30:1-12 celebrates deliverance: if weeping comes for the night, there is joy at morn. Yet for this Messiah died, Psalms 31:1-24. Thus only could transgression be forgiven, sin be covered, and true blessedness come, Psalms 32:1-11; and thus alone could the righteous exult in Jehovah as in Psalms 33:1-22, its companion psalm, while Psalms 34:1-22 rises to a strain yet higher and sustained "at all times."

Psalms 35:1-28, Psalms 36:1-12, Psalms 37:1-40, Psalms 38:1-22, again, contemplate the way and power of evil judicially, also the path of the righteous, as well as a just sense of their sins confessed; whilst Psalms 39:1-13 owns that it is to their chastening, though man walks in a vain show. The section worthily concludes with Christ, after death and resurrection, praising in a new song, faithful in obedience, as also in bearing sins, in word and deed and suffering to the uttermost (Psalms 40:1-17); and blessed is he that understands the Poor One, if His own familiar friend lifted up heel against Him (Psalms 41:1-13). The second section regards the godly remnant as forced to Bee and be outside Jerusalem (Psalms 42:1-11). Compare Matthew 24:15, etc. For those within are in league with idolatrous Gentiles, being alike ungodly and apostate (Psalms 43:1-5). "Arise," pleads Psalms 44:1-26. Christ too is no longer viewed in general as graciously in their midst on earth, but gloriously on high; as we see in Psalms 45:1-17. Elohim appropriately is their refuge in Psalms 46:1-11, but Jehovah Most High is anticipatively celebrated in faith, and this for all the peoples, a great King for all the earth (Psalms 47:1-9). Whatever present things may say, the utter rout of earth’s kings is seen by faith, and Zion is the hill of His holiness (Psalms 48:1-14). Psalms 49:1-20 is a homily thereon: that day proclaims the folly of unbelief. Man in honour and understanding not is like the beasts that perish. Their wealth, lands, sayings, glory, come to nought. Only the redeemed abide. The chosen people in Psalms 50:1-23 were no better than the world, yea more guilty; but the godly made a covenant with God over sacrifice. In lit like David they own corruption and blood-guiltiness; they recognise man’s might under judgment, Psalms 52:1-9, and the folly of "the many" Psalms 53:1-6 But all the resource of faith is in God, Psalms 54:1-7, though the wilderness was better than the city traitorous to Christ, Psalms 55:1-23. Psalms 56:1-13. Psalms 57:1-11 are an evident pair, expressing confidence, and growingly, in that day of danger and distress. So are Psalms 58:1-11, Psalms 59:1-17 when God’s judgment is owned as the only means to convince man of fruit for the righteous, and that God rules in Jacob. In Psalms 60:1-12 the Jew accepts God’s chastening, but looks for victory. In Psalms 61:1-8 he cries "from the end of the earth" (and it is mainly for his soul and the king’s life); in Psalms 62:1-12 with enlarging expectation. In Psalms 63:1-11 the praise and blessing and soul-satisfaction rise, though he be still an outcast from the sanctuary. Psalms 64:1-10 spreads before God the deadly craft and evil of that day, but is sure of God’s intervention; and also in Psalms 65:1-13 the outburst then of praise, silent long in Zion. Yea, all the earth shall shout aloud to God; and the godly one who had fled will then go into His house and pay the vows made in trouble, Psalms 66:1-20. Next Psalms

67:1-7 closes this group by the blessing of the Jew as the means for all nations to know God's salvation, never before nor otherwise. The triumph of God, as Psalms 68:1-35 exultingly sings, is in and by Christ ascended on high. So shall His enemies be scattered when He arises; so shall the isolated be made to dwell in a home, and the kings of armies flee, and Jehovah dwell in Zion for ever, and the kingdoms of the earth sing to God: blessed be God! But what was not Christ's humiliation in order that it all should be righteously? This, Psalms 69:1-36 declares of Him, Who here speaks of being smitten and wounded of Jehovah. Indeed Christ bore reproach for His sake, for which judgment must follow on His enemies. Psalms 70:1-5 pleads for His deliverance, but withal to the shame of His wicked adversaries, and to their joy that sought Jehovah, Himself afflicted in order to it. Psalms 71:1-24 turns this principle to Jewish deliverance, "old" as they might be, but yet to renew their youth in praise; and so this portion closes with Psalms 72:1-20 "for Solomon." It is not the aged David, the man of war, but the Prince of Peace, Who introduces the rest of God, when the prayers of Jesse's son are ended. Who can doubt the divine design thus far? The third division bears out its larger character as bringing in Israel and their Gentile foes so plainly that fewer words are here needed. Psalms 73:1-28 speaks expressly of the people thus; as Psalms 74:1-23 of their and His enemies. In Psalms 75:1-10 Messiah intervenes, judging with equity; when earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved, He bears up its pillars. Can any one doubt Who He is? or when? Psalms 76:1-12 speaks of the catastrophe for the kings of the earth when He dwells in Zion; not when His presence shines from heaven to the destruction of the Beast and the False prophet. But there is inward deliverance also as in Psalms 77:1-20. And the history of the people is turned more than ever to "instruction" in that day as in Psalms 78:1-72. But even when Israel is back in the land, Gentile hatred once more breaks out as we see in Psalms 79:1-13, and the people are not yet established in the new covenant. In Psalms 80:1-19 they pray that the Shepherd of Israel may shine forth, and His hand be on the Man of His right hand, the Son of man.

Psalms 81:1-16 bids the trumpet be blown at the new moon. It is the awakening and gathering of Israel, as Psalms 82:1-8 warns the judges of His arising to judge the earth. Nor will the confederacy of Gentiles, small or great (Psalms 83:1-18), avail against God's hidden ones; their greed after His holy places will only bring out that He alone Whose name is Jehovah is the Most High over all the earth. Psalms 84:1-12 then points out the blessing, first, of dwelling where Jehovah dwells, in His house; next, of going up thither. Psalms 85:1-13 celebrates His favour, though the result was far from complete; for glory is to dwell in the land. Cf. Isaiah 4:1-6 for Jerusalem. A suited prayer of David follows in Psalms 86:1-17; and Psalms 87:1-7 contrasts Zion with the passing splendour of the earth's great ones. But none the less do the godly feel and express in Psalms 88:1-18 the terrors of a broken law; and they cry to the God of their salvation accordingly. They had utterly failed in their relationship; but the Spirit of Christ in no way held aloof from this righteous affliction, Himself holy and spotless Psalms 89:1-52 is the song of Jehovah's loving-kindness or mercies, the centre of which is the Merciful or Holy One in Psalms 89:19. They had lost all but His mercies in Christ, which abide and will yet be theirs "for ever." The fit opening of the fourth section is Moses' prayer, Psalms 90:1-17. The sovereign Lord aloes can say to crumbling man, Return, children of men. But this turns on the Messiah, Psalms 91:1-16, Whose work brings in the true sabbath song, Psalms 92:1-15 Jehovah then reigns, higher than the highest of creatures; and holiness becomes His house ever more, Psalms 93:1-5. Yet vengeance belongs to Him, dishonoured from the first, and most of all at the last, Psalms 94:1-23. But when the workers of iniquity are cut off, then goes forth Israel's joyous call to sing to Jehovah, Psalms

95:1-11, as in Psalms 96:1-13 all the earth is invited to sing a new song. Is not Psalms 97:1-12 the answer to that, as Psalms 99:1-9 to Psalms 98:1-9 where Israel is in question? In Psalms 100:1-5 they are all summoned to shout aloud and serve Jehovah with joy. There is no narrowness of heart more. If "we" are His people, enter "ye" into His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Psalms 101:1-8 is Messiah setting out the terms of His reign, mercy and judgment. Psalms 102:1-28 gives the ground of all blessing in His humiliation, Who was not the cast down Messiah only but Jehovah, as truly as He who lifted Him up; for He is the Creator of all. Then, Psalms 103:1-22, what praise in Israel flows out! What praise in creation, Psalms 104:1-35! What thanks given in Psalms 105:1-45 where Jehovah's ways of grace are retraced from the fathers down till the sons entered on the lands of the nations! What thanks, in Psalms 106:1-48 not less deeply but here adding, "for His loving kindness (or mercy) is for ever." Grace opens their lips to confess how they had sinned with their fathers, and done wickedly throughout the self-same history, and later still when carried captive. Now they say, "Save us, Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations to give thanks to thy holy name, to triumph in thy praise." The fifth division begins with Psalms 107:1-43, in substance like the concluding one of the fourth, but adding the weighty facts in Psalms 107:2-3, and recounting their varied providential past, wise now to understand Jehovah's mercy. Cf. Romans 11:30-32. Psalms 108:1-13 is the joy of the Spirit of Christ when Israel is put in possession of their long forfeited inheritance. Here it is His mercy, truth, and glory. Now in Psalms 109:1-31 we have Christ rejected but exalted to help the needy, with judgment on the son of perdition first and last. Psalms 110:1-7 is David's Son and Lord exalted. Though Priest for ever after Melchisedek's order, He is about to smite through kings in the day of His anger, especially the "head over a mighty land": the just reply to Psalms 109:1-31. In Psalms 111:1-10, Psalms 112:1-10, Psalms 113:1-9, Psalms 114:1-8, Psalms 115:1-18, Psalms 116:1-19, Psalms 117:1-2, Psalms 118:1-29 we have a group celebrating Jehovah successively in His works and wonders: Psalms 111:1-10, in His commandments and righteousness; Psalms 112:1-10, in His character and dealings; Psalms 113:1-9, in praise, all being Hallelujahs; then in Psalms 114:1-8 is the effect on the earth of the presence of Jacob's God, as Psalms 115:1-18 is the humbling effect on Israel to His glory, blessed and blessing; and in Psalms 116:1-19 their love in Christ's Spirit as delivered from death like Jairus' daughter. Again, Psalms 117:1-2 calls all the nations to praise Jehovah, as Psalms 118:1-29 closes the set with "His mercy for ever" sung by Israel, Aaron's house, and those that fear Him. Through sore trial Israel had passed, but destroyed their foes; but it was in His name Who set the rejected Stone at the head of the corner; and in His name Messiah coming they bless.

Next in Psalms 119:1-176 we have Israel's state shown, the law written on their hearts, and its virtues analysed fully and distinctively. Then follows the series of fifteen "Songs of degrees," or steps in Israel's restoration, not yet fulfilled. In Psalms 120:1-7 the deceitful foe is discerned; in Psalms 121:1-8 Jehovah is looked to for help; and in Psalms 122:1-9 Christ's Spirit kindles their joy in worship. Then in Psalms 123:1-4 their eyes are devotedly lifted up to Jehovah; and in Psalms 124:1-8 the snare is broken, and they bless Him. In Psalms 125:1-5 they confide in Jehovah, peace on Israel; in Psalms 126:1-6 joy is reaped after sowing in tears, by Christ above all. Psalms 127:1-5 is for Solomon, contrasting the house and the city of the rest of God with the Babel-building that preceded, and looking for a blessed posterity. The blessing of Jehovah-fearers duly ensues in Psalms 128:1-6 and their many afflictions can now, in Psalms 129:1-8, be calmly remembered with the assurance of shame to all that hate Zion. Then Psalms 130:1-8 tells how

forgiveness with Jehovah taught them to fear Him, and wait for Him, and hope; as in Psalms 131:1-3 the moral effect goes forth in subjection of heart, deepening that hope. Psalms 132:1-18 asks Jehovah to remember for David all his affliction, the figure of infinitely greater; and to arise into His rest, with answers from Psalms 132:14 exceeding every request. Next Psalms 133:1-3 points us to the beauteous dwelling in unity that results from the power of the Spirit, honouring a greater than Aaron in the blessing — life for evermore; while Psalms 134:1-3 ends this series with blessing rising up: night brings no pause, and Jehovah blesses out of Zion, king and priest being here together in it.

Psalms 135:1-21 is more general praise, though it and the succeeding Psalms 136:1-26 may be regarded as replying to the psalms of degrees. They are rehearsals. The first begins and ends with Hallelujah; the second resounds with Israel's known chorus.

Special circumstances, of the people's sorrow, and of Jehovah's fidelity to His word, begin in Psalms 137:1-9 and Psalms 138:1-8, while Psalms 139:1-24 gives the individual heart-searching in goodness of the Eternal, which encourages to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart," etc. As the last foe has not fallen before the kingdom is established in peace, we have in Psalms 140:1-13 a prayer for his fall; so in Psalms 141:1-10 for preservation and profit by the discipline meanwhile. It is even more urgent in Psalms 142:1-7 and in sense of loneliness. Psalms 143:1-12 takes the deep ground that in His sight no man living shall be justified. It is a question of divine righteousness. So in Psalms 144:1-15. "Jehovah, what is man?" Why should He delay judgment and blessing for him? for Jehovah only has and gives might.

Psalms 145:1-21 is the Spirit of Christ in the Jewish saints praising for the kingdom; and Hallelujah psalms swell in volume to the end. Psalms 146:1-10 is the contrast in the man of Jehovah delivering His people; Psalms 147:1-20 His mercy to Jerusalem and Israel's outcasts with His blessing of creation. In Psalms 148:1-14 it is His praise "from the heavens," and "from the earth," with all therein; as Psalms 149:1-9 is His praise in the congregation of the godly (for such are Israel henceforth). Psalms 150:1-6 is praise to El (the mighty One), everywhere and in all respects, with every instrument and by everything that has breath. How evident is the special design of God not only in each psalm but in their arrangement Man without Him was incapable of either.

§ 20. PROVERBS. The collection of "the words of the wise" which next claims our heed is as different in character from the book of Psalms as one can conceive, though both may be in form poetical, the latter in the highest degree. But they are the inverse of one another: the Psalms mostly presenting to us Jehovah, or God in His nature rather than in covenant, the expression by the Holy Spirit of His people's and His own feelings in their varying experience, in hopes and fears, joy and distress, as well as in the acknowledgment of His ways; the Proverbs, His wisdom in view of the difficulties and trials, snares and joys, and all other circumstances in the earthly path. The fear of Jehovah is the key-note. The special design of the book is unmistakable. No other part of the Bible fulfils or even shares its place. It communicates Jehovah's wisdom in its authoritative instruction of His people. Hence "God" as such occurs very sparingly in the prologue, Proverbs 2:5; Proverbs 2:17, Proverbs 3:4; not at all in the strict "proverbs of Solomon" (10-24); once in the supplement which Hezekiah's men transcribed (Proverbs 25:2); and twice in the appendix of Agur's words (Proverbs 30:5; Proverbs 30:9). This however gives no countenance to the dream of Astruc, but one more plain proof that it is false, senseless, and misleading.

After the preface of Proverbs 1:1-7, we have a very full and affectionate introduction in the first nine chapters. In contrast with the authority given to parents is the enticement in the world through independence and lust, which calls to violence in Proverbs 1:1-33 and corruption in Proverbs 2:1-22. But if that authority works early and within, wisdom on Jehovah's part cries without, warning of the judgment at the end on the wicked man and the strange woman, and assuring of the moral value and blessing at all times for those that hear and prize her voice. In Proverbs 3:1-35 not our own intelligence but Jehovah's fear and instruction can avail. Hence in Proverbs 4:1-27 wisdom's words are to be sought to get true intelligence, avoiding all other ways. In Proverbs 5:1-23 is shown that only remorse and ruin come from swerving to corruption, while Jehovah would have His own enjoy the relations He sanctions. Proverbs 6:1-35 warns against suretyship and sloth, evil activity and adultery; as Proverbs 7:1-27 pursues the latter in detail to death and Sheol. In Proverbs 8:1-36 the wisdom of God, energetic and importunate in love, rises up to Him Who is Son; as Christ is said to be His wisdom in the N.T. (object of Jehovah's delight), and His delights not merely in Israel but "with the sons of men." In Proverbs 9:1-18 wisdom has built her house with her seven pillars, answering to the house of God, as it were, and not His call only, but contrasted with "the foolish woman" who leads her victims to destruction. Wisdom has an organisation of good, as the strange and "clamorous" woman has of evil. The intermediate chapters to 24, with the supplement in Proverbs 25:1-28, Proverbs 26:1-28, Proverbs 27:1-27, Proverbs 28:1-28, Proverbs 29:1-27, present us the detailed wisdom of Jehovah for His people on the earth. The special walk of the Christian is not contemplated; still less is the church of God before us; any more than Christ suffering as God's witness, or for our sins, or His exaltation on high as Head, and in the heavenly sanctuary as Priest. But we have those divine apophthegms on the earthly path, which have drawn out the admiration of the wisest among men. After all they are but a selection from the "three thousand proverbs" which Solomon spoke (1 Kings 4:32). For God gave the king wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about. What we have is a selection made by the Holy Spirit: a principle just as true of the "signs" wrought by our Lord (John 20:30-31, John 21:24-25). Every scripture is of God's special design. Of the concluding Proverbs 30:1-33, Proverbs 31:1-31 we would say here little more than that they are in keeping with the book and worthy of forming its close. They claim the character of "prophecy "; and every word bears the stamp of God. The picture of the matron in Proverbs 31:10-31 (acrostics) is beautiful, and shows what woman might be under the law, even before Christ came and gave her a yet higher dignity.

§ 21. ECCLESIASTES. On the face of the book stands revealed this striking difference from the Proverbs that here Elohim, or God, is found from first to last, never once Jehovah. Hence it is not the people in special relationship, but man as he is. Indeed some found on this fact the absurd inference that, if Solomon for the most part wrote the former, he could not have written the latter. The books claim to have emanated from the son of David. This however is nothing to a rationalist, save perhaps one incentive more to deny it. Leaving such a question, the case confirms the truth which we have often asserted, that the use of these divine designations depends on the different objects in view, not on separate writers. In Ecclesiastes it is no question of covenant relationship and its prescribed order, but of God, of the Creator, and of man vainly seeking happiness in a

ruined creation. Here therefore Jehovah would be wholly out of place. It is moral suitability under the Holy Spirit which regulates the choice quite independently of the writer, whether the same or a different person. It is therefore Elohim, and man having to do with Him and His judgment.

Thus here again God's special design is manifest; and so is the shortsightedness of learning, or rather of unbelief, in overlooking the intimations of the written word for an hypothesis of pure imagination. The truth on the contrary, if it be only in the designation, edifies and helps us so far to enter into the scope of the book. Here it is a book which has its own peculiar place; none other even resembles it. It is the experience of a man unequalled in his capacity, in his circumstances, and in his means (for what can the man do that comes after the king?) for quest of happiness, and finding only vanity and pursuit of the wind in all "done under the sun." How could it be otherwise, if man is an outcast from paradise, and looks not in faith to Him Who is above the sun? Experience, even the exceptional power, position, and activity of Solomon, experience of all that promises most on earth, ends in "vanity of vanities," as surely as experience of self does to the man born of God who is occupied with himself (Romans 7:7-24). All in man or the world is fallen and most wretched. Nor did wisdom itself avail to help, but rather intensified, the dissatisfaction and the sorrow. Death comes, and what does man as such know of that which is after it? To outward eye he dies as the brute. What then is for him but to fear God and keep His commandments? For this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. This has been counted pessimistic and sceptical; and so it would be if it were all. But the book itself urges the thankful use of the good God gives in a ruin so pervading. And if He gives them to weary themselves, it is to cast themselves on His fear and obedience, wherein is no vanity, But it was in no way the aim of the book to unfold sovereign grace, and its saving provisions.

"The words of the wise" are not positive here as in the Proverbs, but negative, acting as goads to turn from seeking good in the creature, seeing that the end of all is death. Of this, as it closes on man, is given a most poetical allegory at the close; as the book opens with the constant change stamped on all the creature around and within. What a contrast with the rest of God into which the work of Christ (here entirely out of sight) alone can introduce such as we are, which from the beginning pointed to the Messiah and redemption based on sacrifice! Even when God's house is named, it is for man to hear, and pay vows conscientiously, and fear God; but the forgiveness with Jehovah that produces fear is no more entered on here than propitiation is in Romans 2:1-16, where the apostle lays down God's immutable principles in dealing with men, be they who they may. Man needs God as a centre for his heart which the creature cannot satisfy.

§ 22. SOLOMON'S SONG.

Quite as unique is God's special design in Canticles, wherein neither Elohim nor Jehovah is once found, only Jah descriptively and not as an object (Song of Solomon 7:6). It is the Beloved and His love, the Bridegroom and the Bride as revealed to Israel; not the great secret as to Christ and as to the church, but a communication fully disclosed to the ancient people of God. (Compare also Psalms 45:1-17 and Isaiah 62:1-12.). The one who drew the bride's heart is the King, Messiah Himself; as this Song of songs is Solomon's. This need not hinder its application to the believer, or mutatis mutandis to the church; for there is a principle of relationship common to them all. It was an early error, especially from and even before the Constantinian epoch, to conceive Israel cast off

for ever, and the church the heir of earthly honour and power. Men forgot the warning in Romans 11:1-36 that this is but Gentile conceit, which loses the church's present suffering and future glory with Christ, and also denies the mercy which, when the Gentile calling corrupts itself and is cut off, will restore Israel and be to the world as life from the dead when the Lord comes to reign. Thus the key to Canticles got hidden; and the boon was either lowered irreverently, and sometimes grossly enough as is natural to a rationalist, or elevated in error to a heavenly object, which finds its proper unfolding in Revelation 19:1-21, Revelation 20:1-15, Revelation 21:1-27, Revelation 22:1-21, not here strictly or fully. The church is the body of Christ glorified at God's right hand on high by virtue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit sent down as the fruit of Christ's known redemption. This explains the peace and calm enjoyment of our peculiar relationship even now, before the day comes for the marriage of the Lamb above, as we read in Revelation 19:1-21 which adds and keeps for us, in all its fulness, the power of hope in Christ's coming.

It is a different state we find here where the relationship has to be formed or re-established under the new covenant. Hence the varied antecedent experiences for the heart of which this book so largely consists, and which grace will turn to the blessing of the daughter of Zion. Nothing of the kind is found in the N.T. any more than a collection of Psalms; but they are both provided in the O.T. about the ancient people, though all is surely for our use and blessing, although not about us. We are supposed to be in such peace, liberty, and joy by the presence of the Holy Spirit, as to make and sing our own psalms and hymns (1 Corinthians 14:1-40, Ephesians 5:1-33, Colossians 3:1-25). The misuse of these scriptures, as if the church were Zion, Judah, Israel, etc., has done much to judaize the Christian. The blessing of their direct use will begin for the godly remnant before the day breaks; after which all Israel will sing them together — with what joy in that day! But who save God could have provided this wonderful anticipation?

§ 23. ISAIAH. The vision of Isaiah is here unrolled before us. What is the special design? One does not enquire whether the noblest and most comprehensive of the prophets wrote without a purpose. The question is then, judging by its contents throughout, what did God mean His ancient people, ourselves too who now believe, to consider His aim to be in the book? What does He teach in it as a whole?

Jerusalem and Judah have a marked prominence; but from first to last the holy seer was given to judge the moral ruin of Israel by the word of Jehovah and the future glory under the sway of the divine Messiah, when all the nations shall flow to the mountain of Jehovah's house. What could be more odious than sacrifices and offerings, new moons and set feasts, from rulers of Sodom and a people of Gomorrah? If we must reject the traditional delusion that Isaiah 2:1-22 opens with the progress of the gospel, how can rationalist unbelief face the plain intimation that only by the judgment He will execute are the people to be restored? and this, not nationally only but also in their souls, that only thus will all the nations be brought into glad and willing subjection? What for so good and grand an issue has present experience to do with either outlook? Surely not the hypocrisy of the Jews, or the idolatrous iniquities of all the nations.

Yet such were the actual facts. What sign, then or since, of Jerusalem thoroughly purged or of the Gentiles learning war no more? No, the Holy Spirit led the prophet to foresee the "end of the age," and the judgment of Jehovah's adversaries; neither the one nor the other as yet accomplished facts. He shall reign Whose right it is. In that day all pride shall fall, and every disorder be rectified;

even each petty female vanity shall vanish (Isaiah 3:1-26). Yet it will not be by the gospel nor the church; but the Lord shall scour out corruption and violence by the spirit of judgment and of burning; and Jehovah will create over every dwelling-place the glory to be a canopy (Isaiah 4:1-6). Such is the introduction, each part ending with Israel's restoration, as does each larger section prove save the intermediary one.

Then follows in Isaiah 5:1-30 a song of lamentation touching His vineyard, the house of Israel, and Judah the plant of His delight, followed by manifold woes on His people, which introduces the refrain of His anger not turned away, and His hand stretched out still, closing here with darkness and distress on the land and light darkened in the heavens thereof. After a striking parenthesis in Isaiah 6:1-13 followed up in Isaiah 7:1-25, Isaiah 8:1-22, Isaiah 9:1-7, the refrain is repeated from Isaiah 9:8, till the end comes in the Assyrian who had been the rod of His anger (Isaiah 10:5), now to be punished and destroyed when the Lord has performed His whole work on mount Zion. "For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall be accomplished, and mine anger, in their destruction." Deliverance comes by divine judgment. Who He is that makes good both is given in Isaiah 11:1-16 with Israel's song of joy in Isaiah 12:1-6. But the parenthesis which is occupied with Judah and David's house had already prepared for this. For His divine glory is seen according to John 12:1-50 in Isaiah 6:1-13; then in Isaiah 7:1-25 His incarnation; in Isaiah 8:1-22 His claim too (as Immanuel) to the land; and in Isaiah 9:1-21, after the eclipse of His rejection, when Jehovah hid His face from the house of Jacob, His victory over the oppressor as in the day of Midian, when His glories are proclaimed. Thus the general course of judgment, as well as the parenthetic revelation of Messiah rejected but at last intervening for judgment of the foe, coalesce. Such is the remainder of the first section, ending in Jehovah's praise, and the Holy One of Israel great in the midst of Zion. The second division consists of "burdens" or "oracles" of judgment from Isaiah 13-23, ending with not the land only but "the world" languishing and fading away, and Jehovah punishing the high ones on high and the kings of the earth on the earth, but a fortress to the poor remnant of godly Jews, when the veil is destroyed that veils all the peoples; yea death is swallowed up in victory. Who can fail to discern the end of the age? For in that day shall be sung in Judah's land a song of victory; and a vineyard of verjuice no more, but of pure wine; and Israel shall fill the face of the world with fruit, as we read with much more in Isaiah 25:1-12, Isaiah 26:1-21, Isaiah 27:1-13. The end is full triumph for restored Israel, as throughout it appears briefly in each part. And how plainly the future is in view by beginning with Babylon and next Assyria! For historically every one knows this is not the order: compare Micah 5:4-7. The portion that succeeds begins with "woe" to Ephraim, and "woe" to Ariel or Jerusalem, in Isaiah 28:1-29, Isaiah 29:1-24, with moral "woes" going on to Isaiah 30:1-33 and in Isaiah 31:1-9 on those that go down to Egypt for help: Jehovah alone avails. In Isaiah 32:1-20 is the contrasted reign of Christ, and the Spirit poured out for that day on the earth, as already on the Christian for heaven. Isaiah 33:1-24 is "woe" on the last spoiler, as Isaiah 34:1-17 is the final slaughter in the land of Edom, which makes way for the wilderness and the parched land to be glad, indeed for all creation. And no wonder; for they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of Israel's God. The church, and all the glorified, will have a still more lofty and a deeper portion on high.

Then we have four prose chapters (Isaiah 36:1-22, Isaiah 37:1-38, Isaiah 38:1-22, Isaiah 39:1-8) of the greatest interest, evidently of prophetic type, and meant to brace together the two halves of this sublime prophecy by recounting the facts of Hezekiah's history, which begin with the

blasphemous pride and the divine overthrow of the Assyrian, and end with the predicted removal to Babylon, occupying as it does large space in the unbroken stream of prophecy that follows. But even this interlude of external change would not have been complete without the inner revelation of the sickness unto death of the king, from which Jehovah raised him up (Isaiah 38:1-22), and which has its glorious counterpart in the infinitely greater Son of David, Who really died and rose again: the everlasting ground, not merely for the sure mercies of David toward Israel, but for all the divine counsels of blessing for all saints, for heaven and earth, for time and eternity. But what is this to the higher criticism so called? Alas! it derides true prophecy and miracle, and has no revealed future of blessedness or judgment, confessing neither the Father nor the Son. Is it of God, or of the enemy? The profound and majestic dignity of the latter half (vainly attributed to "the Great Unnamed") is exactly suited to its more inward character, each section, though more secretly intimated than in the first half, centring in the Messiah. There are three distinct aspects in continuous flow. Isaiah 40:1-31, Isaiah 41:1-29, Isaiah 42:1-25, Isaiah 43:1-28, Isaiah 44:1-28, Isaiah 45:1-25, Isaiah 46:1-13, Isaiah 47:1-15, Isaiah 48:1-22 are the first where Jehovah redeemed His servant Jacob, adumbrated by Cyrus' overthrow of Babylon, and his proclamation of liberty and return to the captive Jew. "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked"; which only a far greater than Cyrus will effectuate. The second consists of Isaiah 49:1-26, Isaiah 50:1-11, Isaiah 51:1-23, Isaiah 52:1-15, Isaiah 53:1-12, Isaiah 54:1-17, Isaiah 55:1-13, Isaiah 56:1-12, Isaiah 57:1-21 where it is no question of idols judged in Babylon, as a chastening for the Jew but final and fatal for the heathen; but we have the still more impious and unbelieving guilt of the Jew in rejecting Jehovah-Messiah, with "no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." For this evil lies deeper and strikes at God Himself, not merely at His relative and continuous title as the God of ages, and governor of Israel. Lastly, the crown of blessing is to the end of the book, where faith in the Righteous Servant and in His atonement changes unrighteous Israel; and the elect from them become His servants, not only delivered from every foe at the last extremity, but brought into unchanging joy and glory; no longer a curse, but at the end of the age an everlasting blessing to all families of the earth, as was promised at the beginning of their history to their first fathers. Who but God could have inspired so far reaching a plan, worthy of Himself and of His Son the Anointed! He, by unreserved obedience and infinite suffering in atonement, will deliver His people at last out of their manifold evil, wandering, and ruin, to become the ready servants of His good and holy will, and the honoured instruments as well as objects of His mercy in the great day, when Israel shall be as stable before Jehovah as the new heavens and the new earth which He will create. How sad the unbelief which doubts that the zeal of Jehovah will do this, and much more! How blind those who fail to see the glowing and splendid testimony of all the vision of Isaiah to it all!

Take the Incarnation so clearly predicted in Isaiah 7, yet in Isaiah 8 a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, while Jehovah hides His face from the guilty people, but has "disciples" given to the rejected Christ for signs, and for wonders, before the day of final victory and abiding joy. Then shall the nation be multiplied as in Isaiah 9:1-21 and say triumphantly, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Father of the age to come (or eternity), The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice henceforth even for ever. Is the trumpet's voice uncertain?

Take again His atoning death in Isaiah 53:1-12 and the glories surely to follow, though we have to wait for the Jews to look on Him Whom they pierced before He is sot on Zion, and reigns as Jehovah over all the earth. How honestly deny true, divinely given, foresight in broad and clear instances like these, early and later? Indubitable fairly as they are, they serve to attest all the others as to Babylon, Cyrus, etc. — any of which have furnished matter for critical cavil. But the orderly design also of the book, both as a whole and in each of its seven parts, points to its divine author through Isaiah.

§ 24a. JEREMIAH. The special object of Jeremiah's prophecy is no less evident than Isaiah's; yet is each as different in character and style from the other, as both are from Ezekiel and Daniel. It was Jeremiah's lot to live and testify in the midst of guilty Judah hastening to utter ruin, and in the land for the most part during the crisis of its last kings of David's house. Instead of being the honoured prophet of the king (save Josiah of course), and dear alike to monarch and people, he was a weeping Seer. It was not his to see his prediction accomplished in the sudden judgment which befell the most arrogant of Assyrian monarchs, who in his retreat of shame perished by the hand of his own sons before the vain idol of his worship. We have before us the greatest and most constant sufferer among the prophets; and this at the hand, now of kings, now of priests and false prophets, now of princes, and of the people, the chosen people; who, after their rebellious contempt during his life, regarded him subsequently to his death as the chief of prophets. No such immense sweep is compassed by the tender priest of Anathoth as in Isaiah's sublime vision with its rich and varied expression. But no book in the O.T. is so distinguished as this of Jeremiah, on the one hand by entire identification with Jehovah's indignant denunciation of Jewish iniquity and apostasy, on the other hand by self-sacrificing love to the end toward his countrymen who despised and hated him for his faithful rebukes and solemn warnings. Yet the wicked Jews were not so wicked even at last as the higher critics. "That generation" in the spurious 2Ma 2:1-32 represents him as appearing to their hero Judas Macc. as "a man with grey hairs and exceeding glorious, and a wonderful and excellent majesty to gird him with a golden sword:" an imposture singularly out of harmony with all that scripture tells us of this prophet of sorrows, troubles, and woes. Yet as he was given to proclaim, not only the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and the captivity in Babylon, but also at the close of seventy years the downfall of that great city and the first of the proper world-powers, even "that generation" was not so incredulous as the self-exalting and God-defying scribes of the last century and our own, who are audacious enough to deny all true prediction as they do all real miracle, just as they reject the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ and the future glory to be revealed.

Unbelievers may speculate about the Pentateuch generally, and Deuteronomy in particular; for nothing is easier than for sharp wits, armed by self-will, to conjure difficulties and doubts against books so ancient as they profess to be. But the prophet lived till the Four great Empires or the "times of the Gentiles" began, and extant human history more or less credible followed, to say nothing of monuments (spite of their vain-glory and too frequent lying), which confirm him in remarkable and unexpected ways. And as the authenticity of his writings cannot be justly questioned, so the punctual accomplishment of so striking a prediction deeply moved the Jewish mind. Thereby the saintly captive was led to look onward, not merely to the proximate and provisional return of a remnant to the land, but to the final and full and everlasting redemption of Jerusalem in the latter days.

Then Jehovah will turn again the captivity of His people Israel and Judah, who will possess (as they have not yet done) the land given to their fathers, and Jehovah will be the God of all the families of Israel. Yet it cannot be without the last and unparalleled time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. "Behold, days come, saith Jehovah [not merely to "sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah," not for destruction and affliction, but to build and plant them], that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." It will not rest, as he declares, on man's weakness, but on divine grace. For Jehovah will put His law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts, and as He will be their God, so they His people knowing Him from the least of them to the greatest, and their sins remembered by Him no more. But while Jeremiah laboured and testified, he had the bitter lot of his worst enemies among those he loved and pitied and censured so profoundly. This incredulity of Jehovah's word was caused by their rebellion of will against Jehovah Himself, as it ever is, whatever men say or boast. Nebuchadnezzar and his servants shone in honouring Jeremiah, in the most marked contrast with priests and false prophets and even kings Jehoiachim and Zedekiah. Nevertheless, as a true lover of God's people in their lowest estate and their base ingratitude to him, instead of going to Babylon where ease and honour were assured, he preferred to suffer affliction with the most despised in the land, who behaved as ill as ever and against his inspired warnings carried him down into Egypt, rather than abide in subjection to the Chaldean. Who can doubt, whose ear is opened to hear, the specific design and unique place of Jeremiah's writings in the Bible? But, as before, a sketch of its parts is given in proof that the general estimate is only confirmed by the detail. Moral appeal to conscience in Jerusalem and Judah occupies the early half, or nearly so, Jeremiah 1 being the prophet's inauguration as a young man. Nor is any fact more striking than the way in which the apparent disorder of the chapters as in Jeremiah 21:1-14, Jeremiah 22:1-30, Jeremiah 23:1-40, Jeremiah 24:1-10, even in the Hebrew (to say nothing of the Septuagint), subserves the aim of God's Spirit by the truth. To characterise it as confusion among his writings owing to a violent death is a mere and arbitrary guess, which overlooks the moral purpose and design of God. Jeremiah 25:1-38 is a transition, declaring the providential judgment of nations, ominously putting Jerusalem and Judah in their forefront. In Jeremiah 30:1-24, Jeremiah 31:1-40, Jeremiah 32:1-44, Jeremiah 33:1-26 the entire people of God, all Israel, are promised restoration to the land with salvation (in its vital and blessed sense) in days to come, under a new covenant and the Messiah clearly announced to reign (as King in Jeremiah 23:5), a Branch of righteousness unto David, as Jerusalem shall be called by the new name of Jehovah our righteousness. From Jeremiah 34:1-22, Jeremiah 35:1-19, Jeremiah 36:1-32, Jeremiah 37:1-21, Jeremiah 38:1-28 is the word of Jehovah as to various kings of Judah, but not in historical order, save that they preceded the fall of Jerusalem; while those from Jeremiah 39:1-18, Jeremiah 40:1-16, Jeremiah 41:1-18, Jeremiah 42:1-22, Jeremiah 43:1-13, Jeremiah 44:1-30 bear on what followed, Jeremiah 44:1-30 closing the section with the prophetic word to Baruch his amanuensis. The last series consists of predictions on foreign nations separately, as we may see also in the writings of Isaiah and Ezekiel. The last Jeremiah 52:1-34 is expressly an appendix to the words of Jeremiah by the inspired editor. It is a most appropriate close of the prophecy and introduction to the Lamentations.

§ 24b. THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

It is notable, but by no means an unprecedented thing, that the book, which more than any other breathes the distress of a pious and broken heart, is clothed in a markedly artificial form. God

meant His people to share the prophet's lamentation; and its predominant straps occupied his heart who wrote, and theirs who pondered and remembered it all the more. Its five chapters are five elegies. Lamentations 1:1-22, Lamentations 2:1-22 have twenty-two stanzas or verses, answering to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each stanza with three parts. In the third chapter the initial letter occurs for each of the three parts, when the prophet speaks personally of his own sufferings, as before and after Lamentations 3:1-66 he pours forth his groans over the city destroyed with all its glories. In Lamentations 4:1-22 each stanza consists of two parts, each verse beginning with the successive letters of the alphabet. Though Lamentations 5:1-22 has twenty-two stanzas or verses of two parts, the initial letters do not follow regularly. It is throughout a true-hearted confession of sins. "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us for we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes have grown dim, because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate: foxes walk over it. Thou, Jehovah, dwellest for ever; thy throne is from generation to generation. Wherefore cost thou forget us for ever — dost thou forsake us so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, Jehovah, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. Or is it that thou hast utterly rejected us — art wroth with us exceedingly? " The book has then a place quite unique, from a heart which answered to the love of Jehovah for His people, when they were most justly in the depths because of their sins and His chastisement, even to blotting them out from His land, city, kingdom, and house. It is thorough self-judgment in the heart's solidarity with them and clinging in the face and experience of all to Him. Can we not discern what a gap for the Bible if we had not Lamentations? What will it not be to the godly in their last tribulation? Did the writer forget his own purchase (Jeremiah 32:1-44) in faith of the word? or his prophecy of Israel under Messiah and the new covenant? Assuredly not; yet none the less did he mourn the ruin of Israel, and that Jehovah should have grounds so valid for His severe chastening.

§ 25. EZEKIEL.

We have traced the distinctive character of Jeremiah as compared with Isaiah, and the special design by each. Ezekiel (= strengthened of God), who was a priest like Jeremiah, has his characteristic differences. Here rationalism seems less irreverent. As Christ is not so openly predicted, they are more indifferent to question and deny the truth. If the orthodox were decided in confessing the millennial city and sanctuary in his concluding chapters, we should hear of their opposition and vapid theories to get rid of divine truths. For Christendom it is all ideal enough; and the neo-critics can leave the visions of their coming glory undisturbed. Real and pronounced faith in others would soon awaken their enmity. But alas! when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

Now as Jeremiah prophesied long after Isaiah in the closing throes of the expiring monarchy of Judah, his mournful mission and messages from Jehovah lay up to the last in the land, till he was carried away by the unbelieving leaders of the remnant into Egypt. But Ezekiel was carried into captivity with Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar, and given his place with others at Tel-Abib on the river Chebar. It was in the "thirtieth year" (he does not say of what epoch, but it would seem of Nabopolassar's era), the fifth of the Jewish king's captivity, that he saw the vision of Ezekiel 1:1-28. It was the throne of the Lord Jehovah in unsparing majesty seen in Chaldea and judging Jerusalem and His sanctuary there. What a solemn change, not reigning, but vengeance on His house and city!

Here there appeared four living creatures, as a stormy wind issuing from the north, with cloud and a fire infolding itself, out of which indeed they came each with four faces and four wings, running and returning like lightning. But their four wheels too he beheld on the earth, and wheel within a wheel, with rims full of eyes, and the spirit of the living creatures in the four wheels. Overhead was the likeness of an expanse "as the look of the terrible crystal," and above the expanse the likeness of a throne as of sapphire, and as it were a man above upon it. As the appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire, as the appearance of torches, so the man's likeness was as the look of glowing brass, as the appearance of fire within round about, and from the loins and downward the appearance of fire. It was at this time the suited display of Jehovah's glory, but in punitive judgment of Israel.

How strikingly different from the holy scene of the Lord in the temple, where Isaiah saw His glory with winged seraphim in attendance, and one touched the Seer's lips with a coal from the altar, that he might tell the people (who seemed so prospering in religion and all else) of the judicial darkness about to befall them and the desolation, to follow, though a remnant should be spared for the unfailing purpose of Jehovah. How different from both the call of Jeremiah, with its lowly symbols, yet hallowed before his birth to be a prophet to the nations, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant. He too learnt that out of the north should evil break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. Feeble and sensitive as he was, Jeremiah was to speak all Jehovah should command him: he was in their midst and tasted sorrows out of a full cup. Ezekiel is away from the land, which the divine glory visits judicially by Nebuchadnezzar. He, and not Jeremiah or Isaiah, is regularly called "Son of man" as Daniel but once. Hence it is not a dealing with conscience as with Jeremiah to restore; Ezekiel was to be dumb, and only to pronounce Jehovah's sentence. Yet is it constantly to Israel, or "the house of Israel," or the like, he refers, when as a prophet His mouth is opened to vindicate Jehovah's casting them off. They were more hardened than the heathen who knew not God; and he had to speak whether they heard or forbore.

Ezekiel 1-7 comprise the first division, the judgment that was sent on Jehovah's people. The next comprehends from Ezekiel 8-19 though with a subdivision at the end of Ezekiel 11:1-25. The prophet was carried to Jerusalem in the Spirit that he might behold the abominations of all the remnant there, and especially in His house, which His glory visits in judgment. The city is also entirely given up, as well as the sanctuary. The last prince should go captive to Babylon, but should not see it, yet there die (Ezekiel 12:1-28). Think of any but a profane scoffer here denying true prediction! It was not only in great events, but in a minute point like this, which seemed an enigma till the event made it as impressive as plain. And who were guilty? Not the king only, but the prophets, and the people down to the women in their petty ways (Ezekiel 13:1-23). So were the elders, though they came and sat before Ezekiel (Ezekiel 14:1-23). Famine, etc. must come to cut off man and beast; in such a crisis not even Noah, Daniel, and Job could deliver any but their own souls. The vine (Ezekiel 15:1-8), being fruitless, was good only for fuel; such the doom for the capital. Jerusalem's father was Amorite and mother Hittite; Jehovah's love to win her she rejected; worse was she than Sodom and Samaria; yet would He establish His covenant with her for ever (Ezekiel 16:1-63). After a parable it is shown in Ezekiel 17:1-24 how Jerusalem's king despised Jehovah's oath and broke the covenant to utter ruin; but grace in the end is to Jehovah's praise. And Ezekiel 18:1-23 declares that they need not complain of the old ground of national judgment:

they would be dealt with each according to his works. This portion closes with a lamentation over the total ruin of the last princes of Israel in Ezekiel 19:1-14. The third part goes hence to the end of Ezekiel 23:1-49. Here Israel is again prominent, and sin from the beginning, and that, idolatry; but in the end He will purge out the rebels and work for His own name. It is Israel contrasted here with Judah's lot. A fresh threat comes from Ezekiel 23:45-49; and Ezekiel 21:1-32 declares Jehovah's sword unsheathed against Jerusalem and the land of Israel because of the profane and wicked prince (Zedekiah) till He come Whose right is the crown: an allusion, we may presume, invisible to unbelieving eyes. Ammon shares the judgment (Ezekiel 21:1-32). The prophet is to judge the bloody and unclean Jerusalem (Ezekiel 22:1-31); and the fresh parable of Oholah and Oholibah enforces it in Ezekiel 23:1-49.

Ezekiel 24:1-27 is the utter rejection of Jerusalem, which the prophet is not to mourn: another contrast with Jeremiah who was unmarried; and as a sign, Ezekiel loses suddenly his wife whom he was forbidden to lament. It was in the ninth year of the captivity, as Ezekiel 1-7 pertained to the fifth year, Ezekiel 8-19 to the sixth, and Ezekiel 20-23 to the seventh. Ezekiel 24 leads to Ezekiel 25-32 which take up the nations around or within the land dealt with by the Lord Jehovah, but no longer in chronological order like the first half of the book: a fact instructive for other books, inasmuch as the neo-critics do not dispute our prophet's hand. The arrangement is due to no disturbing cause, but to God's design above man's thought (or want of thought) and care. Like Jerusalem, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistine shall know that He is Jehovah. So (Ezekiel 26:1-21) shall Tyre and her towns. This is pursued with wide and accurate minuteness as to its commerce in chap. Ezekiel 27:1-36, and in Ezekiel 28:1-26 for the prince and the king of Tyre, with veiled reference to Satan's fall, the great world-ruler. The chapter goes on to Sidon's judgment, and closes with the assured restoration of Israel. The three chapters following contain Egypt's judgment under Nebuchadnezzar who had put down the rest.

Ezekiel 33:1-33 opens a new series by proclaiming individual responsibility henceforth, instead of national solidarity with their ancestors' guilt as in Ezekiel 18:1-32. Ezekiel 34:1-31 gives their chiefs judged; and Ezekiel 35:1-15. Edom once more. But Ezekiel 36:1-38 is the work of grace inward and self-judging in Israel; as Ezekiel 37:1-28 is the nation resuscitated and united under the true David; ending with Ezekiel 38:1-23, Ezekiel 39:1-29, the judgment of Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal (all the Russias), who attacks Israel when peaceful in the land, and perishes with all the nations which fight under that banner. This done, the Solomon type will be fulfilled.

Ezekiel 40-48, the concluding series, furnish the grand picture of that day. In the visions of God Ezekiel is set on a very high mountain, on or by which was a city. But the primary object is the temple with its many chambers, into which comes the glory of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Therein the sons of Zadok shall minister to Him with burnt, sin, and peace offerings, as we find later the guilt and the meal offerings. A prince too of David's house represents Messiah (Ezekiel 44:1-31), with a portion for priests and prince. The first of the month and the last of the week are remembered; the Passover and the Tabernacles, but no Pentecost, no Atonement-day, no Red Heifer. Ezekiel 47:1-23 presents the beautiful sight of waters issuing from under the threshold of the house, which soon rise into a river that could not be waded through; a river of healing where death reigned, only with an exception to show that it is not yet the new heaven and new earth absolutely and eternally. It is the kingdom that precedes; and the division of the land for the twelve tribes is such as never has been more than any other part of this vision. And the name of the city

from that day shall be Jehovah-Shammah (Jehovah [is] there). The originality of Ezekiel, in God's special design, starts from Israel given up and judged of old, passing clean over the four Gentile empires or world-powers, till Jehovah takes up Israel (when this age ends) for His grand and unfailing purpose of blessing on all the earth. It is in no way typical of the church of God destined to heavenly glory.

04A.06. Part 6

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 6 § 26. Daniel. Have we clear and conclusive proof from its own internal evidence that the book is marked by special aim on God’s part? Who can deny, as he weighs its testimony as a whole, that Daniel is, as no other, the prophet of "the times of the Gentiles"? There is a valuable but curt confirmatory witness in the later book of Zechariah subsequent to the Babylonish captivity. But neither there nor in all could be gleaned from every other prophecy put together any real ground of comparison with the pious captive Jew; who was called in God’s providence to the highest position of counselling rule, not only at the Babylonian court under its mightiest monarch, but in the Medo-Persian which succeeded, to the days when Cyrus reigned sole and supreme.

While Israel was thus manifestly "Lo-ammi (not-my-people)," as the book indicates throughout, the striking fact is also disclosed of a provisional state for the Jewish remnant in the land, spiritual intelligence in a few, unbelieving blindness in the mass. This is revealed in Daniel 9:24, etc. as coming into collision with Messiah the Prince, and His being cut off, without having anything (i.e. of His Messianic rights), and its ruinous consequences described thereafter "even unto the consummation," which is not come. But it also recurs in Daniel 11:36 to Daniel 12:7, where we read the details of that consummation, when the same unbelieving generation of the Jews, who rejected long ago the true Christ, will receive the Antichrist to his and their shame and everlasting contempt. So the great Prophet Himself warned those of His day in John 5:43, before either of those awful catastrophes immeasurably more momentous, whatever rationalists think or say, than all the "decisive battles" of the world. The unity of the book is now admitted even by most advanced freethinkers, save a few eccentrics of no weight. In the first half, having the historical form, Daniel is spoken of, and the Gentile chiefs are prominent (especially the first and greatest), though only the prophet could interpret. In the second half the prophet only has the visions as well as interpretations, which refer to "the saints" and "the people of the saints" in a way which the first did not. The best answer to cavilling sceptics is to read and believe "Daniel the prophet," as the Lord of all designated him.

Daniel 1:1-21 is a preface, from Jerusalem losing the direct government of God (who set up meanwhile Babylon in a fresh imperial position), down to the first year of Cyrus. Daniel 12:1-13 has also a conclusory character in the judgment of the Gentiles up to the deliverance of Israel. From Daniel 2-6 Gentiles are prominent in an exoteric way. From Daniel 7 to the end, only the prophet receives and communicates the mind of God intimately on all, with the glory of the Son of man and His saints on high, but His people here below. We may therefore call this half esoteric. What could so immense, as well as intimate, a range of truth have in keeping with Maccabean times? It is true that the Syrian king’s furious persecution of the Jews, and his profanation of worship, find a marked place in the course of the book; but where it does, plain indication is given of a greater power and a worse evil typified thereby before "the end of the indignation." What sad belittling of an inspired book to make that king, audacious as he was and gruel, a blind not only to the final actor in that sphere, but to others on an incomparably larger scale, who are all to come

under divine dealings at "the time of the end" — a time which assuredly is not yet arrived!

Daniel 2:1-49 conveys the interesting and important fact that "the God of the heavens" acted by a dream on the first Gentile head of empire, to show the general course of dominion then begun till its extinction: an image gorgeous and terrible, but gradually deteriorating as it descends, and closing with great strength and marked weakness also. Then He sets up another kingdom — His own, after destroying not only the fourth empire in its last divided condition of the ten toes (which did not exist when Christ suffered or the Holy Spirit came down) but the remains of all from the first — the gold, the silver, the brass, as well as the iron and clay. Only when judgment has been executed does the "little stone" expand into a great mountain and fill the whole earth. It awaits His second advent.

Here, as is well known, the rationalist coalesces with the ritualist in teaching the self-complacent chimera of an "ideal Israel," the church or Christendom. Yet in the church is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all. It is the body of the glorified Head; and its calling is to suffering grace on earth, awaiting glory with Christ at His return. Crushing to powder the image of Gentile empires is in no way or time the church's work. The once rejected but now exalted Stone will do it, as He declared in Matthew 21:44 and in other scriptures. But the literal Israel will be then and there delivered, and become His earthly centre in power and glory. Such is the uniform witness of the prophets. We need not begrudge this to the remnant of Jacob then repentant; for we are called to far brighter glory with Christ in heavenly places. But, whether believed now or not, the first dominion on earth shall surely come to the daughter of Zion in that day, for as long as the earth endures. The intervening histories in Daniel 3:1-30, Daniel 4:1-37, Daniel 5:1-31, Daniel 6:1-28 are in the fullest accord with the predictions of Daniel, two of them general (Daniel 3:1-30, Daniel 4:1-37) and two particular (Daniel 5:1-31, Daniel 6:1-28, as we shall find the prophecies are also); but none of them in fact refers to the peculiar scourge in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. In not one is there a trace of Hellenism imposed on the Jews. Not even in Belshazzar have we the least real likeness to punishing recalcitrants against the gods of Olympus. The aim of Daniel 3:1-30 is to show how the Gentile entrusted with imperial power by God used it, deeply impressed as he had been by the lost secret which none but the Hebrew captive could interpret. Alas! man being in honour abides not; he is like the beasts that perish. So it had been with Israel under law, with Judah, and with David's house. New-fangled idolatry on pain of the most cruel death was the first recorded command of the Gentile world-power: a religious bond to unite by that act the various peoples, nations, and tongues of the one empire, and thus to counteract the divisive influence of gods peculiar to each of these races. But such a universal test gave God, thus ignored, the occasion to prove the nullity of that idol and of every other, the total and manifest defeat of supreme power even by its own captives cast into the fiery furnace, be it ever so heated. How grave the public lesson read to the Gentile empires, were not man as forgetful of God as he is bent on his own will! The next chapter, Daniel 4:1-37, is no less general, and the more impressive as the deepest humiliation was inflicted by God, after His slighted warning, on the same haughty head of imperial power. Nebuchadnezzar had ascribed all his glory to himself, and got debased, as none else ever was, to the bestial state till "seven times" passed over him. After that he "lifted up his eyes to heaven," a repentant and restored man owning the Most High, no longer like the brute but morally intelligent. It is childish to lower or restrain to the Seleucid prince a lesson he never learnt. It is infidel to doubt the facts of this chapter or of the preceding one. It is blind not to

recognise that Daniel 3:1-30 looks on to the deliverance of faithful ones (not "the many") at the end; as the next does to the day when the Gentile shall have a beast's heart no more, but will bless the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: the character of the divine display when this present evil age terminates. What connection had either with the loathsome foe of the Jews, Antiochus Epiphanes? Nothing could be more telling than both displays of God's power during the "head of gold" "till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." It is Satan's work to disbelieve them; and a nominal Christian is far more guilty now than a heathen of old if he help Satan against God and His word. The special aims of Daniel 5:1-31, Daniel 6:1-28 are of no less serious moment. Neither the one nor the other represents or resembles Antiochus Epiphanes. In Daniel 5 we see dissolute profanity eliciting a most solemn token of divine displeasure on the spot, and judged by a providential infliction that very night. Monuments or not, the word of our God shall stand for ever. Nothing more dangerous than to trust any thing or one against scripture; and what can be more sinful? What avail the brave words of men enamoured of Babylonish bricks, cylinders, etc.? Let them beware of the snares of the great enemy; not even resurrection power broke Jewish unbelief. In Daniel 6:1-28 man was by craft set up for a while as the sole object of prayer or worship, which brought on its devisers the sudden destruction they had plotted for the faithful. What bearing had this, any more than the chapter before, on the grievous scourge of Antiochus Epiphanes? They evidently prepare the way, for the judgment of the future Babylon in the one (Daniel 5:1-31), and for that of the Beast in the other (Daniel 6:1-28), as given in the Book of Revelation, where both are shown to perish frightfully though with difference.

Next follow the more complicated communications of God's mind about the four "Beasts," the last especially, much fuller and more intimate than in Daniel 2:1-49. The movement of heaven is disclosed, and God's interest in His people, and particularly in the sufferers for His name specified "as saints," and even as "saints of the high places." The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, condescending as it was to him and awe-inspiring in itself, contained no such vision of glory on high, no such prospects for heaven or earth, no such display of divine purpose in the Son of man. But as in Daniel 2:1-49, so yet more in Daniel 7:1-28, the last and most distant empire, the fourth, is much more fully described than the Babylonish then in being, or the Medo-Persian that next followed, or the Greek that succeeded in its due time. For we have a crowd of minute predictions of an unexampled nature, the many horns in the last empire at its close, the audacious presumption and restless ambition of its last chief; who from a small beginning governed the rest, and, not content with trampling down the saints, rose up in blasphemy against God and His rights. But this calls forth summary and final judgment on all, with the action of heaven in establishing the everlasting kingdom of power and glory here below.

Such a revelation fundamentally clashes with the canons of the Higher Criticism, and demonstrates, if believed, their utter futility. Hence we can understand the wild efforts to get rid of the unvarnished truth Daniel sets before us in this vision. The attempt to separate the Median and the Persian elements, so as to make them respectively the second and third empires, is desperate and unworthy. Daniel 5:28 was explicit beforehand as well as Daniel 6:8; Daniel 6:12; Daniel 6:15; and afterwards Daniel 8:1-27 demolishes such contradiction of scripture. The bear in Daniel 7:1-28 answers to the ram in Daniel 8:1-27, which had two horns, the kings of Media and Persia — not two Beasts, but one composite power expressly. The leopard, therefore, with its four heads answers to the goat of Greece, for whose great horn, when broken, four stood up in its stead. The

fourth Beast, different from all the Beasts before, is none other than the Roman Empire; which has ten horns in its final shape, after which, when further change comes, divine judgment falls in a form without previous parallel (Daniel 7:11-12).*

If we let in, as we are bound, the further light of the Apocalypse, where we cannot but recognise the same "Beast" which Daniel saw in the fourth place, we gain the fullest certainty from Revelation 17:1-18 that the seven heads were successive governing forms, of which the sixth or imperial head was in being when John saw the vision (Revelation 17:10); and that the ten horns were contemporary, for all receive authority as kings for "one hour with the beast." It is preparatory to the last crisis, when they make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them (Revelation 17:12-14). This is also decisively shown in Revelation 17:16, "And the ten horns which thou sawest, and [not 'on'] the beast, these shall hate the harlot," etc., as they also give their kingdom to the "Beast" until the words of God shall be fulfilled. This, accordingly and absolutely, disposes of the attempt to make the "ten horns" mean only ten successive kings; so as to apply the list to the Seleucidae, and make it appear that Antiochus was the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28, who got rid of the three last of his predecessors. Such a scheme is mere perversion of scripture, wholly dislocates the chapter, and deprives us of the only true interpretation. For this supposes a divine interposition at the end of the age in judgment of the Roman Empire, revived to fulfil its complete destiny and to be judged by the Lord Jesus at His appearing.

*As far as I know, Ephraem Syrus stands alone among the early ecclesiastics in treating Antiochus Epiphanes as the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28. An earnest man, extremely attached to monasticism, and vehement against the heterodox, he died in A. D. 378 but one has yet to learn why his differing from all other fathers earlier and later should have weight. Grotius and others, notorious for excluding the future and Christ, and for limiting prophecy to past history, followed in modern times, though early fathers enough led in the same path of unbelief. The first empire had a simplicity peculiar to itself. The second or Medo-Persian had dual elements; and so has the symbol two horns, of which the higher came up last. The third or Macedonian after its brief rise had four heads, of which two are noticed particularly as having to do with the Jews in the details of Daniel 11:1-45. The fourth empire, beyond just doubt, is the Roman, diverse from all before it, and distinguished by the notable form of ten concurrent horns, ere its destructive judgment by a divine kingdom which supersedes all, alone truly both universal and everlasting. Then shall the saints of the high places have their grand portion, surely not to eclipse the Son of man (as these sorry critics would like), but to swell the train of His glory Who is Heir of all things.

None but the Roman Empire corresponds with the feet of iron and clay; none other furnishes an analogy to the ten toes in one case and ten horns in another, the only true force of which is ten kings (subject to the violent change indicated) reigning together. Nor can any power that ever bore sway be so truly compared to "iron breaking and subduing all things," or a most ravenous nondescript brute with great iron teeth, which "devoured and brake in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it." The entrance of the Teuton clay indicates the brittleness of independent will (in contrast with the old Roman cohesive centralism); which, as it broke up the empire in the past, will culminate in the tenfold division of the future, on that revival of the empire which is presupposed in Daniel 7:1-28 before judgment falls, and is distinctly revealed in Revelation 17:1-18. This is a trait wholly absent from all previous empires, as well as from the Syro-Greek kingdom, which never was an empire nor approached it. As the revival of the Roman Empire is so

momentous a fact of the future and for "the time of the end," it may be well here to point out its clear and conclusive evidence in scripture. On the showing of Daniel 2:1-49, Daniel 7:1-28 the fourth or Roman Empire is in power when the kingdom of God comes, enforced by the Son of man. But the Revelation explains how this can and will be. In Revelation 13:1-10 is seen the "Beast" emerging once more from the sea or revolutionary state of nations, having seven heads and ten horns. These last have been ever held to identify it with Daniel's fourth empire. Again, the seven heads, now appropriately added, can only confirm it; for (explained as it is in Revelation 17:9-10) this description applies to no known empire so significantly as to the Roman. Only we have to observe an absolutely new fact in connection with the healing of that one of his heads (the imperial, as it appears) which had been wounded to death: that the great dragon (who in Revelation 12:1-17 is declared to be Satan) gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Pagan Rome was evil exceedingly, and had its part in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. The same Roman empire will reappear at the end of the age, energized by Satan in a way neither itself nor any other empire had ever known. This gives the key to its extreme blasphemy and defiance of the Most High, as well as to other enemies; because of which the judgment shall sit and the dominion be taken away by the wrath of God from heaven, when the Beast with its hosts dares to make war against the Lord descending in power and glory. The horns will then act as of one will with the "Beast" that is then present to give imperial unity. For still more clearing the intimations of Revelation 13:1-18, Revelation 17:8 is most explicit: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into perdition." Again, at the close of the verse, "Seeing the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present." (See also Revelation 17:11.) The "Beast" without the horns was under the Caesars and their successors. Horns in their varying numbers were without the "Beast" in the middle ages and onward: "The beast was, and is not." But the wonder of the future is that the Beast, before the closing scene, is to arise not only out of the sea but with the far more awful symbol, "out of the abyss," the prelude of perdition. Here, again, the consistency of the truth asserts itself. To none but the Roman Empire can these predictions apply. To Alexander's empire they are irrelevant; how much more to a mere offshoot of it! No, it is the empire that rose up against the Lord in humiliation, which, blinded and filled by Satan's power, will make war with the Lamb when He comes in glory to its appalling ruin.

Daniel 8:1-27 is manifestly of a character and scope more circumscribed than the general prophecies of Daniel 2:1-49, Daniel 7:1-28. Yet it is none the less important for its design, because it takes up only a special part; but all alike conduct us to the catastrophe at the end. As this we have seen to be evidently true of the great general visions of the book, so is it equally of the particulars; which circumstance exposes the fallacy of identifying the objects. All come into collision with divine judgment; but they are distinct in character as in fact. Here, then, we have the second empire of Medo-Persia assailed overwhelmingly by the third or Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great. How any upright mind can fail to apprehend this from the simple reading of the text is hard to account for. The great horn was broken when it became strong, and in its stead came up four notable horns. Out of one of these four kingdoms rose a little horn which became exceeding great, and also meddled peculiarly with the Jews and the sanctuary. It is a deplorable lack of intelligence to confound this oppressor with the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28. The one was as manifestly the ruler over a part of the Greek empire in the East, as the other from a small beginning arrives to be the chief of the Western empire. Both are to be excessively impious and

wicked, both surely punished by God beyond example. But to confound them is to lose the difference of the actors at the close, even wholly opposed as they are to each other, though both inflict the worst evils on the chosen people. Now there is the less need of many words here, as it is agreed that the vision in its later part from Daniel 7:9 does set forth the Seleucid enemy of the Jews and of their religion. And it would appear that Daniel 7:13-14 apply to his defilement of the sanctuary and suppression of the daily offering. As usual in Daniel and elsewhere in scripture, the interpretation not only explains but adds considerably, and in particular dwells, not on the typical Antiochus Epiphanes, but on the final antitypical enemy in the same quarter at the latter day. It is weak to pretend that the awful end predicted for the infamous personage of the future in Daniel 7:1-28 and at the end of Daniel 11:1-45 could be fulfilled in the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, terrible as it was in the estimate of Greeks as well as Jews. Thus the real prediction of his history in Daniel 11:1-32 does not dwell on it as comparable with that of him who is found "at the time of the end." For the prophecy goes on to the consummation, when God interferes in unmistakeable power. Hence the angelic interpreter would make Daniel know "what shall be at the end of the indignation." Who can say with the smallest show of truth that this was in the days of the impious Syrian or of the Maccabean resistance? "The end of the indignation" will only be, when Israel are truly repentant and God has no more controversy with His people. Nor should this surprise any one who reads the scriptures in faith, for all the prophets look on to that happy time. The real person before the mind of the Holy Spirit at the close is one who will "stand up against the Prince of princes," but shall be "broken without hand" in a way far beyond its type in past history. A gap, therefore, necessarily occurs in every one of the prophecies. In no instance is continuity unbroken. Enough is said to make the general bearing plain; but in every case the Holy Spirit dwells on the final scene which connects itself with the subject matter before us; because then only will the judgment of God decide all absolutely and publicly, and introduce the kingdom of power and glory that shall never pass away.

Daniel 9:1-27 has its own peculiarities. Those who contrast this book with other prophecies, as lacking the predominantly moral element, only prove their own blindness. In no prophecy is it more conspicuous; and the same chapter which so profoundly tells out to God a heart that identified itself with the sins and iniquities ("we have sinned," etc.) of the men of Judah, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of all Israel near and far off, but with the most earnest intercession, is precisely the one that, as he prayed, received from God a prediction in some respects the most striking and important of any in scripture. Here even rationalism cannot but own that the promised blessings of Daniel 9:24 belong to the Messianic hope, when the 490 years really close. Thus it shares, with every other prediction in the book, the mark of going down to the end of the age; when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and God sets up His kingdom in Christ by judgments executed on all lawlessness, Jewish or Gentile. But here, where Jeremiah’s seventy years are referred to, with the provisional return of a remnant from Babylon to rebuild the city and the sanctuary, we have not only Jehovah the Lord God of Israel addressed, but also Messiah’s first advent and cutting off. This interrupts the thread of the seventy weeks, as it naturally must; and an undated vista of desolation follows. For it clearly includes Messiah’s rejection, and leaves nothing but the destruction of the city and temple, and a flood of troubles on the Jews. There evidently comes the break. Messiah’s death was "after" the sixty-ninth week = 483 years. Then follows the desolation determined, and to the end war, outside the course of the "weeks" altogether, as it is hardly possible for a serious man to deny. The last week remains for the close, without fixing any

connection or starting-point, save that the Roman "prince" (whose "people" came and destroyed Jerusalem) will, at the time of the end, make covenant with "the many," or mass of faithless Jews, for a week or seven years, and will in the midst of it cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. That is, he will put down the Jewish religion, contrary to his covenant; and "because of the protection" [rather than the overspreading] "of abominations" or idols, which take its place, a desolator shall be, even until the consumption and that which is determined to be poured on the desolate, i.e. Jerusalem. The desolator seems to he the last north-eastern enemy, as the Roman prince is he who is so prominent in Daniel 7:1-28, where we saw the times and laws given into his hand for the same last half week, or three and a half times.

Instead of this plain, worthy, and homogeneous interpretation, what do the neo-critics say? "There can be no reasonable doubt that this [the cutting off of Messiah] is a reference to the deposition of the high priest, Onias III., and his murder by Andronicus (B.C. 171)"; while the rest is turned to Antiochus. Of course, all is chaos among these critics. The design is to pervert the prophecy, from Christ's death and the burning of their city and the flood of desolation, to those murderers. The precise scope is clear if the interruption of the series is observed in the text, with the future bearing of the last week. If this be true, it is a death-blow to the "higher critics," and an unanswerable proof that the true Daniel wrote it; who here distinctively brings in the awful truth of Christ's rejection, which has deferred the world-kingdom till His second advent; while the disasters of the poor Jews are shown, not only till the Romans destroyed their city and temple, but at the end of the age when they meet their worst tribulation, before deliverance comes for the godly in that day, as it surely will.

Daniel 10:1-21 answers to the earlier portion of Daniel 9:1-27 when the power of Babylon was broken, and a new dynasty reigned with favour toward the Jews. Daniel was in no way deceived as to the moral state of the Jews, but led into humiliation and prayer more than ever before. As the vision of Daniel 9:1-27 was given him, and the violent rejection of Messiah its most notable fact within a measured period, so in Daniel 10:1-21 Daniel beheld One of surpassing glory, and had an angelic communication (inscribed in the scripture of truth) of what should befall his people at the end of the days. And so we find that a prophecy follows in Daniel 11:1-45, Daniel 12:1-13 remarkable beyond any in scripture for details, especially for the persecution which befell the Jews in the land for their religion. Thence it turns with plain intimation to "the time of the end," when the similar spirit of unbelief among the Jews, which had long before cut off the Messiah, will receive the Antichrist at the end of the age, bringing in the conflicts of Gentile powers, and the unparalleled tribulation that precedes the deliverance of the righteous remnant, and the blessed rest of that day. The last three chapters are also a particular prophecy, Daniel 11:1-45 being exceedingly minute, to the fierce dislike of such as think for God, and would dictate to Him if they could. There is a rich variety in scripture, and not least in the prophetic word. Our place is to bow to God and learn of Him. Unbelief sits in judgment of Him Who is worthy of all trust and adoration. Now Daniel 11:1-45, peculiar as it may be, demands and deserves our fullest confidence, whatever say the scorners. It was in the third year of Cyrus that the revelation came to Daniel. Three more kings were to arise in Persia — Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspis; then the fourth, richer than them all, Xerxes, who, when waxed strong by his riches, should stir up the whole against the kingdom of Javan or Greece. This gives the fitting gap, which necessarily must be, unless an uninterrupted thread were inserted: a thing unprecedented in such cases, for the gap we have seen to be

regular. The next personage is the Macedonian chief, who repaid the blow intended by Persia. No unprejudiced man can avoid seeing Alexander the Great in Daniel 11:3, or his divided kingdom in Daniel 11:4, which introduces two of those divisions, the kingdoms of the north and the south, and their conflicts which follow. Again, it is clear and certain that in Daniel 11:21-32 we have a full account of him who more than any hated the Jews and their religion. The sceptical theory is, that a patriotic Jew in his day personated Daniel of ancient renown in the exile, and converted the past history into professed prophecy up to that time. But the fact stands opposed that, when Antiochus Epiphanes is dropped, Daniel 11:33-35 give a protracted state of trial which ensued long for the Jews, when their old foe had ceased from troubling; and that the text expressly declares their trial was to go on to "the time of the end." Here, therefore, is the great gap implied in accordance with the other predictions of the book, and even with the same principle on a smaller scale between Daniel 11:2-3 as already pointed out and undeniable.

Then from Daniel 11:36 we find ourselves confronted with the last time. We are told, not of a king of the north or of the south as before, but of "the king," that final wicked one whom a prophet so distinguished and early as Isaiah presents in Isaiah 11:4, Isaiah 30:33, Isaiah 57:9 under the same ominous phrase. He is the Anointed’s personal rival reigning in the land according to his own pleasure, and thus fully contrasted with Him who only did His Father’s will. It is an energetic sketch of one exalting himself against every god; whereas Antiochus Epiphanes was devoted to the gods of Greece and Rome. Though speaking impious things against the God of gods, he is to prosper "till the indignation be accomplished" — God’s indignation against His guilty people (as Isaiah also spoke), another proof of days still to come. The Palestinian prince (which Antiochus Epiphanes was not, but king of the north) will have no regard for the God of his fathers, namely, Jehovah (for he is an apostate Jew), nor the desire of women (Messiah, the hope of Israel), nor any god (i.e. of the Gentiles); which last it is absurd and false to say of Antiochus Epiphanes. In truth it is the long predicted and then present Antichrist, supplanting Christ, denying the Father and the Son, coming in his own name, and received by those that refused Him who came in the Father’s. His and their destruction is shown elsewhere. But here the prophet turns to the old struggle of the kings of the north and of the south, both being as opposed to "the king" as to each other: an incontestable proof of the folly, first of fancying Antiochus Epiphanes here, and next of denying that these events, believed or disbelieved, are set forth as the prophet’s prediction of the last future collision

Observe, finally, what accumulation of proofs Daniel 12:1-13 affords of these events to come, which of themselves refute the petty scheme of seeing only Antiochus Epiphanes up to the end. For when the last king of the north perishes by divine judgment, a divine intervention on behalf of Israel is assured "at that time." Sorely will the Jews need it, for they will be passing through this their last and severest tribulation. But, unlike their calamitous history for long centuries, "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." It is no mere policy nor prowess, but mercy for the righteous. Hence the appropriate figure of many of the sleepers in the dust awakening, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt So Isaiah (Isaiah 26:1-21) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:1-28) employed the same figure of resurrection for the uprising of Israel nationally, but with the rejection of the unrighteous, as our prophet plainly indicates. The result, then, of this brief survey of the book, assailed by neo-critical unbelief, is to show that their scheme is unfounded from first to last; and that it overlooks the grand scope of Gentile empire, both exoteric (Daniel 2:1-49) and esoteric (Daniel 7:1-28). In this so

inconsiderable a ruler as Antiochus Epiphanes could have no place, still less be the culmination of all in bringing on the divine extinction of the entire system of Gentile empire, and hence in restoring Israel under conditions of blessing and glory which will change the world's history.

Plainly no such time is arrived. When Christ came, the fourth empire was in power; which will also play its part against Him at His second advent, as the New Testament carefully and clearly reveals. His cross laid the basis for reconciling, not believers only, but all things also in due time. Meanwhile in the world "the times of the Gentiles" proceed, and "the indignation" against faithless Israel. The gospel is indeed sovereign grace toward all, and upon all that believe, and the church is Christ's body for heavenly glory. But the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is not yet come, nor can it come till the seventh trumpet is blown. Even in the particular prophecies of Daniel, where Antiochus Epiphanes is referred to (Daniel 8:1-27 and Daniel 11:1-45), the book itself teaches us to look on from his evil to a greater and worse antitype expressly bound up with "the time of the end," which in no way applies to the Seleucid king.

§ 27. MINOR PROPHETS. — HOSEA. Does the group of the so-called Minor Prophets differ from all the other component parts of Holy scripture? or is each of them characterised by its own special aim, and a peculiar contribution to the sum of divine revelation? Let us examine them, however briefly, one by one, though in time they were gathered for convenience into a single volume by the Jews. The drift of Hosea, though in style terse and abrupt to obscurity, is sufficiently clear in the main to any attentive believer. He announces in Hosea 1:1-11 the fall of Jehu's house and of Israel's kingdom under the symbolic children Jezreel and Lo-ruhamah. A still more awful doom was intimated by Lo-Ammi, when the ruin of Judah should leave Jehovah without a recognisable people. Yet the chapter does not conclude without the assurance, (1) that in the place where Lo-Ammi was said, sons of the living God should be said (which Romans 9:1-33 applies to the call of the Gentile and to privileges higher than Jewish); (2) that the two houses of the divided people shall be gathered together with one head (Messiah without doubt in a day yet to come). Is not this so? 1 Peter 2:1-25 applies the end of Hosea 2:1-23 to the Christian Jews even now. It is plain however that the end of both chapters contemplates as a whole what is not yet in terms fulfilled. Hosea 3:1-5 fills up the gap with a graphic sketch of the long interval during which the people abide without privilege, civil or religious, and yet without idolatry, before their blessed restoration at the end of the days. Such is the first section, as sure for the future, as for the present. The second part is a series of expostulations, entreaties, menaces, and lamentations over the beloved but guilty people, distinguishing the sons of Israel from Judah's in danger; and testifying not only the loss of priestly place as a whole (Hosea 4:6), but priests, people, princes, all objects of divine displeasure and judgment (Hosea 5:1-15). Hosea 6:1-11 breaks out into a touching appeal, that they might repent; as Hosea 7:1-16 has to pronounce woe, because even when they howled, they cried not to Jehovah in heart. Hosea 8:1-14 therefore is the trumpet blast of coming destruction on Israel and Judah. Yet in Hosea 9:1-17 what tender pleading over Ephraim, about to become a wanderer, wherein the prophet was a snare! It was no new evil, but since Gibeah: what could be but cutting off Israel's king and the Assyrian their king (Hosea 10:1-15, Hosea 11:1-12)? What a contrast with Jacob, as Hosea 12:1-14 draws out! Nevertheless He declares that He will ransom them from the power of Sheol, and redeem them from death (Hosea 13:1-16).

Accordingly the last chapter (Hosea 14:1-9) provides words of confession, and of return to Jehovah from iniquities and creature help, with His own blessed and blessing promises, which

shall be made good as surely as He spoke them through the prophet.

JOEL.

Joel remarkably differs from the general sweep of Hosea; for he concentrates attention, from a then famine (Joel 1:1-20), on the northern army in spite of its menaces to perish between the eastern and the western seas. After that will come not only fulness of outward blessing but the divine Spirit poured out upon all flesh, and in Jerusalem shall be, no ruin nor danger more, but deliverance in every sense (Joel 2:1-32). For in those days Jehovah will enter into judgment with all the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat on account of Israel (Joel 3:1-21). The apostle Peter was beyond controversy justified in vindicating the effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost as of this character, and in no wise creaturely excitement (Acts 2:16). But he is far from intimating that it was the fulfilment of the prophecy; which did not contemplate the formation of the church, or the going forth of the gospel to all the creation, but the earthly glories of the Messianic kingdom for Judah and Jerusalem, as shall follow in the due season. So the apostle Paul applies it in Romans 10 to the salvation of Jew or Gentile now, stopping short of citing the promised deliverance in mount Zion and in Jerusalem.

AMOS. Who can fail to discriminate the work assigned to the herdman or sheep-master Amos of Tekoa? No competent person can deny the beauty and force of his style, or the fresh originality with which he pronounces Jehovah's punishment on the nations which surround His people, and the surprising fact that Judah and Israel fall under it also (Amos 1:1-15, Amos 2:1-16). Indeed Amos 3:1-15 lets them together learn that, because they were known as none else, therefore He should visit them for their iniquities. But He would do nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets. Do professing Christians believe either of those words of His? "Hear this word" begins Amos 3:1-15, Amos 4:1-13, Amos 5:1-27, all of them warnings to His guilty people, whose false worship was the mother sin of all other sins. Amos 6:1-14 is a woe on their self-security and luxury, like Gentiles who know not God. Now would the Lord Jehovah, who repented of destroying judgments at the prophet's intercession, take the measuring-line in hand and desolate the people and king (Amos 7:1-17); as in Amos 8:1-14 the end is shown coming on Israel, and the land darkened in the clear day. Amos 9:1-15 reveals the Lord standing (not on a wall) but on the altar for judgment still more overwhelming. Yet, while He declares that He will shake the house of Israel to and fro among all the nations, He says not the least grain shall fall. Nay more, He will raise up David's fallen tabernacle, and build it as in days of old to the downfall of their spiteful foes; He will pour on them earthly blessing without stint; and when He plants them in those days on their land, they shall no more be plucked up. These glorious realities await repentant Israel.

OBADIAH.

Obadiah calls for few words, not only because it is so short, but because its distinctive aim is most unmistakeable. Edom is the object before him, and the judgment which the Lord Jehovah would inflict on its jealous and rancorous hatred of His chosen people. Their pride had deceived them; their fastnesses should not screen them: Jehovah will bring them down. Their boasted wisdom is in vain, as well as their might. Their malice was aggravated, as against "thy brother Jacob," and "in the day of his disaster." But in the day of Jehovah upon all the nations shall be deliverance on mount Zion, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. Can any thing be plainer than the speciality of our prophet? or that he looks onward to the triumphs of the

last days, when saviours shall come upon mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's in a form and fulness never yet known on the earth?

JONAH.

He who does not see Jonah's distinctive place must have singularly little perception. Indeed it is the man or what befell him that is the prophetical sign, though the prophetic message, short as it is, must strike us as addressed to the Gentiles in Nineveh. The history is a great and instructive type throughout; and this is no mere idea but truth taught by our Lord.

Jonah 1:1-17 tells us of Jonah charged to cry against the great city because of its wickedness. Strange to say, he a true prophet flees west when bidden to go east. But Jehovah sent a mighty tempest on the ship sailing to Tarshish; and Jonah slept below, while the mariners cried each to his god, and vainly struggled on. At length they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah, who, as they knew, fled from Jehovah's presence; and he frankly bade them cast him overboard as their only safety. This reluctantly and with prayer to Jehovah they did; and the sea ceased from raging to their deeper fear, which issued in a sacrifice to Him and vows. But Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, who was in its belly three days and nights, the sign of Christ (Matthew 12:1-50).

There he prayed as in Jonah 2:1-10 owning salvation to be of Jehovah, Who commanded the fish to vomit out Jonah on the dry land. And the word of Jehovah came to him the second time, bidding him to go and preach to Nineveh what He should say. Jonah both despised the Gentiles, and feared that Jehovah might repent Him of judgment if they sought His mercy; and where then would be the glory of a prophet of Israel, when his Yea became Nay? The figure of death and resurrection opens the door of grace to the lost. If Christ for the time be lost to the Jew who rejected Him, grace works to save Gentiles. Jonah does his errand now (Jonah 3:1-10); and they repent at his preaching from the king downward, the very beasts covered with sackcloth being denied food and drink that they might cry out; and God repented of what He threatened. This even now Jonah resented (Jonah 4:1-11) and wished to die rather than his word should fail and Nineveh abide. But here was the truth so needed by Israel as well as Jonah. Hence the gourd (that sprang up under the hand of Jehovah Elohim to shelter the narrow-hearted and self-occupied prophet) withered under the worm He prepared to this end, so that Jonah fainted under the heat, and again wished to die. Then said Jehovah, "Thou hadst pity on the gourd . . . and I, should not I have pity on Nineveh, the great city, wherein are more than 120,000 persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" Yes, He is the God of all grace, the God not of Jews only but of Gentiles also, whose mercies as the faithful Creator are over all His works. What Jew, what Rabbi, had ever allowed such a book within the sacred canon, if God had not written it for the purpose?

MICAH.

NEXT comes a still more brilliant seer: the word of Jehovah that came to Micah the Morasthite, a contemporary of Isaiah, concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. It is composed of three chief divisions, ushered in by a call to listen, "Hear, ye peoples, all of you; hearken, O earth, and all that is therein" (Micah 1:2); "And I said, Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel" (Micah 3:1); and "Hear ye now what Jehovah saith," etc. (Micah 6:1). Can the least discerning Of believers fail to apprehend its distinctive character?

It opens with the imminent fall of the northern kingdom because of its transgression, but goes on to the punishment of Judah also and Jerusalem. "Of late my people is risen up as an enemy." "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not the rest, because of defilement that destroyeth, even a grievous destruction" (Micah 2:8; Micah 2:10). The people and their prophets were alike wicked and rebellious. As Micah 1:1-16 has a predictive sketch of the Assyrian foe coming against Jerusalem, so does the end of Micah 2:1-13 present Him Who will effectuate Jehovah's purpose of deliverance and blessing for the remnant of Israel at the end. In the next section he appeals to the chiefs, warning them against the prophets that cause Jehovah's people to err. If they cried, Peace, without a vision or light from God, Micah could say that he was filled with power by the Spirit of Jehovah to declare unto Jacob his transgression and unto Israel his sin. Heads, priests, prophets were only building up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with unrighteousness, while veiling iniquity under the privilege of His name. Zion and Jerusalem should come to utter desolation (Micah 3:9-12). But this is followed in Micah 4:1-13 by the glowing picture with which Isaiah begins his Isaiah 2:1-22. Only Micah, instead of going on to the overwhelming judgment of the day of Jehovah as there, predicts the going to Babylon as Isaiah does in his Isaiah 39:1-8. Thence he turns to the closing scenes where many nations gather against Zion, which is told to arise and thresh many peoples: a judgment awaiting its sure fulfilment, when the first or former dominion shall come to her. This gives occasion for announcing a still deeper reason for putting off blessing and the giving up His people for a season. Awful to think and say, they should smite the Judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek (Micah 5:1)! And a parenthesis reveals Him born at Bethlehem, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. His rejection was their own rejection, till God's counsel comes to birth; when the residue of His brethren, instead of merging in the church of God as now, shall return unto the children of Israel, and the kingdom be displayed in power and glory before all the world. And the prospect is beautifully described to the end of this part. The third section is a most affecting call to hear Jehovah's controversy with His people, in spite of His goodness to them from the beginning and through the wilderness into Canaan. It is not offerings but righteousness He values. In the face of iniquity, deceit, and violence, of family bonds turned to enmity all the more evil and destructive, the prophet waits on Jehovah with confidence of deliverance and vindication. And he looks through the desolation that must intervene because of Israel's sins to the restitution of all things in the latter day, when the nations shall be ashamed of all their might, and lick the dust. "Who is a God like Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have mercy upon us; He will tread under foot our iniquities. And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the seas. Thou wilt perform truth to Jacob, loving-kindness to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:18-20). In denying God's faithfulness to Israel and monopolising the earthly promises, Babylon has shown herself, as in all else, faithless to the true place of His church, in present suffering and future glory with Christ. But we speak not of her that occupied the plain of Shinar, but of the more guilty woman that sits on seven hills, mystery written on her forehead, the corrupt counterpart of the bride, the Lamb's wife.

NAHUM. As Micah on a small scale noticed both Babylon and the Assyrian which Isaiah presented much more fully, Nahum is occupied only with Nineveh and its chief before the world-powers were ordained. For such was the order historically, as prophetically it will be the inverse. (Compare Isaiah 13:1-22 and Isaiah 14:1-32 with Micah 4:1-13, Micah 5:1-15) For what answers to Babylon,

the imperial Beast or fourth empire revived for judgment at the consummation of the age, will meet its doom before the Assyrian comes up with the external nations for final destruction when Israel shall be owned of Jehovah; but the reign of righteousness and peace is not yet fully established. Who can deny the special place designed for Nahum as to Nineveh, any more than the peculiar task given to Obadiah as to Edom?

Nahum was a Galilean like Jonah; and if the latter was sent long before to warn the haughty Gentile, and on repentance to defer the judgment in divine mercy, the former was given, on its raising its head still more proudly, to pronounce Jehovah's indignant vengeance, however slow to anger; for He is as great as He is good. In vain went forth out of Nineveh one that imagined evil against Jehovah, a counsellor of Belial. He will make a full end — trouble shall not rise a second time; as Sennacherib proved, his yoke broken, His people's bonds burst, out of the house of the Assyrian's gods graven and molten images cut off, and his grave prepared. The scourge finally past is followed by the enduring peace of His people (Nahum 1:1-15).

What more superb than the lifelike graphic sketch of the dashing in pieces (Nahum 2:1-13)? But all ends, not in Jerusalem taken, but in Nineveh and its palace melting away in its own rivers which burst the gates, the converse of Babylon's later fate. The lair of the lions would be an utter ruin, instead of a terror (Nahum 3:1-19). Nineveh was no better than Thebes, or No-Amon; there is no healing of her breach.

HABAKKUK .

Habakkuk begins by complaining of the evil in Jehovah's people, when he is reminded of the marvellous work He wrought in using the Chaldeans in their proud self-seeking energy to chastise them. This turns his complaint against the wicked swallowing up one more righteous, and withal sacrificing to his net and burning incense to his drag (Habakkuk 1:1-17). Can any hesitate to own distinctive design here? The prophet waits for His word, and Jehovah's answer comes so plainly that its reader may run. The just shall live by his faith, before public deliverance is given. If God is patient, His people may well be. All the iniquity was seen and felt: retribution would come at an appointed time. The peoples labour for the fire, and the nations weary themselves in vain. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah (not of the gospel, which appeals to faith now for heaven), as the waters cover the sea. The Babylonian capturing would be to no purpose any more than their famous building; and their intoxication of others for deceit as of themselves would end in shame, like their idolatries: Jehovah is in His holy temple above, whatever the state of His house on earth. Silence! (Habakkuk 2:1-20) His prayer follows in Habakkuk 3:1-19 and the power that will make itself seen, heard, and felt, rises for his soul, as he recalls His deliverance of old, though but partial, as He had only Israel in view, not yet Messiah and the new covenant. He anticipates the triumphant lot of Israel, as is already seen, no less than the downfall of their foes; but he ends with the faith that waits, though not a sign meanwhile appears (Habakkuk 3:1-19).

ZEPHANIAH. Is Zephaniah one whit less distinctive? Is he not beyond mistake occupied from first to last with the day of Jehovah on Jerusalem? But the land and the Jewish remnant are fully in view for that day. The reign of the last pious king did not hinder or defer it; for the general advance in evil revolt would be all the surer when that check vanished. Divine judgment must clear away all offences, that righteousness by grace may flourish. Hardly any truth is more repulsive to haughty

and lawless Christendom than the Lord’s unexpected dealing with the living, though every one in word confesses that He is coming to judge the quick as well as the dead. Who can wonder that idolatrous Jews decried it? It is the becoming answer of our prophet to all questions. If Jehovah must judge His people, all the world must bow, no nation can escape. What Nebuchadnezzar did was but the earnest of a great and complete judgment; yet Jehovah could not but begin with His land, people, and city, as in Zephaniah 1:1-18. In Zephaniah 2:1-15 a remnant is looked for, the meek, that they may be hidden in that day which overtakes the guilty mass. There is indeed and for the same reason the doom of the Philistines, of Moab, and of Ammon. But not the neighbours only; He will famish all the gods of the earth: and Assyria with its great city Nineveh shall fall into desolation.

Zephaniah 3:1-20 returns to Jerusalem unsparingly. But from Zephaniah 3:8 he shows Jehovah rising to pour His indignation upon the nations and kingdoms in all the earth. Then will He turn to the peoples a pure language that they may all call on Jehovah’s name and serve Him with one consent. And His dispersed shall return, suppliant and accepted, afflicted and poor, but unrighteous and deceitful no more. Assuredly it is a day yet future, when none shall make them afraid. From Zephaniah 3:14 he calls on the daughter of Zion to exult, Israel to shout. Jehovah is their king and in their midst, having taken away their judgments and cast out their enemy. "He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will exult over thee with singing." Praise and fame He will make in all the lands of their shame when He gathers and turns again their captivity before their eyes. It is wholly distinct from the gospel or the church.

HAGGAI. The three prophets that remain were after the Return, and thus differ from all before. The house of God, lowly as it might be, was a great test for their lukewarm state. Haggai was sent to awaken their zeal: not God’s providence, however it might work, but Jehovah’s word. Difficulties arose; and they left off to build. It was not the time, said they. "Is it time for you to dwell in your wainscotted houses, while this house lieth waste?" replies the prophet, as he points out how their efforts came to failure under His hand Who bade them, "Consider your ways." But there were who heard Zerubbabel and Joshua, and others of opened ear; and Jehovah’s messenger declared on His part, I am with you, saith Jehovah; and they came and worked for Jehovah’s house (Haggai 1:1-15).

Near a month after, the word came to such as had ears to hear, abating any disappointment from comparison with the house in its former glory: Be strong, for I am with you. "For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry [land]; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts (Haggai 2:6-9)." Could any answer be more assuring or glorious? Some believed it then, we may trust, to their blessing: do men who call themselves Christians believe it now? Whatever measure of application it had when Christ came the first time, Hebrews 12:1-29 leaves no doubt that its fulfilment awaits His second advent. — It may be observed how carefully the house is viewed as one till then. Render therefore as in the Sept., "the latter glory of this house," not "the glory of this latter house." It has unity in His eyes. The third message turns on holiness according to the law. Things ordinary are not sanctified by the touch of what is holy; though the holy becomes unclean by contact with defilement. Such the

prophet declares this people and every work of theirs — unclean. Yet they are told to consider from this day that, instead of smiting as before, Jehovah would bless them (Haggai 2:10-19). On the same day came a fourth word, in which Jehovah says, "I will shake the heavens and the earth, and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and I will overthrow the chariots and those that ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother," Haggai 2:21-22. It is the judgment of the quick, or at least that part which relates to the nations that gather against Israel; it is after the destruction of the Beast and his vassal kings and armies whom the Lord destroys by His appearing. Zerubbabel seems taken as a shadow of great David's greater Son in the verse following. A strange critic would he be who fails to discern Haggai's special place, and a faithless one who questions his divine inspiration.

ZECHARlAH. No less distinctive is the work given to Zechariah, who alone approaches in his earlier visions to the apocalyptic character of Daniel among the four so-called greater prophets. But unlike Daniel he is occupied with Jerusalem, and launches out in his later visions to the open and magnificent scenes of universal glory under Jehovah-Messiah for all the earth. If all peoples and all the nations assemble against Jerusalem even in the day of Jehovah, He will go forth and fight with them and smite all the adversaries; and it shall be that all that are left of all the nations which came up against her shall go up from year to year to worship the Ring, Jehovah of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. It is the day of His manifested supremacy in the midst of Israel, and clearly as yet to be fulfilled. What circumstances among the returned remnant gave the prophet an existing groundwork? Did the book come from God? or is it a human dream? That the writer could begin with prose, and rise later to poetical style when called for is no great marvel.

After aggrieved appeal in the preface of Zechariah 1:1-6, the youthful prophet saw (as in the rest of the chapter) the vision of the administering powers of the three empires under the symbol of red, bay, and white horses; for the first empire had passed away and the provisional return to the land had already been a fact for some 18 years. Next he saw four horns, powers which had scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, as well as four smiths to cast out those Gentile horns. Zechariah 2:1-13 presents a man with a line to measure Jerusalem; for if Jehovah was jealous over the feeble remnant, He also looks on to the time when He would be the glory in their midst; and a song quite as lofty as any afterward follows. In Zechariah 3:1-10 is solved by grace the question of fitness for His presence, though the high priest represents also their responsibility meanwhile. But the Branch or Sprout is promised, Who will be the true Stone of Israel, when their iniquity shall pass away, and communion shall abound. The vision of order and of holy power in testimony follows in Zechariah 4:1-14, in its measure of light then, but complete only when He reigns Who combines royalty and priesthood. Zechariah 5:1-11 gives two visions of judgment which must be: the flying roll against iniquity in Israel toward man and toward Jehovah; and the ephah with the woman (this is wickedness, or demoralising idolatry) carried off to Shinar, its source, for its dwelling-place. After the vision of the four chariots in Zechariah 6:1-15, representing the external powers in divine providence, comes the word of Jehovah, on the occasion of gifts from those of the captivity, to make crowns, one of which was to be set on Joshua, again looking on to the Branch Who should build the temple of Jehovah emphatically, bearing the glory, sitting and ruling upon His throne, a priest thereon, when the counsel of peace should be between Them both. What believer can mistake the special design of this?

Zechariah 7:1-14, Zechariah 8:1-23 seem transitional. Such fasts as those in the captivity would not do: Jehovah claimed righteousness and mercy, not oppression and evil-mindedness, for which He had scattered them. Returned to Zion He would restore and bless to the full, as He will yet. Fasts will yield to feasts; and peoples come to Jerusalem as they never yet have done, whatever the application of intermediate condition then.

Then we have "the burden of the word of Jehovah" in Zechariah 9:1-17. Not only will He defend His house against surrounding foes, but Zion's King will come in humiliation, notably and to the letter fulfilled, but going on to the day when Ephraim, as well as Jerusalem, shall behold His judgments issuing in peace to the nations and dominion everywhere. How could such a future be before the prophet without kindling the fire of hope so assured? And this is pursued through Zechariah 10:1-12. But in Zechariah 11:1-17 comes a change to pathos and grief, as Christ's rejection passes before his spirit, and the retributive usurpation of Antichrist. Then another "burden" is heard concerning Israel; and beseiged Jerusalem becomes a burdensome stone, as never yet, "to all peoples" (Zechariah 12:3); and David's house and Jerusalem's inhabitants shall be objects of grace in true repentance; and a fountain to cleanse those who may look to Him Whom they pierced shall be opened in that day (Zechariah 13:1-9). Then shall the very names of idols, and prophets with the unclean, pass out of the land; and Christ is again recalled, wounded in the house of His friends, albeit Jehovah's Shepherd, the Man Who is His fellow. Scattering is thence justly predicted, though not without protection for the little ones. But again we are in presence of the final crisis (Zechariah 8:1-23, Zechariah 9:1-17), which is too plain in Zechariah 14:1-21 save for obstinate unbelief. There is a final capture of Jerusalem in part when all the nations join to assail it; but Jehovah then decides all. (Compare Psalms 48:1-14. Isaiah 29:1-24, Isaiah 66:1-24). Subjection of all to Him is the glorious and blessed result.

MALACHI. The brief prophecy of Malachi has its specific moral traits, exactly suited to Jehovah's final call to the Jew in view of His messenger to prepare the way, and of the Lord suddenly coming to His temple. He denounces irreverence, corruption, fraud, and profanity in the returned, but looks for a remnant, and is sure of divine faithfulness to purpose and promise. Jehovah's name shall be great among the nations when His kingdom comes. What is Israel now? What the priests are as in Malachi 2:1-17. All hung on Jehovah's coming; but He will judge as well as purge (Malachi 3:1-18). Meanwhile those that fear Him have the resource of His name and shall be His peculiar treasure; as He will discern the wicked too. For His day comes as a furnace for the wicked, but with healing for those that are His, who also shall tread down the wicked. It is for Israel in that day, not the heavenly church, though we should profit by all the word (Malachi 4:1-6). Thus He recalls the law of Moses, and promises Elijah before that day, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to their fathers, lest His coming should bring not blessing but curse, as the first man entails.

Here, as all know, closes the great volume of O.T. inspiration. There only is found the authentic account of creation and of early mankind; there of the deluge, and of nations and tongues subsequently, of the promises given to the fathers, and of Israel, their offspring, the people chosen of God, but failing under trial, and worst of all (as the prophets predicted) when they rejected their Messiah. But the prophets as certainly predicted that He will surely restore them penitent and believing in the latter day.

04A.07. Part 7

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 7 Chapter 5. (Continued).

Divine Design.

(New Testament). A new language, the characteristically Gentile one i.e. the Greek, marks outwardly a still deeper inward distinction in what is commonly called the New Testament. Its basis is the Son of God come, who has given all who believe, Jew or Greek, an understanding that we should know Him that is true. The gospel therefore goes out freely to every creature, and the children of God are gathered in one by the Holy Spirit; whilst the Lord, ascended to heaven, promises to come and receive His own, before the day of His appearing when the kingdom shall be set up over the earth in visible and indisputable glory, and Christ’s supremacy be manifested over all creation heavenly and earthly, which the church shall share as His bride. Hence God is revealed as He is in light and love; man is laid bare as wholly evil and lost; provisional dealing and probation yield to grace and truth come in Jesus Christ, Who, rejected of man and the Jews especially, accomplished redemption, and brings in the new things according to the hidden but eternal counsels of God, before He will resume His relations with Israel in fulfilment of His promises to the fathers and the blessing of all families of the earth in the restitution of all things, of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began.

§ 28. MATTHEW. In the first Gospel the Holy Spirit has for the distinctive object, as shown in its contents, to set forth Jesus as the Christ or Messiah, according to promises and prophecy; Son of David, Son of Abraham, in an especial sense; yet rejected by the Jew no less but more than by the Gentile, and so proclaiming Himself Son of man to suffer for mankind, and be exalted to heavenly and universal glory. The mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens meanwhile are disclosed to faith, and the church, part of a mystery still greater, is built on Him, the Son of the living God, before He returns as Son of man in power and glory.

Hence Matthew 1:1-25 furnishes His genealogy in the Messianic point of view, down from the roots of promise and royalty in three series of fourteen generations, in which the few women named carry the manifest significance of grace to Gentiles and the grossest of sinners. It is Joseph’s line from Solomon, which was legally essential; though due care is taken to mark His birth of "the virgin" of that house by the Holy Spirit, according to Isaiah 7:1-25, Emmanuel, and Jehovah or Jah in His very name. In Matthew 2:1-23 magi from the east are seen coming to pay homage to the born King of the Jews; but they learn Bethlehem to be the birthplace, as Micah had predicted long before. An Idumean under Roman authority then ruled Jerusalem; and king and people were troubled at the tidings. But the strangers are angelically warned as well as Joseph, to defeat the designs of Herod, and thus also to accomplish Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31:15. The return to dwell at Nazareth, despised as it was, fell in with the prophecies that such was to be Messiah’s lot.

Matthew 3:1-17 presents the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah. It is John the Baptist saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens hath drawn nigh: a testimony to Christ's coming to baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire. But Jesus stoops to be baptised, and is owned as Son by the Father, while the Spirit descends on Him visibly. The Trinity now revealed. In Matthew 4:1-25 we have Jesus tempted by the devil forty days and after that in three special ways, but victorious. Then when John was delivered up, the Lord's Galilean ministry begins, as in Isaiah 9:1-2, and the call of the earlier disciples, with a general summary of His teaching and preaching which attracts from far beyond that province, as of His healing all sickness and disease, and of His power over demons.

Then in Matthew 5:1-48, Matthew 6:1-34, Matthew 7:1-29 He on the mount lays down authoritatively the principles of the kingdom in contrast to the law, with the manifestation of the Father's name and the suited word, concluding with the security of the obedient, but the sin and vanity and ruin of mere profession.

Matthew 8:1-34 displays the reality and character of Jehovah's presence in Christ here below: (1) the Jewish leper, (2) the Gentile centurion, (3) Peter's wife's mother, (4) the fulfilment of Isaiah 53:4, (5) scribes and disciples tested, (6) the tempest rebuked, and (7) the demoniacs delivered. In Matthew 9:1-38 is shown the growth of unbelieving hatred and blasphemy brought out by (1) the paralytic forgiven, (2) the tax-gatherer called, (3) the question of fasting, (4) the ruler's child raised, (5) and on the way the flux of blood healed, (6) the two blind given to see, and (7) the dumb demoniac to speak.

Thereon, deeply pitying the distressed and scattered sheep of Israel, He bids His disciples pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers and in Matthew 10:1-42 He sends forth the twelve with authority like His own over unclean spirits and diseases, but as yet only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (not to Gentiles or Samaritans), preaching the kingdom, as John had preached and Himself. He prepares them for enmity and tells them that their task will not close till the Son of man be come, while He assures them, not only of the Spirit's grace, but of honour and reward before His Father. In Matthew 11:1-30 Christ testifies to John, instead of getting due testimony from him; shows that the kingdom calls for decision at all cost but is well worth while; reproves the caprice of "this generation;" and warns the cities unrepentant in the face of the powers displayed. Yet He bows with gracious confession to the Father, Who hid these things from wise and understanding men, yet revealed them to babes. He not only sees but announces a higher glory and a deeper grace opening out than if Israel had received Him after the flesh.

After the rest given to faith, Matthew 12:1-50 opens with the lesson of the sabbath perverted to deny His glory Who is Lord of the sabbath as of all, and with the resolve of the Pharisee to destroy Him. The Lord retires, heals still, but charges them not to make Him known. He bows to His rejection. In another and deeper way would the divine counsel be made good, as Isaiah 42:1-25 declared. So, when a blind and dumb demoniac was healed and the Pharisees attribute His power to Beelzebub, He warns of the blasphemy against the Spirit that shall not be forgiven, pronounces the last state of "this evil generation" to become worse than the first, and owns His true relationship henceforth to be, not with mother and brethren after the flesh, but with such as shall do the will of His Father Who is in heaven.

Accordingly in Matthew 13:1-58 the Lord expounds in seven parables (beginning with His new work as the Sower of the word and in six following similitudes) the mysteries of the kingdom consequent on His rejection and going on high. The first took in His work before the kingdom was set up in the heavens, and was spoken outside like the nest three. The interpretation of the wheatfield spoilt by darner was given within the house like the last three. But, whatever His words or works, the Jews stumbled at the stumbling-stone, His person. In Matthew 14:1-36 we see the state morally no better but rather worse. Yet if the Lord withdraws, His compassion to Israel is unabated. He heals their diseases, satisfies the poor with bread as the true and royal Son of David, dismisses the multitude, and goes up the mountain to pray, the picture of His present work on high. But when the disciples are tempest-tossed with the winds contrary, He rejoins them, and the wind ceases, and those in the ship pay Him homage as God's Son. And now He is recognised and welcomed in His beneficent power.

Matthew 15:1-39 is the Lord's judgment of earthly religion proud in the poverty of tradition, with an unclean condition inwardly, whatever the zeal in washing of hands. On the other hand, if a Canaanite under curse cried for mercy against a demon's oppression, would Jesus deny her? He vindicates her faith, while He renews His labour of love in despised Galilee, and abundantly blesses the provision of the poor as David's Son. In Matthew 16:1-28 none the less does the Lord denounce the hypocrisy of a generation seeking after a sign, while blind to those set before them so fully. None more should be given but that of Jonah's death and resurrection, opening the door to Gentiles. If men said this or that, Simon Peter confesses Him Christ, the Son of the living God, as revealed of the Father. And the Son also gives him a new name, declares that on this rock He will build His church, and confers on him the keys of the kingdom: two distinct, yet connected, systems of blessing to replace Israel. Thereon He announces His suffering, death, and resurrection, and calls on the one that owns Him to deny self, take up his cross, and follow Him.

Matthew 17:1-27 is a miniature though divine display of the kingdom, but Christ meanwhile declared Son of God, Who is to be heard, not law and prophets. Yet here below the disciples fail through unbelief; whereas Christ, proving Himself Lord of all, takes as yet no glory here, but associates His own with Himself in grace meanwhile.

Next in Matthew 18:1-35 He enforces humiliation in love as befitting His own in the kingdom; and in the church grace to win the wrong-doer with the sanction of heaven on their acts rightly done. The parable from Matthew 18:23 teaches that such as professedly had forgiveness, but outraged its spirit, have all their guilt renewed to their ruin.

Matthew 19:1-30 tells us that, while God's constitution of man is right, grace reveals better things to those that share Christ's rejection, and that God encourages fidelity by due reward. It ought to be plain that there are no thrones for the apostles till the regeneration when the Lord comes in glory. Those "enthroned" meanwhile are not genuine successors, but merely affect Gentile grandeur.

Matthew 20:1-34 begins with the other side of God's rights in a parable maintaining His sovereignty. But the Son of man's path lies through shame and death, and there is no other way to glory, though the disposal is His Father's. The danger is from a fleshly mind, which is no better than a Gentile's: the Son of man on the contrary came to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. The Lord had now entered on His last journey to Jerusalem; and the healing of the two blind

men near Jericho begins the final presentation of Himself Who knew the end before He began (Matthew 20:29-34). In Matthew 21:1-46 He accomplishes Zechariah 9:9, purges the temple, and defends the children's Hosannas with Psalms 8:1-9. The curse on the fig-tree was the sentence on the people, full of show but without fruit; and when the religious chiefs ask for His authority, He puts a question to their conscience. When they shirk the answer, He sets out one parable that proves them to be worse than the tax-gatherers and the harlots; and in another He describes God's dealings with the rebellious people, even to His own rejection in death. They themselves must own (Matthew 21:41) their just destruction; on which He cites Psalms 118:22, and connects with it not only the removal of the kingdom of God from them but the effect of both His advents, now their stumbling on Him to be broken, by-and-by His falling on them to be scattered as dust. They knew what He meant, but as yet feared to do their will. So in Matthew 22:1-46 the Lord adds in a parable what grace has done and is doing, with the effects for the unbelieving, not only providential judgment which fell on Jerusalem, but that for each at the end and for ever. Then come the Pharisees with the Herodians about the tribute, and the Sadducees about the resurrection, and the lawyer about the commandments, all answered to their confusion; after which the Lord puts the question of questions for a Jew (as indeed for any). Faith alone answers; but they had none; and there they are to this day. In Matthew 23:1-39 the Lord, while owning the law's authority (spite of the falseness of those who administered it), calls His disciples to the lowly position He had taken as their pattern; and He Who began with "Blessed, blessed," now ends with "Woe, woe." How their evil did not cease with His cross but went on against His servants, we know too well. But even here in declaring the inevitable retribution, He cannot close without a door of hope in the last verse (Matthew 23:39).

Matthew 24:1-51, Matthew 25:1-46 are His great prophecy on the mount, beginning with the Jews, and ending with the Gentiles in Matthew 25:31 to the end. Between these two (Matthew 24:45-51, Matthew 25:1-30) is the part that deals with the Christian profession. This takes therefore the general unrestricted form of three parables, since the link is with Christ Himself, not with the land or the people of Israel: the house-bondman faithful and prudent, or evil, respectively characterising Christendom in comprehensive responsibility; the ten virgins, foolish or prudent, manifested by the reality or unreality of the hope when judgment falls; and the bondmen trading with His goods, good and faithful on the one hand, or wicked and slothful on the other, in individual responsibility. The sheep and the goats represent the true and the false, not in Christendom, but among all the nations in the end of the age, tested by the testimony of the King's "brethren" during that crisis, while the heavenly saints are with Christ on high before He appears, and they with Him, in the same glory (Matthew 25:31-36). In Matthew 26:1-75, Matthew 27:1-66 we have the unutterably solemn and touching scenes of the Lord's earthly close. The Lord announces it; the chief priests and their associates plot; the last anointing is done for His burial; the traitor covenants; the Lord directs the paschal feast and eats it with the disciples; He institutes His supper; He goes out to Olivet, and He enters on His agony in Gethsemane; and then becomes the willing Captive, as later the Victim. The mock trial before Caiaphas follows; and Peter denies, and Judas in remorse casts down his silver in the sanctuary, and commits suicide. Pilate condemns the Holy One and releases Barabbas. Jesus is crucified, "the King of the Jews": for this alone is Pilate firm. All rail, even the robbers. He dismissed His spirit; and the veil of the temple was rent, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, as there had been supernatural darkness around the cross when the Messiah made sin was abandoned by His God. But if men designed otherwise, He was with the rich in His

death, as the prophet said so emphatically.

Matthew 28:1-20 tells of Him risen. What availed the keepers or the seal? And the angel, before whom the guard trembled, bade the women not fear, but tell the disciples He was risen and would meet them in Galilee, the familiar ground of His ministry. And so it was amid fear and joy and doubt: He Himself appeared and confirmed it, whatever lying Jews and bribed Gentiles pretended. There too He gave them His commission. "All authority is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, disciple all the nations, baptising them unto the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age." Here may be seen what supersedes Israel till the age is ended. When the new age comes, they will be owned and blessed as the head of the nations. The first dominion will be Zion's. Even during that period (for such is the consummation of the age, not a mere epoch) there will be a suited state of transition. Till then discipling proceeds; and disciples are to be baptised to the name, not of Jehovah, but of God fully revealed as now-the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Observance of Christ's injunctions follows, with the assurance of His constant presence: a condition quite distinct from His millennial reign in manifested power and glory.

§29. MARK. The second Gospel has for its design the setting forth of the service "of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He who at first failed but at length was pronounced "profitable for ministry" was just as suitable in the power of the Holy Spirit for that task, as Matthew called from the receipt of customs to be an apostle was for the first Gospel. Christ Himself serves in the gospel, and does mighty works accompanying it, as Mark describes.

Before proceeding farther, the precision which Mark furnishes, partly by his characteristic "straightway" that so often occurs, partly by a perhaps still more definite specifying of time e.g. in Mark 4:35, enables us to clear up some difficulties in the different order of the events related in the three Synoptic Gospels. From a careful comparison it results, that of the four inspired writers, two were led to preserve save in a rare exception the chronological order, two from their respective designs subordinate that order where requisite to a grouping of events or discourses independently; and of the two in each case one was an apostle, the other not. Matthew and Luke were from time to time not bound to simple historic sequence; whereas Mark and John as the rule adhere to it.

None can be justly called "fragmentary"; for each has a specific design impressed on his work, and all that is inserted or omitted may be accounted for on this principle. Where an incident illustrates that which belongs to the scope of all four, they all introduce it, as for instance the miracle of the five loaves and the two little fishes. Where it falls in with the province of one only, there it is given and nowhere else; as the temple tax in Matthew 17:1-27 the deaf stammerer in Mark 7:1-37, the penitent woman in Luke 7:1-50, and the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-54, to mention but one of the many facts, signs, and discourses peculiar to each, to John most abundantly. In some cases three give the same subject matter, in others but two. But this is not all; whilst there are notable phrases and words common to all, there are quite as notable differences in the mode of communication. Hence speculative minds are tempted to irreverent cutting of the knot they cannot untie; whilst unexercised souls fail to gather the profit intended of the Spirit through every shade of difference. For it is a perversion of the truth, that the writers were inspired, but not the writings. If 2

Peter 1:21 warrants the former, still more explicit and distinctly applicable is the claim for the latter in 2 Timothy 3:16. In the verse preceding we have the "saved" title of the O. T.; but in verse 16 the Spirit of God pronounces for "every" thing that falls under the designation of "scripture." It is not a question of human infirmity but of God's power. Every scripture is inspired by God (?e?p?e?st??). Not only were the men inspired, but so according to the apostle Paul is the result. Ordinarily their writing, like their words, would have been liable to the imperfections of human speech and the limitations of human thought; but every scripture, every writing that comes under this category, is God-breathed, and in no way "left" to the mere accidents of human faculties. To mix up with inspiration the manifold errors of copyists in the lapse of ages is illicit and illogical, not to say dishonest; for this is quite another question. All we contend for is the divine character of indisputable scripture.

Differences then there are; but instead of being the discrepancies which unbelief hastily and improperly calls them because of ignorance, they are the beautifully instructive effect and evidence of God's varied design. Take Matthew 8:1-34 as an instance: "a solemn assembly of witnesses," as one justly calls it. The leper came in fact long before what is called the sermon on the mount. "And, behold," in Matthew 8:2 ties us down to no date. But as the Holy Spirit had already given a summary of the Lord's deeds of gracious preaching and power in Matthew 4:23-24, so He presents details of His teaching in Mark 5:1-43, Mark 6:1-56, Mark 7:1-37, and of His miracles in Mark 8:1-38, and again in another way in Mark 9:1-50 where the date yields to deeper considerations, and selected proofs are grouped together designedly. In Mark 1:40-45, where no such purpose operates, we see its place historically. Luke confirms the fact that it was on "one of those days" when Christ was in Capernaum, and before the healing of the paralytic, which in Matthew is reserved for the first case in Mark 9:1-50.

But, to look into details, the leper's cure fitly attested the present power of Jehovah-Messiah which opens Matthew 8:1-34. And as this proved His grace toward the Jew that came in his uncleanness and faith (however faltering), the Gentile centurion's great faith next follows, and here only is connected thus. In the Gospel of Luke it has a different place; in Mark it has none. The third fact in Mark 8:1-38, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, so interesting to a Jew and assuring that grace to the Gentile did not turn Messiah's heart from Israel, seems here inserted with that design; whereas historically it preceded both the previous miracles in date, as shown in Mark 1:1-45 and Luke 4:1-44. So of course did the healing of many demoniacs and sick on that evening after the sabbath, in fulfilment of Isaiah 53:4. It is not in the least difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit led Matthew to introduce at this point what Luke presents in quite a different connection (Luke 9:57), and with an addition too. The harmonists who imagine "duplicates" are no more faithful than the commentators who tax the inspired with "discrepancies." The conversation whenever it occurred seems given in the first Gospel to mark the great vessel of divine power and grace (i.e. the Messiah) consciously rejected, the Son of man having nowhere to lay His head, yet claiming from a disciple to be followed, even if a father lay dead. We know too for certain that both the storm which He rebuked, and the deliverance of the demoniacs took place after the parables of chap. 13 were heard and explained. The septenary of Mark 9:1-50 is a similar collection of witnesses, following that of Mark 8:1-38 which indicates not only His divine power displayed in Israel, but the growing hatred and jealousy which it excited in the Scribes, till it culminated in the Pharisees who sought to poison the multitude with their blasphemy, "By the prince of the demons he casteth out

demons." But no more evidence is needed, that Matthew was led, where it was required, to state facts and words so as best to give dispensational order; as Luke was led in no less a degree to present moral order. Take the Lord's genealogy as a clear proof, not in Mark 1:1-45 but in Mark 3:1-35 after the statement of John put in prison, and of the wondrous scene of his baptism following, though of course it long preceded what is here recounted. Take again the temptation where Luke puts the third act in the second place, as the moral order; whereas the actual fact as represented by Matthew coincided with dispensational order which it was his function to make known. This necessitated the remarkable omission which the true and ancient text testifies, as distinguished from the common error introduced by copyists, harmonists, and the like, whose clumsy assimilations provoke the rather more evil doubts of their opponents.

How full of interest, as bearing on divine purpose, to observe that in the Gospel of Mark there is no account of the Lord's reading of Isaiah 61:1-11 and preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, any more than Matthew or John gives it. For Luke 4:1-44 it was reserved, as Christ's grandly suited introduction to public witness, as we shall see more fully in its place. The introduction for Matthew's Gospel was the striking but wholly different application of Isaiah 9:1-21 where the light shining in despised Galilee was promised. Mark was not given to state this, but only Matthew, whose also it was above all to point out the fulfilment of prophecy in the still more despised Messiah; as he only had mentioned the visit of the Magi, and the flight into Egypt, and the slaughter of the babes, all bearing in the same direction.

Again, Mark was not led to present the remarkable healing of the centurion's servant, which has so prominent a position in the First Gospel, and at still greater length in the Third. Mark does give the leper's cleansing, followed by the healing of the paralytic, and very graphically in both cases; but there was no design by him to bring in the witness that Jehovah's power would call in Gentiles when Israel should be cast out, as in Matthew 8:1-34, any more than to blazon, as in Luke 7:1-50, the faith of the Gentile, not so seen in Israel, which recognised the power of God in Jesus to command sovereignly and in love; and this in a soul so humbled by grace as to discern His people in the degenerate Jews, loved and honoured for His name' sake. So further in the First Gospel and the Second we have no account whatever of the widow's son raised from the dead outside Nain. It had no connection with their scope in particular, and we may presume that it was therefore here omitted. But it had the utmost importance for illustrating divine power in the highest form united in our Lord Jesus with the fullest human sympathy; and so it is exactly in accord with the special aim of Luke's Gospel where alone it is found. On the same principle we may account for a vast deal of intermediate matter given in the central parts of the First and Third Gospels, which does not appear in the Gospel of Mark. We are thus delivered from the theories which have occupied many learned men to the hurt of themselves and of those who trust them. For they have sought on human grounds to explain the different phenomena of the Synoptic Gospels, some advocating a common document, others only a general apostolic tradition. Again, a supplemental intention has been attributed to those that followed successively the first, for his own contribution, to the sum as it gradually appeared and grew. Had they believed in the special design imprinted by the Holy Spirit on each and every one of them, erroneous speculation had been spared to the honour of God's word, and to the spiritual profit of His children. The differences which undoubtedly occur would then have been known to be in no case discrepancy, but springing from God's wisdom, not man's weakness, and adding incalculably to the witness of Christ, and consequently to the

spiritual intelligence of him that accepts all from God in faith of His truth and love.

Mark 1:1-45 presents neither genealogy nor early history, as we have in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. Yet this is not due to his abridging previously well-known facts, but to the divine design which made a genealogy here out of place: the service even of such a Servant did not call for it. Here as every where none so much abounds in striking details. The forerunner is briefly introduced preaching and baptising. Jesus too is baptised, and then tempted of Satan; here without the details given by Matthew and Luke, yet only Mark speaks of His being with the wild beasts. When John is imprisoned, Christ begins His public service, saying, "The time is fulfilled." Calling certain disciples to follow Him, He promises to make them fishers of men. His words and works attest the truth. The unclean spirit is cast out publicly. Simon's mother-in-law is healed of fever, and forthwith ministers to them. Sick and demoniacs are alike set free in numbers. He goes to preach; for this He is come forth. He prays without seeking fame; and a leper is cleansed with His touch as benignant as His word in divine power, love, and compassion. In Mark 2:1-28 are given minute details of the paralytic, not healed only but forgiven (for sin is the root of evil), and made to walk, that they might know the Son of Man's title on earth to remit sins: a title which causes the Scribes to blaspheme. He goes on in grace to call a despised tax-gatherer to follow Him, eats with those whom the Pharisees branded as sinners beyond others, and vindicates it as His mission: "I came not to call righteous but sinners." What a Saviour for guilty man! Any truly righteous were already called: He came to call sinners. Those who believed were to rejoice in His presence there: let John's disciples and those of the Pharisees fast in unbelief of Him; full soon should His own have reason to fast. Besides, the new truth and power of the kingdom cannot without loss mix with old things. The sabbath itself was made for man, and the Son of Man is its Lord, not its slave as Pharisees wished.

Hence in Mark 3:1-35 He on the sabbath heals a man with a withered hand. He was here, sabbath day or not, to do good and save; but the orthodox counselled with their time-serving adversaries how to destroy Him. If He withdraws, it is to heal and deliver more abundantly; and after being alone on the mountain, He calls and appoints twelve, whom He would, to carry on the work of grace in power like His own. For He did all in the Spirit; but such was His unflagging zeal that His relations called Him deranged; and such His power, that the scribes from Jerusalem imputed it in their malice to Satan. Thereon He pronounces sentence, and announces His relationship, not after the flesh, but with him, whoever he be, that does the will of God. Accordingly in Mark 4:1-41, seated on board ship, He teaches the new departure, contingent upon the people's apostacy, and takes the place of the Sower in the world, such that three parts of the seed come to nothing, and only a fourth by grace takes effect in varying measure where conscience works before God. Light is to shine in service; the veil no longer hides; and he that has gets more, as he that has not loses all. A parable follows peculiar to Mark, and emblematic of the Lord's ways in service, Who works throughout and produces all, yet hiddenly now till the harvest is come when He reaps. The parable of mustard seed illustrates the outward rise from little to a great show on the earth. Such would be the abnormal result of service in man's hand. The evening closes with the storm on the lake, Jesus asleep in the boat now filling, and the alarmed disciples awaking Him Who in two words made a great calm. In Mark 5:1-43 we see Him met by the fiercest of demoniacs, Legion; for many spirits were there. Jesus, expelling them from the possessed, let them enter a great herd of swine which bore witness to their evil power in rushing at once to destruction; while the man sat clothed and in

his right mind, beseeching to be with Jesus. The time however is come, not yet for this, but to testify to his friends what great things the Lord, even Jesus, had done for him; while those who heard alas! besought, not Legion, but the Lord to depart from their borders. And Jesus departs. On the other side Jairus beseeches Him to come and lay His hands on his dying daughter. As He went, a woman touches Him secretly and is healed of her issue of blood; the Lord will have her too in the light and without fear. The damsel now dead is restored to life, as the Lord will do for Israel by-and-by. This closes the first part.

Then Mark 6:1-56 lays bare the unbelief that could not deny His word or work, yet stumbled at His humiliation in the grace which escaped them. So the Lord before His departure began to send forth the twelve with power over unclean spirits, but without resources of their own; He could control men's hearts as He pleased, Meanwhile Herod is shown as troubled in conscience because of John as well as Herodias, dreading the report of Jesus as a resurrection of John. And the Lord gives the disciples, full of their great work, their needed quiet with Himself, while He waits on man's wants and satisfies the poor with bread. Then sending away the multitude and the disciples by ship to Bethsaida, while He went on high to pray, He appears to them toiling in vain against contrary wind, and walked the water as if He would pass them, but immediately rejoins them on their crying out in fear; and the wind ceased. When they reached land, those who once wished Him to depart bring their sick, earnestly seeking that they may be healed.

Mark 7:1-37 manifests the superficial worthlessness of the religious chiefs and their tradition. Man's heart was a spring of evil; but grace reveals God's heart, even to the Syro-Phoenician, and His power to deliver her demoniac daughter; whilst the deaf stammering one, like the Jewish remnant, is led apart and healed, that he may hear and speak to the praise of God. In Mark 8:1-38 a fresh pledge, in the seven loaves multiplied, is given of divine compassion to the poor of His people, as also of His power to make the blind, again led outside, see clearly. The leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod was evil; yet the disciples, though ill-affected by it, had no uncertainty as to the Messiah, but like Peter confessed Him. This however must yield to the deeper glory of the Son of Man in His rejection and death; but it was too much for Peter, who deprecates it and is rebuked of the Lord, even insisting on a path like His own for His followers and at all cost. In Mark 9:1-50 His glory as Son of Man and Son of God is presented to witnesses on the hill, while below even His own failed in faith to use His name against Satan. How painful to the Lord! How humbling to the disciples! "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" Only His presence in a coming day will deliver the people from Satan's power. Meanwhile it is a question of faith for individual deliverance. Power depends on faith; the ability is in the believing. Jesus acts by His word in power. But He goes on to be slain and to rise the third day, whilst they understanding nothing dispute who should be greatest, and have a little child set before them as their right example. Even John is jealous for "us" rather than for Christ; but the Lord in grace owns all He can. Woe to the despiser of the little ones that believe! Woe too, when hand, foot, or eye causes to stumble! It is not earthly judgments, but unquenchable fire that awaits the unbelieving; as believers are to have salt (the preservative power of the truth) in themselves, and peace with one another.

Mark 10:1-52 shows our Lord vindicating the relationships as God ordained from the beginning! He insists on the purity of marriage, and blesses babes. Yet while appreciating the blameless young man, who sought everlasting life (not to be saved), He denies goodness in man, and lays

bare love of means and position, which is ruin, as he left Jesus to go away in sorrow. The Saviour thereon dwells on the danger, not blessing, of wealth, to the astonishment of His own; and when Peter boasts their self-denial, the Lord declares the sure remembrance of every loss for His sake (and the gospel's, peculiar to Mark), not only spiritual gain now but life everlasting beyond, with the caution that many first shall be last, and the last first. Then His death and delivery to the Gentiles are announced, and the ambition of Zebedee's sons, as well as the displeasure of the ten, corrected by the cross as God's pattern in a lost world. The last presentation from Mark 10:46 begins with blind Bartimaeus appealing to David's Son and receiving his sight, as Israel will in due time. In Mark 11:1-33 He is presented as the anointed King, and owned with hosannas; He pronounces on the barren fig-tree which is seen withered next morning, cleanses the sanctuary, and exposes the incompetence as well as insincerity of the officials who demand His authority.

Mark 12:1-44 sets forth in a parable Israel's rebellion and Messiah's rejection but exaltation, and in few words the hypocrisy of the question as to Caesar, to whom they were no more subject than to God. Then the Sadducees (who talked of resurrection to undermine it and Him) hear the truth which refutes their error; and the intelligent scribe has the moral sum of the law laid down for his encouragement. Jesus puts the question how David's Son is David's Lord, which is life to him that answers it according to God. But alas! religious show and pretensions with selfishness end in more severe judgment; while the widow and her mite have everlasting record. In the brief form of the prophecy in Mark 13:1-37 the special aim of the Spirit is evident from the fulness given to service past or future; so it is, not only in the centre, but near the end. Hence in that character "the Son" does not know; yet He gave to His bondmen their authority, and to each his work. Nowhere else is service so distinctly noticed. The end approaches in Mark 14:1-72, His final rejection, His death, resurrection, and ascension, yet "working with them" still as the Lord. The chief priests plot, but God's will is done. Love anoints the Lord's body for His burial; the traitor makes his sad bargain with the rejoicing chief priests; the last passover is eaten, and the Lord's supper instituted. Peter is warned, and all three sleep while the Lord goes through the agony in Gethsemane. Judas then leads the band that takes Jesus, and the high priest condemns Him, not for the false witness of others but for His own confession of the truth, while Peter denies Him thrice and with oaths.

Mark 15:1-47 shows us Jesus delivered to Pilate, the Gentile judge, who owns Him guiltless and knows the chief priests' envy, but gives Him up to be crucified. Thereon ensues the scene beyond all before or to come. The Messiah, the righteous Servant, forsaken by all, even by God (for so it must be for our sins), expires on the cross; the centurion in charge confesses Him Son of God; and Joseph, an honourable councillor, lays His body in his own rock-hewn sepulchre. In Mark 16:1-20 we have His resurrection briefly told by an angel to the women that saw the sepulchre open and empty. They were too fearful and amazed to say anything. In the second part of the chapter, of which some unreasonably and unbelievingly doubt, we have the Lord appearing to Mary of Magdala who is disbelieved; then manifested to the two going to Emmaus, as afterward to the eleven at table, with reproof of their unbelief. Yet did He give their great commission of the gospel to all the creation, with signs following those that believed. And if He risen and ascended is styled "Lord," none the less true to the design is He said to be "working with them" and confirming their words, as His servants went forth and preached everywhere. Here only in the N.T. have we the fact historically stated, however briefly. Can specific purpose be clearer first and last?

§ 30. LUKE. The third Gospel is distinguished by its display of God’s grace in man, which could be only and perfectly in the "Holy Thing" to be born and called the Son of God. Here therefore, as the moral ways of God shine, so is manifested man’s heart in saint and sinner. Hence the preface and dedication to Theophilus, and the evangelist’s motives for writing; hence also the beautiful picture of Jewish piety in presence of divine intervention for both forerunner and Son of the Highest to accomplish promise and prophecy, as announced by angels (Luke 1:1-80). The last of the Gentile empires was in power when the Saviour was born in David’s city, and Jehovah’s glory shone around shepherds at their lowly watch that night when His angel proclaimed the joyful event and its significant token, with the heavenly host praising as they said, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, in men complacency (or, good pleasure). God’s Son, born of woman, was also born under law, the seal of which He duly received; and the godly remnant seen in Simeon and Anna, that looked for Jerusalem’s redemption, testified to Him in the spirit of prophecy; while He walked in the holy subjection of grace, with wisdom beyond all teachers, yet bearing witness to His consciousness of divine Sonship even from His youth (Luke 2:1-52). In due time, marked still more explicitly by the dates of Gentile dominion and of Jewish disorder, both civil and religious, John comes preaching, not here the kingdom of the heavens, nor yet the kingdom of God, but a baptism of repentance for remission of sins. Here alone and most appropriately is quoted from Isaiah’s oracle, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God"; here only have we John’s answers to the enquiring people, tax-gatherers and soldiers; and here too is stated anticipatively his imprisonment, but also the baptism of our Lord; and here only is given His praying, when the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and the Father’s voice, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee am I well pleased." And the genealogy is through Mary (as she throughout is prominent, not Joseph as in Matthew) up to Adam, as becomes the Second Man and Last Adam (Luke 3:1-38). It may help if it be seen, that "being, as was supposed, son of Joseph" is parenthetical, and that "of Heli, of Matthat," etc., is the genealogical line from Mary’s father upward.

Then follows His temptation viewed morally, not dispensationally as in the first Gospel; the natural, the worldly, and the spiritual. This order necessarily involved the omission in Luke 4:8, which ignorant copyists assimilated to the text of Matthew. The critics have rightly followed the best witnesses, though none of them appears to notice the evidence it renders to plenary inspiration. Divine purpose is clearly in it. Thereon He returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and at Nazareth in the synagogue He reads Isaiah 61:1-2 (omitting the last clause strikingly), and declares this scripture fulfilled today in their ears. In that interval, or within the acceptable year, Israel as it were goes out, and the church comes in where is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and they one new man in Him. Then when His gracious words were met by unbelieving words on their part, He points out the grace of old that passed by Israel and blessed Gentiles. This kindled His hearers to murderous wrath even then, whilst He, passing through the midst of them, went His way. At Capernaum He astonished them publicly with His teaching and cast out an unclean spirit in the synagogue, as He brought Peter’s mother-in-law immediately to strength from "a great fever," and subsequently healed the varied sick and demoniacs that were brought, while He refused their testimony to Him. And when men would detain Him, He said, "I must announce the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for therefore was I sent" (Luke 4:1-44). It is a question of the soul yet more than of the body. In connection accordingly with preaching the word of God, we have (Luke 5:1-39) the Lord, by a miracle that revealed Him, calling Simon Peter (who judged

himself as never before) with his partners, to forsake all and follow Him: an incident of earlier date, but reserved for this point in Luke. The cleansing of a man full of leprosy follows, and after the healing of multitudes He retires and prays; but as He afterwards was teaching in presence of Pharisees and law-doctors, He declares to a paralytic the forgiveness of his sins, and, to prove it, bids him arise, take up his couch, and go to his house, as the man did forthwith. Then we have the call of Levi, the tax-gatherer, and a great feast with many such in his house; but Jesus answers all murmurs with the open assertion of His coming to call sinners to repentance, as He defends the actual eating and drinking of His disciples by their joy in His presence with them: He once taken away, they should fast. In parable He intimates that the old was doomed, and that the new character and power demand a new way; though naturally no one relishes the new, but likes the old.

Luke 6:1-49 shows first, the Son of Man Lord also of the sabbath, and secondly the title to do good on that day, which filled them with madness against Him. Next, going to the mountain to pray all night to God, He chose twelve and named them apostles, with whom He came down to a plateau, healing all that came under diseases and demons Then He addresses them in that form of His discourse which falls in perfectly with our Gospel. The great moral principles are there, not contrast with law as in Matthew, but the personal blessedness of His own, and the woes of such as were not His but enjoy the world. Another peculiarity is that Luke was led to give our Lord's teaching in detached parts connected with facts of kindred character; whereas Matthew was no less divinely given to present it as a whole, omitting the facts or questions which drew out those particulars.

Then in Luke 7:1-50 He entered Capernaum, and the healing of the centurion's slave follows Luke distinguishes the embassy of Jewish elders, then of friends when He was near the house; but the dispensational issue was left to Matthew. The raising of the widow's only son at Nain yet more deeply proves the divine power He wields with a perfect human heart. It was high time for John's disciples to find all doubts solved by Jesus, Who testifies to the Baptist's place instead of being witnessed to by him. Yet was wisdom justified of all her children, as the penitent woman finds from the Lord's lips in the Pharisee's house. Everywhere it was divine grace in man; and she tasted it in the faith that saved, and in the grace that bade her go in peace. In Luke 8:1-56 we see Him on His errand of mercy, followed not by the twelve only but by certain women heeled of wicked spirits and infirmities, who ministered to Him of their substance. And the Lord addresses the crowd in parables, but not of the Kingdom, as in Matthew; after that He designates His true relatives to be those that hear and do the word of God. The storm on the lake follows, and the healing of Legion in the details of grace, as well as of the woman who had a flux of blood, while He was on the way to raise the daughter of Jairus.

Luke 9:1-62 gives the mission of the twelve empowered by and like Himself, and sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God, with its effect on Herod's bad conscience. The apostles on their return He leads apart, but, being followed by a hungry crowd, He feeds about 5,000 men with five loaves and two fishes multiplied under His hand, while the fragments left filled twelve hand-baskets. After praying alone, He elicits from His disciples men's varying thoughts of Him, and Peter's confession of His Messiahship (Matthew recording much more). For this He substitutes His suffering and His glory as Son of Man: they were no more to speak of Him as Messiah. Deeper need had to be met in the face of Jewish unbelief. The transfiguration follows with moral traits usual in Luke, and the

centre of that glory is owned Son of God. When the Lord and His chosen witnesses come down, the power of Satan that baffled the disciples yields to the majesty of God's power in Jesus, Who thereon announces to them His delivery into men's hands, and lays bare to the end of the chapter the various forms that self may assume in His people or in pretenders to that place.

Then we have in Luke 10:1-42 the seventy sent out two and two before His face, a larger and more urgent mission peculiar to Luke. On their return, exultant that even the demons were subject to them in His name, the Lord looks on to Satan's overthrow, but calls them to rejoice that their names were written in the heavens. To this our Gospel leads more and more henceforth. His own joy follows, not as in Matthew dispensationally connected, but bound up with the blessedness of the disciples. Then the tempting lawyer is taught that, while those who trust themselves are as blind as they are powerless, grace sees one's neighbour in every one that needs love. The parable of the Samaritan is in Luke only. The close of the chapter teaches that the one thing needful, the good part, is to hear the word of Jesus. It is not only by the word that we are begotten; by it we are refreshed, nourished, and kept. But prayer hereon follows (as He was praying), (Luke 11:1-54), not only because of our need, but to enjoy the God of grace Whose children we become through faith; and in His illustration He urges importunity. Here again we have an instructive example of the divine design by Luke as compared with that in Matthew 6:1-34. His casting out a dumb demon gave to some occasion to blaspheme, whereon He declares that he that is not with Him is against Him, and he that gathers not with Him scatters: a solemn word for every soul. Nature has nothing to do with it, but the grace that hears and keeps the word of God. So did the Ninevites repent, and the Queen of Sheba come to hear; and more than Solomon and Jonah was there. But if light is not seen, it is the fault of the eye; if it is wicked, the body also is dark. Then to the end the dead externalism of man's religion is exposed, with the woe of such as have taken away the key of knowledge, and their malice when exposed.

Luke 12:1-59 warns the disciples against hypocrisy, and urges the sure revelation of all things in the light, with the call to fear God and to confess the Son of Man, trusting not in themselves but in the Holy Spirit. It is no question now of Jewish blessing; and He would be no judge of earthly inheritances. They should beware of being like the rich fool whose soul is required when busy with gain. The ravens and the lilies teach a better lesson. The little flock need not fear, but rid themselves rather of what men covet, and seek a treasure unfailing: if it is in the heavens, there will the heart be. And thence is the Lord coming Whom they were habitually and diligently to wait for. Blessed they whom the Lord finds watching! Blessed he whom the Lord finds working! To put off His coming in heart is evil, and will be so judged. But the judgment will be righteous, and worst of all that of corrupt and faithless and apostate Christendom. Whatever His love, the opposition of man brings hate, and fire, and division, not peace meanwhile. His grace aroused enmity. Judgment came and will come; as on the other hand He was baptised in death that the pent up floods of grace might flow as they do in the gospel. With the Jews on the way to the judge, and about to suffer from God's just government (at the end of the chapter before), the Holy Spirit in Luke 13:1-35 connects the question of what had befallen the Galileans. Here the Lord pronounces the exposure of all to perdition, except they repented. The parable of the fig tree tells the same tale; respite hung on Himself. In vain was the ruler of the synagogue indignant for the sabbath against Jehovah present to heal; it was but hypocrisy and preference of Satan. The kingdom about to follow His rejection was not to come in by manifested power and glory, but, as under man's

responsibility, from a little seed to wax a great tree, and to leaven the assigned measure, wholly in contrast with Daniel 2:1-49, Daniel 7:1-28. Instead of gratifying curiosity as to "those to be saved" (the remnant), the Lord urges the necessity of entering by the strait gate (conversion to God); seeking their own way they would utterly fail. So He would tell them He knew them not whence they were, in the day when they should see the Jews even thrust out, and Gentiles sitting with the fathers, last first, and first last, in the Kingdom of God. Crafty as Herod was, it was Jerusalem He lamented, the guiltiest rejector alike of God's government and of His grace, yet not beyond His grace at the end.

Hence Luke 14:1-35 points out unanswerably the title of grace in the face of form, and its way of self-renunciation, which will be owned in the resurrection of the just, not by the religious world which is deaf to God's call to the great supper. But if the bidden remain without, grace fills it not only with the poor of the city but with the despised Gentiles. Only those that believe God's grace are called to break with the world. Coming to Christ costs all else: if one lose the salt of truth, none more useless and offensive. In Luke 15:1-32 the Lord asserts the sovereign power of grace in His own seeking of the lost one, in the painstaking of the Spirit by the word, and in the Father's reception and joy when he is found; as self-righteousness betrays its alienation from the Father and contempt for the reconciled soul.

Then Luke 16:1-31 describes parabolically the Jew losing his place; so that the only wisdom was, not in hoarding for self but in giving up his master's goods, to make friends with an everlasting and heavenly habitation. Practical Christianity is the sacrifice of the present (which is God's) to secure the future (which will be our own, the true riches). Pharisees, being covetous, derided this; but death lifts the veil that then hid the true issue in the selfish rich tormented, and the once suffering beggar in Abraham's bosom. If God's word fail, not even resurrection would assure. Unbelief is invincible, save by His grace. As grace thus delivers from the world, so it is to govern the believer's walk, who must take heed to himself, rebuke a sinning brother, and, if he repent, forgive him even seven times in the day (Luke 17:1-37). Faith is followed by answering power. But the yoke of Judaism, though still existing, is gone for faith, as the Lord shows in the Samaritan leper, who broke through letter of the law, rightly confessed the power of God in Christ, and went his way in liberty. The kingdom in His person was in the midst of men for faith. By-and-by it will be displayed visibly and judicially; for such will be the Son of Man (now about to suffer and be rejected) in His day, as in those of Noah and Lot, far different from the indiscriminate sack of Jerusalem by Titus.

Luke 18:1-43 shows prayer to be the "rest resource, as always, so especially when oppression prevails in the latter day, and God is about to avenge His elect, and the question is raised if the coming Son of Man shall find faith on the earth. After this the Lord lets us see the spirit and ways suited to the kingdom in the penitent tax-gatherer contrasted with the Pharisee, and in the babes He received, not in the ruler who, not following Jesus because he crave to his riches, lost treasure in heaven. Yet he that leaves all for His sake receives manifold more now, and in the coming age life everlasting. Lastly the Lord again announces His ignominious death but His resurrection.

Then (Luke 18:35) begins His last progress to Jerusalem and presentation as David's Son; and the blind beggar, invoking Him so, receives his sight, and follows Him, glorifying God.

Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-48, chief tax-gatherer and rich, is the witness of yet more-the saving grace of God. But the Lord is not going to restore the Kingdom immediately, as they thought; He is

going to a far country to receive it and to return; and when He does, He will examine the ways of His servants meanwhile entrusted with His goods and He will execute judgment on His guilty citizens who would not that He should reign over them. Next He rides to the city from the Mount of Olivet on a colt, given up at once by the owners; and the whole multitude of the disciples praise God aloud for all the powers they had seen, saying, Blessed the coming King in Jehovah's name: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. It is a striking difference from the angels' praise at His birth; but both in season. Pharisees in vain object, and hear that the stones would cry out if the disciples did not. Yet did He weep over the city that knew not even then the things for its peace, doomed to destruction because it knew not the time of its visitation. The purging of the temple follows, and there He was teaching daily; yet could not the chief priests and the chiefs of the people destroy Him, though seeking it earnestly.

Then in Luke 20:1-47 come the various parties to judge Him, really to be judged themselves. The chief priests and the scribes with the elders demand His authority; which He meets with the question, Was John's baptism of heaven or from men? Their dishonest plea of ignorance drew out His refusal to tell such people the source of His authority. But He utters the parable of the vineyard let to husbandmen, who not only grew worse and worse to their lord's servants but killed at last his son and heir, to their own ruin according to Psalms 118:22-23, adding His own solemn and twofold sentence. Next, we have His reply to the spies who would have entangled Him with the civil power; but as He asks for a denarius, and they own Caesar's image on it, He bids them render to Caesar Caesar's things, and to God the things that are God's; and they were put to silence. The heterodox Sadducees followed with their difficulty as to the resurrection; whereon He shows that there was nothing in it but their ignorance of its glorious nature, of which present experience gives no hint. Resurrection belongs to the new age, to which marriage does not apply. Even now all live to God, if men cannot see. The Lord closes with His question on Psalms 110:1-7, how He Whom David calls his Lord is also his Son. It is just Israel's stumbling-stone, ere long to be Israel's sure foundation. Then the chapter concludes with His warning to beware of those that affect worldly show in religion, and prey on the weak and bereaved, about to receive, spite of long prayers, judgment all the more severe.

Luke 21:1-38 begins with the poor widow and her two mites of more account than the richest in the offertory. Then, in correction of those who thought much of the temple adorned with goodly stones and offerings, the Lord predicts its approaching demolition, though the end was not to be immediately. But He cheers and counsels His own meanwhile. From Luke 21:20-24 is the siege under Titus, and its consequences to this day. Luke 21:25 and the following look on to the future. The Gentiles are prominent; whence we have, "Behold the fig tree and all the tree'" in ver. 29. Observe also "this generation," etc. in Luke 21:32, is in the future part, not in what is fulfilled. Lastly, Luke 21:34-36 give moral appeal. Here again we find Him teaching in the temple by day, and every night lodging at Olivet. The last Passover approaches (Luke 22:1-71) and found the chief priests and the scribes plotting, when Judas Iscariot* gave them the desired means. On the day of sacrifice He sent Peter and John to prepare, and the Lord instructs them divinely when and how: for as He said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," and its cup He bade them take and divide it among themselves. Then He institutes His supper. As yet He had given no sign to mark the traitor, though He had long alluded to the fact. But alas! they were even then contending which of them would be accounted greatest; whilst He explains that

such is the way of the Gentiles and their kings, whilst they were to follow His example-"I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." Yet He owns their continuance with Him in His temptations, and appoints to them a kingdom. He tells Simon of Satan's sifting, but of His supplication that his faith should not fail, and bids him, when turned again, or restored, to stablish his brethren. After further warning Peter, He clears up the change from a Messianic mission to the ordinary ways of providence in Luke 22:35-38, and then goes out to the mount and passes through His agony with His Father (Luke 22:39-46) while the disciples slept. Then a crowd comes, and Judas drew near to kiss, and the Lord laid all open. He heals the high priest's bondman, whose right ear was cut off; but remonstrates, yet allows Himself to be taken Who could have overwhelmed them with a word. Peter denies Him thrice. The men revile the Lord with mockery and blows; and as soon as it was day, He is led to the Sanhedrin, and when asked if He were the Christ, He tells them of the place the Son of Man will take, and owns Himself Son of God.

* It is quite general here in Luke 22:3 : "And [not Then] Satan entered into Judas." The precise time is shown in John 13:27, where then is expressed, here the statement is general, as often in the third Evangelist. So in Luke 24:12 it should be And or But, not Then.

Before Pilate in Luke 23:1-56 the effort was to prove Him a rival of Caesar; but though confessing Himself the King of the Jews, Pilate found no fault in Him. The connection with Galilee gave the opportunity for a compliment to Herod, who got not a word from the Lord; but, after with his soldiers insulting Him, he sent Him back, when Pilate again sought to release Him, as neither he nor yet Herod found evidence against Him. But the Jews only the more fiercely demanded a seditious murderer to be released, and Jesus to be crucified. Still Pilate made a last effort. But their voices prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that what they asked for should be done. Such is man; and such is religious man, even more wicked: "Jesus he delivered up to their will." Simon of Cyrene had to prove the violence of that hour; and Jerusalem's daughters lamented with wailing. But the Lord bade them weep for themselves and for their children, and proceeds to Calvary where He was crucified, and the two robbers on either side. There He prayed His Father to forgive them as rulers scoffed and soldiers mocked. Even one of those crucified kept railing on Him; but the other became a monument of grace, confessing the Saviour and King, when others forsook and fled. The centurion too bore testimony to Him; and if they made His grave with the wicked, the rich was there in His death, and with Pilate's leave laid His body in a tomb hewn in stone where never man had yet lain. It was Friday, growing dark, and sabbath twilight was coming on. And the Galilean women who saw Him laid there returned and prepared spices and unguents. Little did they know what God was about to do; yet they loved Him in Whom they believed. On the first day of the week at early dawn the women came (Luke 24:1-53) but found the stone rolled away from the tomb and the body gone; and two in dazzling raiment stood by them to their alarm, who asked, "Why seek ye the Living One among the dead? He is not here, but is risen;" and they recalled to their minds His words in Galilee now fulfilled in His death and resurrection. Even the apostles disbelieved. And Peter went, and saw evidences and wondered. Then we have the walk to Emmaus with all its grace and deep instruction from the scriptures, not for those disheartened men only, but for all time and all believers. Next the Lord makes Himself known in the breaking of bread (the sign of death), and at once vanishes. For we walk by faith, not by sight. On returning to Jerusalem they hear how He had appeared to Simon; and as they spoke, the Lord stood in their midst, bids them handle Him and see (for they were troubled), and even eats to reassure them of

His resurrection. He speaks further and opens their minds to understand the scriptures; a distinct thing from the power of the Spirit they were to receive in due time. No going to Galilee is introduced here; it was exactly suited to Matthew’s design. Here Jerusalem is prominent, which was avowedly most guilty. So repentance and remission of sins "were to be preached in his name, unto all the nations, beginning with Jerusalem." There too they were to tarry till clothed with power from on high. But thence, when the day arrived, He led them out over against Bethany, and blessed them with uplifted hands; and, while blessing them, He parted from them and was borne up into heaven.

04A.08. Part 8

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 8 § 31. John. Can it be doubted by any serious reader that the fourth Gospel presents the Lord pre-eminently in His divine aspect? He is the Word Who in the beginning was with God and was God. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. He was made (or became) flesh; but none the less the Only-begotten is Son in the bosom of the Father, as we hear in the wonderful opening (John 1:1-18) of the three introductory chapters. Indeed most of chap. 4 is before His public ministry commences in Galilee after John was put in prison.

John 1:1-51 is striking in its enumeration of His various titles, and in setting forth the work which on earth (John 1:29) or from heaven (John 1:33) none but a Divine Person could do. John 2:1-25 prefigures the bridal joy He will usher in at His coming, and the judgment which is to cleanse the temple in Jerusalem; but it is as risen from the dead, as He announces. Man, however, was quite unmeet. Hence John 3:1-36 insists on his being born anew as indispensable even for the earthly things of the kingdom. But the Son of Man lifted up on the cross opens the way for heavenly things and life eternal, being in truth also the Son of God given in love to the world that the believer might be fully blessed. And the chapter closes with John’s witness to His glory as above all, Whom the Father loves and has given all things to be in His hand. To the woman of Samaria (John 4:1-54) the Lord opens the free giving of God in the Son stooping to the uttermost, yet giving not life only but living water, the Spirit, as a fountain within; as He goes on to the hour when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth. Not only does she own Him as the Christ, but many of the Samaritans believed because of her word, and many more because of His, confessing Him the Saviour of the world. When at Cana, the dying son of the courtier is healed by His word, though the father’s faith at first was short and corrected by the Lord. In Jerusalem (for this Gospel tells of His often working there), at the pool of Bethesda, He brings out His quickening and raising power, with a resurrection of judgment for unbelievers, in a discourse which grew out of a man long infirm being immediately made well. The latter part of John 5:1-47 points out man’s responsibility because of the ample testimonies afforded.

John 6:1-71 opens with the five loaves in His hand feeding five thousand men, and the Lord owned as the Prophet, refusing at present to be King, goes as Priest on high but will return to His own, tempest-tossed as they may be, so that the ship at once reaches the land. The discourse follows, or rather discourses (see John 6:59), in which He speaks of Himself coming down from heaven as the bread of God; next, giving His flesh to be eaten and His blood drunk; lastly, the Son of Man ascending where He was before: the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the Ascension, the "common faith."

John 7:1-53 completes this portion by the disclosure that, though the time was not yet come to show Himself to the world as He surely will when He comes in His kingdom, He would give the Spirit when glorified, like rivers flowing out. It is the Spirit for bearing witness, as in chap 4 for worship. Judaism is in all these chapters set aside for Christ, Who is really and in power what it was in figure, not to say much more. In John 8:1-59 we have Christ, the Son, yea God, manifested

by His word, but rejected; in John 9:1-41 manifested by His work, and equally rejected by those unbelievers who pretended to see, while the once blind from birth believed, saw, and worshipped Him. John 10:1-42 closes this section by the Good Shepherd service of the Son, one with the Father, Whose word and work are the resting-place of His sheep, not Jews only but Gentiles, and even now one flock, one Shepherd. The next portion gives the testimonies borne to the Lord Jesus; and first in John 11:1-57 as Son of God in power of resurrection shown on Lazarus, already not dead only but buried, "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." The Jews, dead to all but self and present interests, are only afraid of the Romans; and Caiaphas, more wicked than Balaam, prophesies the expediency of one man (albeit Son of God!) dying for the people. Yes, grace in God sent Him, grace in Himself came, to die; but what blind and blasphemous iniquity in that expediency, whereby the whole nation morally speaking did perish, and their priesthood notably! In John 12:1-50 Mary's anointing Jesus' feet with the costly unguent is told, censured by the heartless covetousness of Judas about to betray Him. But the testimony is next given to Him as King of Israel, Son of David, when entering Jerusalem. Here the Greeks desire to see Jesus, Who answers, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified," and announces in His solemn formula the necessity of His death to bear much fruit. Thus could Gentiles be fellow-heirs as well as Jews in God's rich grace. But if man was insensible, the Lord realised the sacrifice; and the Father answered the trouble of His soul with the assurance of glorifying His name again, as He had already, to wit in resurrection. The Lord, no longer in figure but in open speech, explains the judgment of the world and of its prince, because of His rejection on the cross; whereby He becomes the centre for all, whether Jew or Gentile, the One by Whom alone the believer comes to God. From John 12:37 the evangelist ponders on the situation of Jewish unbelief, as owned in Isaiah 6:1-13, Isaiah 53:1-12, putting God's seal on the prophet. It is the more awful because many even of the rulers did believe, but feared to confess through loving the glory of men rather than of God. From John 12:44 it is Jesus in His last charge publicly laying bare the root of things. It was not Himself only come as light and to save: the word He had spoken should judge in the last day. The Father Who had sent Him, and Whose commandment is life eternal, was behind and above all.

Then in John 13:1-38, John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26 we have the communications that open out the coming association with Christ in heaven, which was a wholly new thing after the breach with the Jew, John 17:1-26 completing it by giving us to hear His communion with His Father thereon. The first of these presents Christ in the significant act of washing the disciples' feet, with (not blood but) water. It is His advocacy for us now in heaven with the Father, interceding for us, as we on earth are called to do for one another (John 14:1-31). Advocacy is not to form relations, but to restore communion when interrupted by sins: as generally misunderstood now as by Peter then, to the shame of those who have the Holy Spirit given them. Judas is excepted, whose betraying Him He most touchingly discloses after supper; "and he went out immediately; and it was night!" Thereon, in terms of infinite depth, the Lord says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." There is the ground and the display of the righteousness of God in its highest character. The blessing proclaimed in the Gospel is its result to us in His grace. Here we have all fully in Christ, where none as yet could follow. Yet all are exhorted to love one another as His disciples. If Peter trusted himself, he should learn what he himself was by denying Him thrice.

John 14:1-31 follows, comforting the disciples on His departure by the blessed hope of His coming to receive them for the Father's house, whither He was going to prepare a place for them: a wonderful statement indeed of that wonderful hope. Next, He points out what the Father is Whom He had been showing while here, words and works alike the Father's; as they should do even greater works because of His going to the Father. Obedience was to be the witness of their loving Him; on His part, the Father at the Son's instance would give them another Advocate, the Spirit of truth, to dwell with them for ever, yea to be in them. Hence in that day they should know that Christ is in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them. But obedience should only be deepened, not of His commandments only but of His word. Here comes in the Christian's responsibility, and in the Father's government of our souls more enjoyment follows fidelity. Indifference to the Saviour's words would prove that one loves Him not. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father would send in His name, should teach them all things, as well as recall all that Christ had said. He leaves them peace, and gives them His peace. Why then be troubled or fear? Love to Him would rejoice that He was going to the Father. Now that He is rejected, the enemy acquires the title of Prince or Ruler of this world; but his coming finds nothing in Christ, Who fovea the Father and obeys, as Adam disobeyed, unto. death. And what a death was His!

John 15:1-27 treats of Christ as superseding Israel (fully proved an empty vine, and worse), and the disciples as branches, responsible to bear fruit, but this only done so by abiding in Him. Not life, still less unity of the members with the Head, is in question, but practical cleaving to Him in order to fruit. Those who do not are cut off as hollow professors. Keeping His commandments is to abide in His love; for here it is ours to Him in daily practice, not His to us as in the gospel. Even here His love to us is the spring and pattern of ours one to another; but it is as friends, who once were enemies; and He chose us to bear fruit abidingly, telling us all He heard from His Father, and assuring us that what we ask of the Father in His name He will give us. He urges mutual love in the face of the world's hatred, as of Him, so of those who must expect persecution for His sake, and are avowedly not of the world. Christ's words and works had only brought out hatred of Him and His Father — a sin outdoing all other sins. But the Advocate when come would testify of Him, as those also did who were with Him from the beginning. In John 16:1-33 we have distinctly the presence of the Holy Spirit Whom Jesus sends; and He, when come, demonstrates to the world sin, righteousness, and judgment; as He guides the disciples into all the truth, and announces the things to come, thus glorifying Christ. It was but a "little while" in contrast with Jewish expectation. Meanwhile how wondrous to have the Father plainly revealed, and to be loved of Him ourselves, and to have peace in Christ with tribulation in the world!

John 17:1-26 crowns all with the Son's spreading before the Father His person and His work as His double plea for glorification, but in order to glorify the Father in the objects of their common love beyond all thought of man. He requests that they should be associated with Him before the Father as well as before the world; and at length be with Him and behold His glory, and meanwhile yet more know the Father's name with its blessed consequences.

John 18:1-40 commences the final scenes: the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter, the blasphemous unbelief of Annas and Caiaphas, the guilty yielding of Pilate against his conscience, and the guiltier clamour of the Jews who prefer Barabbas. In John 19:1-42 Pilate scourges Jesus, but vainly strives against spite till the chief priests disavow the Christ of God in the apostate answer, We have no king but Caesar. The only One that shines with divine dignity and grace is

Jesus, as this is the design of the Gospel: not His agony in the garden, but the prostration of the band at His name; not the forsaking on the cross, but, "It is finished," and the dismissal of His spirit; for He, and He only, had authority to lay down His life (soul) and to take it again. Here too is noticed the piercing of His side after death, and the blood and water that came out, as John testifies in the Gospel and applies in his First Epistle. Also Nicodemus reappears, and Joseph (whatever man designed) — "with the rich in his death." In John 20:1-31, early as Mary of Magdala came on the first day of the week, she found the stone taken away from the tomb. Peter and John run at her call, and see the evidence of His resurrection. They had not as yet known the scripture that He must rise. Such faith is powerless. Mary knew no more, but remained weeping; when first angels, then the Lord, ask her why she wept. All was known when He said, "Mary." He forbids her touching Him (not so was the Christian to know Him, but as glorified), and sends His message of full grace to His brethren, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. At evening within the shut doors they were assembled, when Jesus stood in the midst, announces peace to them, and gives them their mission of peace, with administrative remission and retention of sins. Thomas was both absent and unbelieving; but eight days after he was with them, and Jesus comes, though the doors were shut, and again salutes them, with full acceptance of Thomas' challenge to shame him into faith, so that he cries, My Lord and my God. The words that follow confirm the conviction that he typifies the Jew brought to see and believe, after the Christian is called to the better part — believing without seeing.

John 21:1-25 appends typically the millennial haul of many great fishes from the sea of the nations, in contrast with the catch now (as in Luke) where the nets break and the boats are sinking. Peter is then probed, but reinstated before his brethren and entrusted with Christ's lambs and sheep. Besides, he is assured of that portion by grace which could not be in his self-confidence. Next John has his place defined enigmatically; not as the earliest tradition said, that he should not die, "but if I will that he abide until I come, what [is it] to thee?" All is left in suspense. John remained, when all the rest were gone, to point out the passing away of the churches, "the things that are," and to predict the judgments on the world which precede the Lord's return in visible glory, when He will take His great power and reign §32. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

What then is the aim of this book, the sequel of the third Gospel? As the title is human, one may draw from its own contents that we have in it the working of the Holy Spirit, rather than of the Twelve of whom we hear little save of Peter, and of Paul called extraordinarily, but of others too who were not apostles. In Acts 1:1-26 the risen Christ is seen ascending to heaven after forty days sines His resurrection, and injunctions given to the apostles through the Holy Spirit Who was soon to baptise them. But instead of His restoring at this time the kingdom to Israel as they expected, they were to be His witnesses everywhere when they received power, whilst waiting for His return from heaven. Meanwhile they gave themselves to persevering prayer; and Peter takes the lead in filling up the vacant place of Judas Iscariot among the witnesses of His resurrection, according to Psalms 109:1-31. On the day of Pentecost, as they were all together, the Father's promise was fulfilled with twofold outward signs: a blowing sound out of heaven that filled all the house; and parted tongues as of fire that sat on each, so that all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as He gave them utterance — the answer of grace to the judgment of Babel. While all were amazed and some mocked, Peter vindicated the wonderful work of God by

citing the close of Joel 2:1-32, though he does not say it was its fulfilment yet till the great and gloriously appearing day of Jehovah. He then lays on the men of Israel the awful sin of crucifying, through lawless men's hand, Jesus, Whom God raised up (Psalms 16:1-11), the Christ yet to sit on David's throne (Psalms 132:1-18), meanwhile ascended to sit at Jehovah's right hand (Psalms 110:1-7). Pricked in their heart when they heard this, they were called to repent and be baptised in His name; when they too should receive the Holy Spirit. For to them and theirs was the promise. In that day about 3,000 souls were added, and such fellowship in joyous unselfish love and truth and in holy worship as earth had never seen; and the Lord kept adding day by day together those to be saved. It was the church's birthday (Acts 2:1-47), though there remained then, and for long, attachment to the institutions of the law.

Accordingly, while going up to the temple, Peter and John were asked alms by a notorious cripple. This was met by Peter's bidding him, in the name of Jesus, arise and walk; as he did immediately before all. And Peter proclaimed that it was the God of their fathers glorifying His Servant Jesus, Whom they delivered up and denied when even Pilate had decided to release Him. They denied the Holy and Just One, preferring a murderer to Him Whom God raised up as the apostles testified. It was the virtue of His name which in faith wrought that deed. He called them then (for grace would treat His rejection as ignorance) to repent and be converted for the blotting out of their sins, so that seasons of refreshing might come from the Lord's presence, and He would send Jesus, Whom heaven must receive till times of restoring all things according to the prophets. This will be the kingdom in power, as the church knows the kingdom in patience till then. But Jesus was the Prophet of Whom Moses spoke in Deuteronomy 18:1-22, as all others foretold of these days, for He was also the true Seed of promise for blessing (Acts 3:1-26). But Sadducean unbelief here opposed the risen Christ (Acts 4:1-37), as Pharisaic self-righteousness hated Him when here below. And the two apostles were put in ward unto the morrow, when the high priest and his party enquired and learnt distinctly from Peter that it was in the name of Him Whom they crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, that the infirm man stood before them whole. Psalms 118:22 was cited as the most irrefragable evidence and for declaring Jesus the only Saviour. Unable to reply they, after consultation, charged them not to utter a word nor teach in the name of Jesus, but received the bold reply whether they should be hearkened to rather than God, for themselves could not but speak what they saw and heard. These, let go, came unto "their own" (for so the Christians are now distinctly called), and reported all; when arose with one accord their cry to God, applying Psalms 2:1-2, but with no thought at all that the following verses could be accomplished till Christ comes again. The Holy Spirit wrought in answer, and gave great power to their testimony of His resurrection and in all ways of grace, Barnabas then first shining conspicuously.

Acts 5:1-42 opens with the sin and judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, deliberately guilty against the gracious working that characterised all at that time; but God turned it to great fear within and without, yet adding more than ever to the Lord, and working in mighty power on men's bodies. Hence the high priest was incensed beyond measure and put in prison all the twelve, who were brought out by an angel and sent to speak in the temple all the words of this life. Led thence by the captain of the temple with the officers, they openly answered that God must be obeyed rather than men, and asserted that the Holy Spirit was witness, as well as they, of what they set forth. This cut to the heart. Counsel was taken to slay them; but Gamaliel with a certain fear of God gave such sound advice, that they satisfied themselves with beating them and reiterated injunction not to

speak in the Name. They however retired with joy that they were counted worthy of dishonour for the Name, which every day in the temple and at home they ceased not to teach and preach.

Another cloud gathered; again failure against the very grace that was so marked. Jealousy and mistrust came in, the Hellenists against the Hebrews, as if their widows were not duly cared for (Acts 6:1-15). The twelve cope with the danger in wisdom and grace, calling on the mass of the believers to choose seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, to relieve the apostles of this outward task and be set by them over the business. For what the church gave, the church was entitled to choose. It is the Lord only who gave spiritual gifts, which are therefore above man's choice. So when the seven were chosen (apparently all Hellenists), the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them. And great blessing followed, even a crowd of the priests obeying the faith. But as Stephen surpassed all in grace and power, so he soon became an object for deadly persecution, and false witnesses were set up, when he was brought before the council. In Acts 7:11-60 he gave the striking testimony, which convicted them, like their fathers, of always resisting the Holy Spirit. Beginning with the call of Abraham (tardy in obeying wholly), he shows him to have been but a pilgrim in the land of promise, as his descendants were bondmen in Egypt, the sons of Jacob selling their brother Joseph to the Gentiles before that. But God, with wonders and signs, delivered them by Moses, whom they had rejected. Even so they went after idols, as the prophets long after testified, and were carried for it beyond Babylon. Law and prophets, Christ and the Spirit, made no difference: they opposed and forsook all. So now, exasperated by the truth, they stoned God's witness invoking the Lord to receive his spirit, and to lay not this sin to his murderers' charge. A great persecution followed, and the greatest persecutor of the saints a young man named Saul (Acts 8:1-40). But grace used those scattered by it, not the twelve, to preach the gospel far and wide. Philip, clothed with power, proclaimed the Christ to the Samaritans to their great joy; so that even Simon the sorcerer, believing the miracles, professed faith and was baptised. The apostles sent Peter and John, who crowned the work with the gift of the Spirit in answer to their prayers and by imposition of hands. But Peter detected Simon's unreality; and while he and John returned, Philip is used to the salvation of the Ethiopian noble travelling home from Jerusalem, but was caught away by divine power for other work, so as to confirm the convert only the more who went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 9:1-43 shows us the new step of sovereign grace in the conversion of Saul to be the witness of an ascended Christ, Who owns the saints as part of Himself, and calls the persecutor to be His chosen vessel to bear His name before Gentiles, kings, and children of Israel, the deepest in truth, the largest in heart, the most abundant in labour of all the apostles. No wonder the gospel of Christ's glory marked him, who first saw and heard the Lord thus; yet a simple disciple baptised him who forthwith, in the synagogues, preached Jesus as the Son of God. Even the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid; but Barnabas, having a deeper sense of grace, banished their fears by showing what the Lord had wrought. When here too menaced with Jewish violence, Saul is sent to Tarsus. The rest of the chapter recounts Peter's activity and power in the Spirit; the paralytic AEneas healed, the dead Tabitha raised, and all around in the Sharon converted, with many in Joppa.

Acts 10:1-48 presents Peter used to open the kingdom to the Gentile Cornelius and his friends, in spite of his own Jewish prejudice. Already converted and devout, Cornelius was yet without; and the law kept such there. The gospel brings them within, as well as converts those who were

enemies, telling words whereby believers "shall be saved." For "salvation" means more than to be born again. In a vision seen by Peter, as well as by an angel sent to Cornelius, we sea the way God took to call and gather the uncircumcision. Peter preached the gospel, and while he was yet speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all those hearing the word, who were accordingly baptised at Peter's direction by the brethren that accompanied him from Joppa. As this unexpected act of accrediting Gentile confessors, no less than Jewish, roused strong objection in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-30), Peter set out the matter as originating in God's word and culminating in the fullest token of God's favour — the equal gift of the Spirit to those Gentiles as to themselves. They could only be still, and even glorify God for His grace. Concurrently with this we hear how God blessed the free action of the Spirit in the scattered preachers to many, not Hellenists but Greeks as the right reading tells us. And Barnabas is sent to Antioch where the work had been; as Peter and John went before to Samaria. He seeks Saul; and there both taught for a whole year, where the disciples were first called Christians. As a prophet predicted universal famine, love wrought actively and maintained sense of unity by sending relief to the brethren in Judea through Barnabas and Saul. In Jerusalem the Spirit testifies (Acts 12:1-25) to the murderous hatred that animated the people and their king, who killed James the brother of John, and apprehended Peter with a line intent. But God answered the prayers of the saints, even to their own surprise, in delivering him the very night before the purposed execution. And ere long Jehovah's angel that brought the apostle out of prison smote the self-exalting king. The word of God grew. Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, as Peter left on his deliverance; but we hear no more of his active work, though he spoke to good purpose in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-41) at the council. The solemn and momentous mission of Barnabas and Saul for work among the Gentiles is recorded in Acts 13:1-52. It was from the Syrian Antioch (Antakieh), and by the Spirit through a prophet, their fellow-labourers fasting and laying hands on them as thus commended to God's grace. Going to Seleucia they sail to Cyprus and preached in the synagogues in Salamis. But at Paphos Jewish hatred to the gospel's reaching the Gentiles is judged by the infliction of blindness for a season, whilst the proconsul believed. But from Perga in Pamphylia, John Mark (not then profitable for service) returned to Jerusalem; and the apostles come to Antioch (Yalobatch) in Pisidia, where Paul, as he was now called, preached Jesus and the resurrection in the synagogue, dwelling on Psalms 2:1-12, Psalms 16:1-11, and Isaiah 55:1-13, with the warning of Habakkuk 1:5. On the next sabbath almost all the city flocked to hear; which filled the Jews with a jealousy that drew out the striking use of Isaiah 49:1-26 to the joy of the Gentiles, though the apostles were expelled. At Iconium (Koniyeh), the capital of Lycaonia, the apostles had like experience (Acts 14:1-28) in the face of signs and wonders; and when worse was purposed, they fled to Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding regions, and preached. At Lystra a miracle of healing would have led to offering them sacrifice, had they not utterly refused it, exhorting them to turn to the one living and gracious God. Yet at the instigation of Jews that came and opposed they stoned Paul, who revived and departed next day to Derbe, where they preached and taught, but revisited the scenes of their labours on their return through Attalia (Adalia) in Pamphylia, from whence they sailed to their point of departure. On this journey they chose elders for the disciples in every church. At Antioch they related to the assembly what God had wrought among the Gentiles.

Acts 15:1-41 records how the Judaising snare which would have put Gentiles under law was put down authoritatively in Jerusalem itself by the apostles and elders, with the whole assembly concurring. Peter testifies, as well as Barnabas and Paul; James sums up in the establishment of

liberty for the Gentiles, but of course recognising those principles which prevailed from Noah's time before the law. Thence Paul and Barnabas return (Judas Barsabas and Silas being chosen to go with them), and read the letter at Antioch whence Judas returns, Silas remaining. But after a while the question of taking John Mark on their next missionary journey led Paul to sever himself from Barnabas and take Silas with him, recommended afresh to the Lord's grace (which is not said of Barnabas): ordination it clearly was not. From Acts 16:1-40, Acts 17:1-34, Acts 18:1-28, Acts 19:1-41, Acts 20:1-38 we see the free power of the Spirit in the apostle's ministry, its character, and its effects. Compare his circumcising Timothy, and his refusal of it in the ease of Titus; his use of the apostolic decrees in the cities passed through, and his solving the question independently of that letter in writing to the Corinthians. The Holy Spirit (for the book treats of His action rather than of the apostles') specifically calls him to fresh scenes. After visiting Phrygia, and working in Galatia and in Philippi of Macedonia, it is still "To the Jew first and to the Greek." Satan wrought by applauding the servants through a Pythoness; but Paul exorcised the spirit. A tumult ensued set on by those whose gain was stopped, and the colonial Duumvirs (for it was a Roman province) yielded for peace' sake and committed them to prison; where God (not the prisoners only) heard their praises and answered by such an earthquake as never was before or since: doors opened, bonds loosed, yet none escaped. The alarmed jailor received the gospel on the spot, and was baptised, he and all his, immediately. But the magistrates, wishing to hush up things, are compelled by Paul to own their wrong: and Paul and Silas depart at their request. In Acts 17:1-34, at Thessalonica, we see the more usual religious opposition to the gospel; and some converts are brought before the Politarchs, who take security and no more. The brethren send away Paul and Silas to Berea, where the Jews prove more noble than those in Thessalonica, being such as received the word of God readily, and searched the scriptures too. But when Jewish enmity pressed here also, Paul went off, Silas and Timothy abiding. At Athens the apostle reasoned in the synagogue and in the market place; and, when attacked by Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, made a speech at the Areopagus, which refuted alike Chance and Fate by a Creator Who is misrepresented by idols, the work of men's hands, and Who will judge the habitable earth, having given proof to all in raising from the dead Jesus Christ the righteous. From that inquisitive seat of art and letters, where the fruit was small, the apostle goes to dissolute Corinth (Acts 18:1-28). There after Jewish opposition the Lord assured him of His protection, as He had mush people in it: and there he stayed a year and a half teaching the word of God. Even the proconsul Gallio's indifference to Jewish plots and to contemptuous Gentile violence shielded him. After a visit to Ephesus where the Jews were willing to hear, he goes to Jerusalem to pay a vow as well as salute the assembly, and revisits Galatia and Phrygia. From Acts 18:24 we have the interesting account of the Spirit's way with Apollos at Ephesus.

After that while he was at Corinth (Acts 19:1-41), Paul comes to Ephesus; and finding a dozen disciples, who, like Apollos at first, only knew the word of the beginning of Christ, he sets the truth of the gospel before them; and they are baptised unto the name of the Lord Jesus. We may profitably compare Ephesians 1:13-14. He preached for three months in the synagogue; when conflict came, he separated the disciples, discoursing daily in the school of Tyrannus; and this for two years, so that all in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. There the wiles of the enemy in profane Jews bowed before the power of the Lord Jesus, even when great gain through sorcery was in question. Here again Satan raised an uproar against His servants, by which the Jews sought to profit. Yet in fact it was the mingled pride of local idolatry and their interests which

agitated men; and some of the Asiarchs who were friendly dissuaded the apostle from taking part in the scene. But after much outcry the town-clerk pointed out the futility and disorder of the proceedings, and dismissed the meeting. The next chapter (Acts 20:1-38) opens with Paul's departure for Macedonia, where he exhorted much, and then came to Greece for three months; but when Jewish plots threatened, he resolved to make his way to Jerusalem through Macedonia. At Troas we have the instructive account of a Lord's-day; and Eutychus suffers for his drowsiness, but is restored through the apostle to the comfort of all. From Miletus the apostle sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church, and gave them that really edifying charge which fills the latter part of the chapter. He feels as if his work was closed, dwelling on its character for their profit. He does not doubt that bonds and afflictions await him; and as he was clean from the blood of all, he calls on them to take heed to themselves and to all the flock wherein the Holy Spirit set them overseers, to feed God's assembly. He knows of a sad change after his departure, not only grievous wolves coming in, but from among themselves men rising up, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples. Not a hint of succession as a safeguard, but a sure declension. Yet he commits them to God and to the word of His grace. This is the resource in perilous times, And in the spirit of His grace had Paul laboured, as they ought, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, the reflex of Himself. No wonder that they wept, especially at the word that they were to see his face no more. As far as the inspired history speaks, the active service of the apostle was closed. His latest Epistles give evidence that he wrought freely between his first and second imprisonments in Rome. But his visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-40), against which he was cautioned, issued in his arrest, and the book terminates with Paul a prisoner. It was thus the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, rejected by the Jews whom he loved, and the Gentiles urged by them not only to imprison but to kill him. On his way he enjoys Christian communion at Tyre; then from Caesarea he goes on in the face of warning, and in Jerusalem yields to Jewish feeling, which brought on the opposition it was meant to allay: all Jerusalem in uproar, and the multitude demanding his death. In Acts 22:1-30 he addresses his defence in Hebrew to the excited Jews, who hear the wondrous tale of his conversion, but are convulsed afresh. Mission to the Gentiles they would not endure; as he should have learnt from the Lord's words to him in a previous trance. As the Jews raged murderously, so the Roman tribune or chiliarch violated law in his haste; and in Jerusalem the apostle did not display the power which marked him in his own proper field outside. Nor in Acts 23:1-35 do we see the same superiority to circumstances, as usual, before the council, where he set the Pharisees in his favour against the Sadducees. But the grace of the Lord was as perfect as ever to cheer him, when he needed it sorely: he was to bear witness in Rome, as in Jerusalem. Then we find the Jewish plot discovered, and Paul conveyed to Caesarea under a characteristic letter from the tribune to the governor or procurator, Felix.

Five days after, the high priest and the elders, with an orator they had retained, accused the apostle of that which he refuted with simple truth and dignity, pointing out the resurrection as the occasion of offence. Felix, conversant with Jewish prejudice, gives latitude to Paul till Lysias came down and all was known. But after an interval he and his wife Drusilla, a Jewess, sent for Paul, who, instead of discussing the faith, dealt with the conscience, so that Felix trembled and closed the interview. The "convenient season" to hear more never came. Disappointed of a bribe from Paul, and willing to gratify the Jews, Felix left him bound when Porcius Festus succeeded (Acts 24:1-27). The new procurator (Acts 25:1-27) was equally unscrupulous. For at Caesarea he proposed to send Paul to Jerusalem, which he had before refused to the Jews; thereon Paul

appealed unto Caesar, which compelled Festus to act on it. But the arrival of king Agrippa with Bernice furnished a new occasion for testimony before the dignities of this age; and Festus was glad, not only to give these members of the Herod family a hearing of interest, but to gather matter for a report to the emperor. In Acts 26:1-32 Paul before all again lays stress on the resurrection as the basis of the promised hope, and tells how he, as determined a foe of Jesus as any, had seen His glory from heaven and heard His voice constituting him a witness, and taking him out of the people and the nations, to which last he was now sent. And this was to turn them from darkness to light and the power of Satan to God, that they might receive remission of sins and inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith in Christ the Lord. Not disobedient to the heavenly vision, he was standing to this day to the call of God everywhere, which drew on him the hatred of the Jews; yet was it in full accord with what Moses and the prophets said should be. Festus broke out as an incredulous heathen; but Paul calmly appealed to the king as one cognisant of the prophets; and his answer proved that he was not unmoved, though seeking to hide it. This drew out from the captive apostle the expression of a heart filled with a happiness he desired for them all, except his bonds. They admitted his innocence: only his appeal sent him to Caesar.

Then in Acts 27:1-44 we have his voyage as far as Malta where the shipwreck occurred. We hear not of evangelising; but the proof is plain that faith saw clearly in circumstances so novel where no other eye did. It was reserved for a naval man, a Christian in our day, to clear up terms and facts misunderstood by all previous translators ignorant of things marine. Yet the great feature was unmistakable: the reality of God’s mind and care enjoyed here by the believer.

Acts 28:1-31 is also full of interest. Paul practically proves the truth of Mark 16:18 (first clause and last); and many honours and kindnesses followed for the Christians from the heathen islanders. In another ship, of Alexandria, the rest of the voyage was completed; and they slowly made their way from Puteoli to Rome, met on the road by the brethren at Appii Forum and Tres Tabernae. This cheered even the apostle. Arrived at the great city Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him, and after three days called together the chief of the Jews, and explained the strange fact that for the hope of Israel he was a prisoner through Jewish accusation. On a subsequent day he testifies the kingdom of God, and sets forth Jesus from the law and the prophets, some being persuaded while others disbelieved. So that Paul could but show them now the sentence finally of the Holy Spirit, as of the Son on earth (John 12:1-50) and of Jehovah of old (Isaiah 6:1-13). But if Israel cut themselves off, save a remnant (the pledge of future restoration), the salvation of God is sent to Gentiles who hear.

Such is the bearing of this book first and last. Only it is well to add that the apostle’s charge in Acts 20:1-38 is no less clear that after his departure evil would prevail in the church, as previously in Israel. And we know from Romans 11 that the Gentile, if not continuing in God’s goodness (as he surely has not), must also be cut off, and thus make way for the recall of Israel to the universal joy and blessing of the world under the Redeemer.

§ 34. THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

It is scarce possible to overlook or mistake the divine aim. For herein, on the proved failure of man, God’s righteousness is revealed, by or of faith unto faith, with its resulting deliverance (Romans 1-8). Yet sovereign grace like this is conciliated with special mercy and unfailing promises to Israel (Romans 9-11). The practical consequences of God’s mercies are urged in devotedness as a

living sacrifice to Him personally, as well as in subjection to the world's authority, and in grace one toward another (Romans 12-16). In Romans 1:1-32 the inspired writer presents himself as bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto God's gospel, which He promised before through His prophets in holy scriptures. It is now fulfilled; for it is concerning His Son, Who came of David's seed according to flesh, and also marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead — Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus He is heir of promise, and conqueror of death. It is not yet the day when to Him shall the obedience of the peoples be; but He is sending out witnesses of Himself, as here He was God's faithful Witness. Through Him Paul received grace and apostleship, not for law but for faith-obedience among all the nations, in behalf of His name; among whom were also they called of Jesus Christ, all that were in Rome beloved of God: they saints, as he apostle, not by birth or merit but called respectively by divine grace. He wishes them grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, as ho did to all saints. It was not only that he thanked his God for them, always at his prayers beseeching that he might be prospered in God's will to come to them, for joint comfort as he graciously said; but he was hindered hitherto. He is not ashamed of the glad tidings, for God's power it is (not promise merely) to every one that believes, both to Jew first and also to Greek; for God's righteousness in it is revealed, and therefore by faith unto faith. Thus the gospel is about God's Son; and therein God's righteousness is revealed, in contrast with His law in vain claiming human righteousness. Hence as faith is the way or principle (so wrote the prophet), it was open to every believer, Jew and Greek (as wrote the apostle). Such is the introduction (Romans 1:1-17).

Then follows from Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20 the overwhelming proof of man's dire need of the gospel. For God's wrath is revealed from heaven (in contrast with earthly judgments under law) upon all impiety and unrighteousness of men holding fast the truth in unrighteousness. As this embraces both Gentiles and Jews, he from Romans 1:21-32 shows the shameless departure of mankind from God: first, ignoring the testimony of creation (Romans 1:19-20); secondly, abandoning what they knew, especially by the public demonstration of moral government given in the deluge. Professing to be wise they were befooled, and changed the truth of God into falsehood; and as they gave up God for idolatrous images, God gave them up to vile lusts and a reprobate mind. Such were the heathen for ages before, and when the gospel went forth, morally as bad or worse (Romans 1:21-32). But had there not been philosophic moralists who judged those unspeakable enormities and religious follies (Romans 2:1-29)? Yes, but they did the same things; and their fine words could not screen them from the judgment of God. For they despised His long-suffering goodness, which leads to repentance, and thus treasured up wrath in a day of wrath. Then God will render to each according to his works, Jew and Greek (for with Him is no favouritism, though He considers privilege or the lack of it), in a day when He will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ (Romans 2:1-16). From Romans 2:17-29 the Jew is weighed, and his rest on the law, and boast in God, and superiority in light to others; but how about his own ways? Was not the name of God blasphemed among the nations on their account, as it is written? Unrighteousness made circumcision uncircumcision, as righteous uncircumcision will be reckoned for circumcision. Shadows are gone with God, Who insists on reality; and he only has the praise of God who is a Jew in what is secret, and heart-circumcision is in spirit, not in letter. Are divine privileges nothing? Much every way, says the apostle in Romans 3:1-31 (Romans 3:1-19); and in nothing so much as having the scriptures. Yet the unbelief of some cannot invalidate either the faith of God or His right to judge. Was not the Jew then better than the Greek? In no wise. Jews

and Greeks are alike under sin. This is shown in Psalms 53:1-6, etc., Isaiah 59:1-21, etc. "Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it speaketh to those under (or, in the scope of) the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world come under judgment to God." The Jew, who would readily allow the Gentile to be hopelessly evil, is expressly condemned by the scriptures. All then were guilty beyond dispute. "Wherefore by deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through law is knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). From Romans 3:21 God's mouth is open to declare His grace, and how it can be righteously, now that every mouth of man is stopped. It is God's righteousness manifested apart from law, witnessed by the law and the prophets; God's righteousness by faith in (lit. of) Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe: its universal direction, and its actual effect (confounded in the R.V., because of trusting the blunder of some old MSS., but right in the A.V.). For there is this distinction. All in fact sinned, and come short of the glory of God; for this becomes the standard, when Adam's paradise was lost. Hence there is "no way" but being justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth a propitiatory through faith in His blood for showing His righteousness in the present time, that He might be just and justify him that is of faith in (lit. of) Jesus. What can be plainer or more precise? Behold boasting excluded. If law can be said, it is faith-law, apart from works of law; and God is of Gentiles as well as of Jews — one God justifying Jews by faith only, and Gentiles through the faith which they have (and hence only in this case the article is used). Thus is law established, not annulled, through the faith of Jesus Who paid the penalty to the utmost. Did the Jew plead the cause of Abraham for favour to his seed? The apostle answers in Romans 4:1-5 that Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned for righteousness. David's case (Romans 4:6-8) equally and quite as evidently proves that all depends on God's grace through faith. For how else is a transgressor to have blessedness? We see again, how circumcision contributed nothing; for Abraham was reckoned righteous by faith when uncircumcised (Romans 6:9-12). Faith secures the promised heirship of the world in the face of all natural disabilities; not law, which works wrath through man's transgression (Romans 6:13-19). Faith on the contrary gives glory to God, and reaps its fruit (Romans 6:20-22), And the Christian has more even than Abraham, fully persuaded as he was that what God had promised He was able also to do; whereas we believe on Him Who actually raised from among the dead Jesus our Lord Who was given up for our offences and was raised for our justification (Romans 6:23-25). Thus as the latter part of Romans 3:1-31 brought in propitiation through Christ's blood, Romans 4:1-25 adds the intervention of God in justifying us by His raising Him from the dead, though not without our faith.

Romans 5:1-11 draws the blessed consequences: peace with God in view of the past, His grace for the present, and His glory in the future. Not only do we boast this, but also in tribulations, as the allotted experience of Christians now, knowing the invaluable result to which God turns them, in breaking the will, and severing from the world, and lifting above things seen; so that faith, love, and hope are all strengthened by better learning God's love. Not only are we so, but "boasting in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we received the reconciliation." Beyond this "boasting in God" it is impossible to rise. One may learn the glories of Christ in God's purpose and our own union with Him in them; but to boast in God Himself is of unequalled depth and joy, and we are called to it now.

Yet a profound discussion forms the needed supplement to that which we have already had, dealing not with our sins, but with sin in the flesh, and deliverance in Christ learnt experimentally

and enjoyed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Hence from Romans 5:11 (closing the former part) the apostle is no longer occupied with the evils we had done, and the grace of God in justifying the guilty by faith. He now lays bare the root of all that we are, and so goes up to Adam, the figure of Him that was to come. For as to man there are two heads, of whom scripture speaks: as of sin and death in him who transgressed where all was good, so of obedience and life eternal in the face of nothing but self-will and ruin here below; the first man, and the Second. For, as we know, no Jew doubted that one man's sin brought those dreadful consequences on the human race.

If this were just on God's part, as they allowed, was it not worthy of God to bring in the gift by grace through one man, Jesus Christ? Adam was under a law, and the Jews had the law; and transgression followed for both. But the nations who had not law were none the less sinners, and thus obnoxious to death like the Jews; for in fact death reigned universally. But shall not the act of favour be as the offence? And shall not the gift be as through one that sinned? Accordingly, as the bearing through one offence was to condemn all men, so is it through one righteousness toward all men for justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so through the One's obedience the many shall be constituted righteous (Romans 5:12-19).

Thus grace far outstripped sin; and if the Adam family were obnoxious to death through sin, the Christ family in spite of manifold sins shall be justified and reign in life. The law came in by the way, that the offence might abound and so crush Jewish self-righteousness; but where sin (and not transgression only) abounded, grace exceeded far; that as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 5:20-21).

Romans 6:1-23 meets the cavil that grace tends to license sinning. This, the apostle shows, contradicts the truth that we disc to sin, and by baptism unto Christ Jesus were baptised unto His death; in order that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too should walk in newness of life. He that died has been justified from sin; for it is a question not of sins forgiven, but of sin and of continuing in it, which death with Christ denies. Hence this also is the meaning of our baptism (Romans 6:1-14). But there is the further reply that being under grace, not law, is the way of holiness for those set free from sin and become bondmen to God. For the wages of sin is death, but God's act of favour is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:15-23).

Then in Romans 7:1-25 Christ dead through Whom we were made dead is deliverance from law, as in Romans 6:1-23 from sin. Law provoked lust and condemned those under it. The Christian belongs to Christ dead and risen, in order that he might bear fruit to God (Romans 7:1-4). When we were in the flesh, fruit was borne to death; but now even Jewish believers have been discharged from the law through having died thus, so as to serve in newness of spirit (Romans 7:5-6). Thereon follows the detailed case (which the apostle personates, as he often does) of one converted yet still struggling under law with its powerlessness and misery; till, experimentally learning that we have flesh unchanged along with a new nature, one looks to God for deliverance, and finding it in Christ (as truly as before for the remission of our sins), he thanks God for it; though the old man is as bad as ever, but with the mind he serves God's law (Romans 7:7-25).

Lastly, Romans 8:1-39 is the blessed conclusion of this appendix on indwelling sin through death with Christ, as Romans 5:1-11 was of pardon of sins through Christ's blood. We are in Christ where all condemnation is gone, as fully treated in Romans 8:1-4 (the latter half of Romans 8:1 being spurious, but right in Romans 8:4). We are not in flesh but in Spirit, if so be that God's Spirit dwells in us — the distinct privilege of the Christian; and therefore we put to death the deeds of the body. For the Spirit we have received is of power, love, and sobriety, as the apostle reminds Timothy. Hence as He is a spirit of adoption, so He groans in us who are delivered, yet with our bodies awaiting redemption which we now have only in our souls. Thus the Spirit, Who gives us joy, helps our weakness, interceding for us according to God. For we are called, as well as predestinated, and being justified, the apostle can say, "glorified": so sure is God's purpose (Romans 8:5-30). Then comes the final triumph even now: God for us, who against us? A series of unanswerable challenges of grace and truth in Christ follows, in the face of all opposing circumstances; and as "no condemnation" began the high argument, "no separation" from God's love closes it in Romans 8:31-39.

We have now to consider the bearing of Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36. They are the divine solution of the question, how to reconcile the indiscriminate grace of God in the gospel (as already seen in Romans 1-8) with the special promises made to the fathers in favour of the children of Israel. Here all is cleared to the opened eye. The scriptures, which the Jews owned to be of God, are here also clear and decisive.

First, the apostle shows how far he was from lowering his interest in Israel; they on the contrary were shutting out their highest privileges by their unbelief. Moses loved them no more than he; but how blind were they in not recognising the Christ, not more truly of David according to flesh than One Who is over all, God blessed for ever! Psalms 45:1-17, Psalms 102:1-28; Isaiah 9:1. (Romans 9:1-5). Next (in Romans 9:6-13), he denies that the word of God had fallen through, for it is certain that not all are Israel that are of Israel. This he proves from the family of Abraham and of Isaac. Fleshly descent, or "seed," is not all: witness Ishmael and Esau. If the Jews must, as they would, repudiate the title of both lines, they must also admit God's sovereignty: a principle plainly shown in Isaac, still more in Jacob where the mother and father were the same, and the children twins. It was God's purpose according to election as Jehovah indicated before their birth, in the first book of the Pentateuch (Genesis 25:23), and sealed it by the last of the prophets (Malachi 1:2-3). Is anyone ready to charge God with unrighteousness? The unrighteousness was in Israel beyond doubt, when they made and adored a calf of gold, and must have been justly destroyed but for that sovereignty in God which unbelief criticises and rejects: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Exodus 33:19). How would pretension to righteousness have suited Israel then? But God is no less sovereign in judgment, as the apostle cites Pharaoh's case (Exodus 9:16). God is judge, not man, who has no right to reply against Him. For has not the potter power of the same clay to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? In effect however He endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and vessels of mercy which He fore-prepared unto glory. The evil is man's, the good is of God's grace, whether of Jews or also of Gentiles, as Hosea declares (Hosea 2:23; Hosea 1:10). On any other ground all was lost for Israel; but if God fell back on His sovereignty, the prophet shows he would use it for Gentiles who believed; and this at the very time He executes judgment on Israel, guilty not of idolatry alone but of rejecting their own Messiah, His Messiah, as

is plain from Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 8:14; Isaiah 10:22-23; Isaiah 28:16 (Romans 9:14-33). In Romans 10:1-21 the apostle reiterates his earnest love for their salvation. Zealous for God, they ignored His righteousness in the gospel and sought to establish their own. For Christ is end of law for righteousness to every believer. Deuteronomy 30:1-20. furnishes the proof; for there, when Israel lost their land by apostasy, God holds out His testimony for believers to lay hold of, though exiles from the land where alone the law could be carried out. Under the law they were ruined, where the word of faith (pointing to Christ) can alone avail, as Isaiah 28:16 confirmed. But being the word of faith, not law, it is for Gentiles as much as Jews, and calls for preachers according to the principle of Isaiah 52:7; Isaiah 53:1; Psalms 19:4; and, as a fact, Jews needed it no less than Gentiles. Nor could Israel deny that God had made this known. Moses (Deuteronomy 32:21) and Isaiah had warned, not only of God's provoking Israel to jealousy, but of being found by a nation that sought Him not, while Israel was perverse and disobedient. This raises the enquiry in Romans 11:1-36 if God thrust away His people (Israel), as indeed Christendom had long dreamt. Of this three disproofs follow. (1) The apostle cites himself as witness of a remnant, and refers to Elijah who erroneously thought himself alone; whereas God had and has a remnant, the fruit and pledge of grace, the rest blinded and for judgment (Romans 11:1-10). (2) Their fall, far from being definitive, is but to provoke Israel to jealousy, as already stated. Theirs is the olive tree, so that they are the natural branches, and the breach of some was because of their unbelief. The Gentiles, now grafted in, were but wild olive; and if they continued not in God's goodness, they too should be cut off (Romans 11:11-24). (3) The prediction is sure, that after the solemn dealing of God with His guilty people, and when the complement of Gentiles shall have come in during the partial blindness of the Jews as now, "All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall be come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." According to the gospel the Jews are enemies for the Gentiles' sake, according to election beloved for the fathers' sake. God does not change His mind as to His gifts and calling. "For as ye once disobeyed God, but now were objects of mercy by their disobedience, so also they disobeyed your mercy that they too should be objects of mercy. For God shut them all together into disobedience that He might show mercy on them all." No wonder that the apostle breaks forth into a transport of praise. For thus the special promises are fulfilled, while all pride of the law and pretension to righteousness vanish: again, Gentiles who boast, instead of enjoying all as mercy, like the Jews before them, must be cut off; whilst all Israel returning to His mercy are saved.

After the episode of the three chapters preceding, the direct course of the Epistle proceeds. The apostle beseeches the saints by the compassions of God, so fully shown, to present their bodies (for they are now vessels of the Spirit) a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, their intelligent service (or one governed by the word). Outwardly they are not to be conformed to this age, yet not by mere externalism, but changed by the renewing of the mind unto their proving the will of God, good, well-pleasing, and perfect. They were to be lowly, and obedient to God in the Spirit, each acting according to the place God chose, many members in one body, but each in his own function. The gifts pass from those in the word to moral and gracious service in the varying circumstances of saints on earth, blessed with all good and its expression to all, in a spirit of humble and holy sympathy. Such is Romans 12:1-21. In Romans 13:1-14 the saints are set in their due relation to higher authorities of the world. Every soul was to be subject. For there is no authority but of God; and the existing authorities have been ordained of God. To resist authority is to oppose God's ordinance; and they that do shall receive judgment (not "damnation," which is an

extravagant mistake here as in Romans 14:23); but a chastening (compare 1 Corinthians 11:29-32). Conscience therefore acts, and not merely dread of punishment. The Christian is to pay honour as every other debt — love alone the due that can never be paid off And love works no ill, and is the law's fulfilment, Besides, it is already time to wake up: salvation, our deliverance for glory, is nearer than when we believed. As in day-light let us walk becomingly, not as the dissolute world, but putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provision for lusts of the flesh.

Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-7 is the great seat of brotherly forbearance as to things above which "the strong" rose in liberty, but which burdened "the weak" with scruple. Many Jewish saints did not realise their deliverance from meats forbidden, or from days enjoined by the law; which Gentile believers knew to be outside Christianity. This led to friction and trial: to judging on the one side; and to despising on the other. The apostle does not hesitate to declare for freedom, but urges receiving the weak, not for discussions of such points. Conscience, though uninstructed, must not be forged: doing, or not doing, "to the Lord" is a great peace-maker. Each shall give account of himself to God. We are therefore now if strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, receiving one another, as Christ received us, to God's glory. This question, to which the union of Jew and Gentile naturally gave occasion, leads on to the apostle's explaining God's ways from Romans 15:8 and onward. Jesus was minister of circumcision for God's truth to stablish the promises of (i.e. made to) the fathers, and that the Gentiles (who had not promises) should glorify God for His mercy. And proofs are produced not only from Psalms 18:49, Psalms 117:1, but from the law (Deuteronomy 32:43) and the prophets (Isaiah 11:10). He appeals to the God of hope to fill the saints in Rome with all joy and peace in believing, and give them to abound in hope; and the more so, as he had no doubt of their actual blessing and ability to admonish each other. But he does not hide from them the grace given him by God to do Christ's public service toward the Gentiles in the saved work of the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. What a difference from Israelitish holiness with its fleshly mark of circumcision!

Then he speaks of the extensive work he had already wrought in might of signs and wonders, in power of the Spirit, preaching the gospel of the Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum round about, and this where He was not named (as in Isaiah 52:15). This had been the hindrance; but as he had no more of this work in those parts undone, and had long desired, he would visit them on his way to Spain. He was going now to Jerusalem in remembrance of the poor saints, as those of Macedonia and Achaia wished with their contributions; after which he would set off by them into Spain, assured to come with the fulness of the blessing of Christ (omit "the gospel of"). But he beseeches their earnest prayers for him that he might be delivered from the disobedient in Judea, and that his service in Jerusalem might be acceptable to the saints. The Acts of the Apostles shows how he got to Rome, not free but a prisoner.

Romans 16:1-27 is very full of personal commendations and salutations to individuals, though he was as yet a stranger there. But what associations of love and faith! What comfort to Phoebe going to Rome! What joy to Prisca and Aquila in such a mention from him! and to the assembly in their house! It is a notice of much interest. Then follows a roll of brothers and sisters with the distinctive marks of honour which a single eye does not forget, closing with a call to them all to salute one another, and to receive the salutation of the churches of Christ. It is the mind of heaven on earth. In Romans 16:17 he is equally earnest in warning against those that make divisions and

stumbling-blocks contrary to the doctrine learnt. If they formed divisions, they were to be avoided; for such serve their own belly (he says with disgust), whatever their fair speech to deceive the hearts of the harmless. The obedience of the Roman saints was known: but they should be wise unto the good, and simple as to the evil. And a second time he commends them to the God of peace, yet more fully and triumphantly. Then he adds this names of Christians saluting with him, and of the scribe of the epistle, Tertius; and after more salutation prays that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with them all. Lastly he himself ascribes glory to Him that was able to strengthen them according to his gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery as to which silence had been kept in everlasting times, but now manifested, and by prophetic scriptures according to the eternal God's command made known for obedience of faith to all the Gentiles; to an only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for the ages. Amen.

§ 35. 1 CORINTHIANS.

We now enter on a very different theme from that developed in the Epistle to the Romans, where the foundation of the gospel is in question, and the individual privileges and walk of the saint. The same apostle writes on the corporate walk of Christians, of the church. The difference of the divine aim is made evident in their respective addresses. To those in Corinth he writes, but to more; "to the assembly of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, to called saints, with those that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." It is a remarkable superscription, and, as written by the Holy Spirit, surely means to warn against an imminent danger to which the new institution of His grace, His assembly, was to be exposed. The work of grace in each is of course presupposed. That they were saints by God's calling is not forgotten in addressing them in their corporate position. Further, there is care taken from the start to guard against all independency, "with all that in every place," etc. (1 Corinthians 1:1-3). No countenance is given to the assumption that the church is free to change or innovate; it has to walk everywhere, and, we may add, always obedient to the word and in holy fellowship. The usual thanksgiving follows for the grace of God given them in Christ Jesus, which assuredly from the apostle was no mere form. But we may observe that it is not said for faith as he speaks of the Roman believers, but for gifts of grace, while waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who also would confirm them as blameless in His day. Solemn responsibility with encouragement he thus awakens: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:4-9).

Thence he turns to their state, and reproaches them with their divisions. They had set up schools of thought among themselves, like the Jews and the heathen, saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Assuredly Christ was not divided, nor was any servant of His crucified for them. The apostle thanks God that, as things were at Corinth, he had baptised only a few of them, lest any should say that he had baptised unto his name. His repudiation shows the mistaken place assigned to baptism. For he presses the superior dignity of evangelising, which Christ sent him for, and the contempt which God puts on the world's wisdom by that which is its foundation, Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Gentiles folly, but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Far from choosing the wise, powerful, and well-born, God had chosen the foolish, the feeble, the vile and despicable, yea things that are not to annul those which are, that no flesh should boast before Him. But he

adds the position and blessing too: "Now are ye of him in Christ Jesus, who wee made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that boasteth, let him boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:10-31).

Hence when Paul first testified at Corinth, it was not the world's wisdom he urged, but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified. No truth makes less of man, and more of God, when those who heard were men, yea, guilty and lost sinners. But when believers can bear, they indeed need more; when they are not infants but grown men ("perfect" here as elsewhere), he could, and in fact did, lead them to learn of Him everywhere, incarnate, risen, glorified, and coming again. Then he goes on to make known that all hangs for the truth on the Spirit of God, Who now does far beyond what the O.T. had revealed. We have Christ and redemption accomplished for the soul; and hence, as He is on high, the Holy Spirit is sent down here, God revealing by Him what had previously been reserved. Thus the all-important relation of the Spirit to Christ comes fully out. Revelation, communication by words, and reception, are alike and only by the Spirit of God. So foolish was it to cry up man's mind or the spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2:1-16). The Corinthians addressed were not "natural" as once; nor were they "spiritual" as they ought to have been. They were "carnal." They falsely estimated their state, and, in fact, needed the food of babes rather than of men in Christ. The proof of their carnality, of their walking "as men," was their setting up Paul and Apollos, as rival leaders with the saints as followers to each. The servants thus shrouded the Master to their loss, fleshly as they were. God gives the increase. The most honoured fellow-servants are but God's journeymen; while the saint) are God's building. If Paul was given as a wise architect, the sole foundation is Jesus Christ; and hence the serious question of what one builds on Him. Happy he who builds things precious that stand the fire! Sad is he, who, though saved, loses his building of what the fire consumes. Terrible is his lot who corrupts God's temple and is himself destroyed. Here the world's wisdom only ensnares. Besides it is real folly: for all things belong to the saints, not only Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but world, life, death, present things and future: "all are yours, and ye Christ's, and Christ God's" (1 Corinthians 3:1-23). The apostle then in the beginning of 1 Corinthians 4:1-21 exhorts that he and others like him should be accounted as servants or officials of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. These last are the Christian truths, previously hidden as being incompatible with the restricted object and the earthly character of Judaism, but absolutely essential to the gospel and the church. They have nothing to do with the notion of sacraments, which superstitious men have fancied. Now fidelity is requisite in a steward, and the Lord is the One that examines; not the saints, who have neither the place nor the power, but are responsible in matters of discipline as we shall see in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. When the Lord comes, He will make manifest the hidden; and then shall be to each the praise from God. He had applied the case to himself and Apollos, not to set man up but to humble him and exalt the Giver (1 Corinthians 4:6-7). In fact God appointed apostles to the extreme place in suffering at the grand spectacle that Christianity affords to the world, both to angels and to men. The light-minded worldliness in Corinth adds point to the comparison: "we fools for Christ, but ye prudent in Christ; we weak, but ye strong; ye glorious, but we in dishonour." And as he had opened this in 1 Corinthians 4:8 by saying that they "reigned without us," so in 1 Corinthians 4:11 he continues, "to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are in weakness and buffeted, and wander homeless, and labour working with our own hands. Reviled, we bless; persecuted, we endure; blasphemed, we entreat; we became as the world's offscouring, refuse of all, until now." How withering is the contrast, not for the Corinthians then only, but for the still more selfish and

vain development in our day, as in fact ever since!

Yet he tenderly assures them, that it was not as chiding, but to admonish them as his beloved children, he writes (1 Corinthians 4:14). "For if ye had ten thousand child-guides in Christ, yet not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begot you through the gospel. I entreat you then, become mine imitators." "Teachers" is not the word in ver. 15, but a servile term expressly. And in his love had ho sent to them one so beloved and faithful as Timothy, "who shall remind you of my ways that are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly" (1 Corinthians 4:17). The church, as the Christian, stands in liberty; but it is the liberty of Christ, never the liberty of differing as we like, or to oppose others. The Spirit of God dwells there to maintain the glory of the Lord Jesus, Whose mind is one. Petty man sets himself up. The apostle lets those know who said he was not coming, that he was, and quickly, the Lord willing; then he would know not the word of the puffed up, but the power. It was love, and to spare them, that he did not come sooner (1 Corinthians 4:18-21). In the next division we have the apostle availing himself of evil rumours which had reached him, not about their general party spirit on which ho had dwelt so fully from 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, 1 Corinthians 4:1-21, but on special evils, the abominable cave of incest as yet unjudged in their midst (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), their worldliness in going to law before the unjust (1 Corinthians 6:1-11), and their abuse of liberty, or licentiousness, denounced and corrected (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). As the portion is short, we may dilate the more.

Desperately evil as were these disorders, general or special, the apostle did not lose confidence in the words of the Lord during the early days of his work at Corinth: "Fear not but speak .... because I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). With these evils of theirs weighing on his heart he wrote to them as "the assembly of God that is at Corinth," sanctified (as they were) in Christ Jesus, saints called (or, by calling). The inconsistency of their practical state with their standing, individually and corporately, was extreme; but he remembered the Lord’s assurance, and pressed home their responsibility. There is no sufficient ground for assuming a lost epistle from 1 Corinthians 5:9, any more than an unrecorded visit from 2 Corinthians 13:1-2, though not a few have argued for both. The worst enormity may glide into the church through its light state or individual pravity; and thus Satan incessantly seeks to dishonour the Lord and destroy those who bear His name. Then comes, as here, the testimony of the Holy Spirit to judge the evil and deliver the saints. It is the rejection of His testimony, and the maintenance of the evil notwithstanding, for which they forfeit their place as God’s assembly. Prom heinous evils, as here, the church may be restored, as the second Epistle proves; for incomparably less, if not judged, the church may have its candlestick removed, as we read in Revelation 2:5.

What a grief for the apostle to write about the common rumour of fornication among the Corinthian believers, "and such as is not even among the Gentiles, so that one should have his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5:1)!" But it was a great aggravation that they, the saints generally, were puffed up, and did not rather mourn, in order that he who did this deed might be taken away from among them (1 Corinthians 5:2). Though not on the spot, the apostle could and does pronounce on the case. "For I, absent in body but present in spirit, have, as present, already judged him that hath so wrought this, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye and my spirit being gathered with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, — to deliver such a one to Satan for destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:2-4)."

Thus did it seem good to divine wisdom that we should have the extreme act of excommunication fully left on record. If the Corinthian assembly had known and discharged its duty, we could not have had it in so solemn a form. For in this instance the apostle joins the exercise of his own official authority and power with the duty of the church to put away the offender. He could deliver to Satan, and thereby to sore trial of mind and body, though with the good and holy aim of the flesh destroyed in order to the spirit's salvation eventually; as we learn in 1 Timothy 1:20 that he could act similarly in cases demanding it without the church. But, with or without apostle, the church is bound not to tolerate but to remove the wicked person from themselves (1 Corinthians 5:6-13). In order to explain the principle further, and to show its application fully, the apostle uses the figure of leaven, intelligible to everyone familiar with its working, and especially to such as knew the care to get rid of it required at the paschal feast, which bore typically on the redeemed. Leaven represents corruption — evil in its tendency to spread and in its character of contaminating. "Your glorying is not good: know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also, Christ, was sacrificed: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened things of sincerity and truth." Clearly Christ's sacrifice, set forth in the paschal lamb, is the ground and means by which Christians are unleavened. The feast of unleavened bread that follows figures the hallowed condition that attaches to them imperatively.

We who believe in Christ are now celebrating this feast during our earthly sojourn as pilgrims and strangers, if we rest on His redemption. But the Corinthians in their levity had ignored it; and the apostle most instructively rebukes them with the authority of that word which abides for over. If they did not yet know God's mind about discipline, divine instinct left them inexcusable. Granted that they had no elders, nor experience; but they had gifts, and if they had life eternal in Christ, they should have felt rightly. Instead of mourning, they were puffed up and boasting: never a becoming state, but how shameful at such a crisis! The will of God was now declared; their) was to judge themselves and obey. Here we have authoritatively the fullest light from on high to guide us, and to guard from like error.

"I wrote [or rather "write," the epistolary aorist] to you in the epistle not to mix with fornicators; not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or the covetous and rapacious or idolaters, since then ye must go out of the world. But now I write [same aorist as before] to you not to mix, if any one called a brother be a fornicator or covetous or idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or rapacious; with such a one not even to eat. For what have I [to do] with judging those outside? Ye, do ye not judge those within? But those without God judgeth. Remove the wicked [person] from among yourselves."

Here the scope is shown to embrace not only the immoral but the evil generally, though in no way to give an exhaustive list; for other scriptures duly denounce other sins. As a plain instance, false and wicked doctrine does not here find a place; whereas in Galatians 5:1-26 it is treated as "leaven," no less than immorality. In 1 John also fundamental error as to Christ's person is dealt with more stringently still as "antichrist," or even not bringing Christ's doctrine. Thus is the church preserved from legislation and called to be true in this respect as in all others to Christ's glory. We have only to do God's will, as He did it perfectly. In 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 the apostle insists on the incongruity of the saints appealing to the tribunals of that world which they are destined to judge, yea, to judge even angels. Yet at Corinth, instead of bringing a difference before the saints, they

like men who had no faith appealed to "the unjust"! Even those of no account in the assembly could well judge such matters; for he speaks to make them ashamed. Why did they not rather suffer wrong? Alas! they did wrong, and to brethren, forgetting that wrongdoers (and he enumerates more than in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13) shall not inherit God's kingdom. Their past evil was no excuse; seeing that they were washed, sanctified, justified (a very observable order), in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. This introduces the abuse of liberty. It is not Christian to be under the power of anything. Even now the body is for the Lord; and as God raised Him up from the dead, so will He raise us. We shall be conformed to Him in that glorious change, and are to act now in faith of it. Our bodies are Christ's members. How shameful and disloyal to be joined to a harlot! For this was the habit, one might say the religion, of the old Corinthian community. Hence the enormity of fornication in a saint, who is "one spirit with the Lord." Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in us, and this of God. We are not our own, but bought with a price, and therefore to glorify God in our body. The rest of the verse in the Authorised Version and others is a spurious addition from bad manuscripts. In this section of the Epistle we have answers to questions which seem to have been submitted to the apostle on marriage and meats, with a notice of the detraction of his authority.

There is a spiritual energy which raises one to whom it is given above ordinary conditions; but the institution of God, as here marriage, remains all the same. If Paul was a witness of the former, none the less does he maintain the latter. Marriage is the rule as laid down of God; but the Holy Spirit may and does exceptionally lift up this one or that for worthy reason above the need of marriage. It was a question of God's gift; so that he who marries does well, and he does better who does not marry. The contrast of this holy wisdom is seen in the world-church, which turns the exception of grace into an ecclesiastical rule of corruption, and builds up thereby a city of confusion hateful to God and ruinous to man. The apostle calls for mutual consideration in married life, as well as for prayer, as having to do with God and the adversary. This leads him, in an interesting and instructive way, to draw the line between what he counselled, and what the Lord commanded by revelation, though the apostle was inspired to give both. He deals also with mixed marriage, and, looking at position and occupation, reminds us that God has called us in peace. Hence too, if one were called as a bondman, it was not to be a concern; but if one could become free, to use it rather. For the bondman called in the Lord is His freedman; likewise the called freeman is Christ's bondman. Bought with a price, they were not to be bondmen of men, but abide with God in that wherein they were called. He presses also the time as straitened, and the passing sway of this world's fashion, as reasons for not setting the heart on change. Such is the outline of 1 Corinthians 7:1-40. In 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 he speaks of eating of animals sacrificed to idols; and, quite allowing the nullity of an idol, he points out the danger for conscience in those who lacked that knowledge seeing a Christian at table in an idol-temple. Gracious thought for another is better than knowledge empty, selfish, and sinning against Christ. This largeness of heart in the apostle exposed him to the false charge of looseness and self from those really guilty, and brings in the parenthetical 1 Corinthians 9:1-27 in which he vindicates his apostleship, and glories in its grace. He maintains title to eat and drink and lead about a sister-wife, as also the other apostles, specifying the Lord's brethren and Cephas. "Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right not to work?" Yet he draws the plain title to support for all labourers — from the soldier, the husbandman, the shepherd, and the herdman. Nevertheless he used no such title, supported though it was by the clear case of those that served the altar in the law. While asserting the right, he refused to use

it for himself (not "abuse") in the gospel. It was God’s grace in it that filled his heart and led his course, free from all yet making himself bondman, so inexplicable to man and hateful to the worldly mind, becoming all things to all that he might save some. A fellow-partaker with the gospel, he was living what others only preached, lest he, after preaching to others, should himself be rejected or reprobate. This warning, though transferred to himself (as he says in 1 Corinthians 4:6, "to himself and Apollos for their sakes" who were in danger), he follows up in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 by pointing out the ruin of so many in Israel of old, who all were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Is the Christian to be more indifferent, because privilege is now greater? Idolatry is a great danger for the professing Christian, as it was for the Jew. Yet what condemns it more than Christ’s death? What more inconsistent with the Lord’s table? For demons were behind the idols; and those a serious reality. True liberty is profitable and edifies; it cannot be at the expense of God’s glory, unto which we as Christians are called to do all things, giving no occasion of stumbling to Jews or Greeks or God’s assembly. So it was that the apostle pleased all in all things, not seeking personal advantage, but that of the many that they might be saved; and he called them again to imitate him, as he did Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

We have here another section of the Epistle, as distinct, or nearly so, from what precedes as from its concluding two chapters. Before coming to the assembly which was compromised in more ways than one at Corinth, the apostle regulates the relative place of the man and the woman in themselves. The importance of this is the more evident from the humanitarian liberalism of our own day which leaves out God’s mind and order. Paul wished them to know that the Christ is the head of every man (??d??? andros), but woman’s head is the man, and the Christ’s head is God. Hence not men but women, in praying or prophesying, were to have their heads covered before others in token of subjection, as the act otherwise seemed to deny it. For woman was created because of man and as of him, so also the man by her; and angels looked on who should see godly decorum Neither is without the other, but all things of God, which unbelief forgets or takes no account of. For woman to act like a man is to her shame, and that of the contentious person who ignores God’s will (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Nor was it in private only. The Corinthians publicly were coming together for the worse. Schisms already existing would surely lead to heresies or sects, which in effect deny the one body of Christ, the church, though the approved are thereby made manifest. How sad too at such an occasion as the Lord’s Supper the dishonour put on the poor. It was really on the church of God; so that such a supper was not the Lord’s. Therefore as he emphatically received the Supper from the Lord, he here also delivered it to them in all its grace and holy solemnity for the remembrance of Him, the centre of the church’s worship. The Lord’s death makes selfishness in any form most hateful, yet fills the heart purified by faith with thanksgiving and praise, and claims vigilant self-judgment, lest any slight might bring on the Lord’s chastening now, that one be not condemned with the world by-and-by. So the apostle rules the severance of a meal, even were it that called the love-feast or Agape, to hinder such disorder in future (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

Thereon follows the greatest unfolding which scripture furnishes of the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in the assembly with the love so essential to right and worthy operation, and the Lord’s regulation of it accordingly against abuse, in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 1 Corinthians 14:1-40. It is designedly apart from the Lord’s Supper, though that Supper was in fact

the most indispensable aim on the most important occasion for which the assembly met, the Holy Spirit acting in all holy freedom. But it seemed good to the Lord to treat of His Supper separately, and before entering on "the spirituals" (or manifestations of the Spirit) which are here explained. The apostle opens it by guarding against the imitative intrusion of demons, whose aim is to debase Jesus, the Son of God, as the power of the Spirit works in exalting Him. Now there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; as there are of service, but the same Lord; and of operations, but the same God that worketh all in all (1 Corinthians 12:1-6).

It is a question here, not of souls saved but of discerning spirits who sought to dishonour the Lord, and deceive if it were possible the very elect. None the less but the more is the Holy Spirit sent down, and here in the church, to glorify the Lord and bless His own as His witnesses of Jesus in glory. The presence of the Spirit is more momentous than even the gifts He distributes and directs. It is that which constitutes the one body; and the assembly is bound to own and act thereon; which is exactly what Christendom has in effect denied since the apostles, perhaps the most perverse of the perverted things the apostle warned of as at hand. There was but one Spirit, as also but one body; as faithfulness means walking by faith, so it is the shame of any to confess truth which they do not seek to carry out at all cost. The Corinthians were light and carnal, and their failure is turned to everlasting profit by the inspired instruction and corrective (1 Corinthians 12:7-13). The gifts are manifestations of His power Who dwells in the church and works, though sovereign, to the Lord’s glory; the one Spirit’s baptism at Pentecost established that unity, which unbelief overlooks and virtually denies. Every true assembly is Christ’s body, as the apostle told the Corinthians they were, though their state was bad enough to draw out the gravest rebuke. But it is the refusal to bow to the word and judge the evil which forfeits the title of God’s assembly; whilst the Corinthians did bow to their restoration, as the Second Epistle shows. Again it is in the assembly as a whole that God set, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, etc. (1 Corinthians 12:14-28). Ministry therefore (that is, gift in exercise) is set in the church. The gift in every variety is for all. There is no such idea in scripture as the minister of a church; which supposes and generates all sorts of error. The edifying gifts are on the same principle and from the same source as the sign gifts (miracles, healings, tongues, etc.), but far more important and permanent and sot in the higher place, whatever Corinthian vanity might prefer.

There was however a quality higher than all, and of deep necessity for the right working of every gift, as indeed for the well-being of every saint, to the Lord’s praise. It was love: a sad word among the Greeks, who readily claimed the most refined place of the first man; but how blessed and blessing and divine as heard and seen and proved to death and deeper still in the second! And this is essential both for the individual Christian (who alone loves, as begotten of God), and for the assembly. Again, it accounts for its place here, between the presence and the operations of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, and the order of His action (for which every member is responsible) in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40. It is striking to observe how the passive characters of love take precedence of the active, while the intermediate dwell on that joy in good which is truly godlike, as it well becomes the children of God now on earth. Again love never fails and abides for ever.

It is well to note in 1 Corinthians 14:3 that we have no definition of prophecy here, only its description in contrast with "a tongue." Edification is the great criterion for the assembly, as comely order is due to Him Who dwells there, and to the Head. Revelation, now complete in scripture, is distinguished from knowledge; and power is subject to the Lord’s authority Who gives rules which

bind even prophets who might plead divine impulse, as they impose silence on women in the assembly. These might use their gifts at home, though as subject to order, like Philip's four daughters who prophesied. The word of God did not come out from the assembly, nor does it come to one only. Through a called and inspired channel it is for all the church, being the Lord's commandment. "But if any be ignorant," it is his withering rebuke of the independent, "let him be ignorant." God has not only spoken but written, and His word abides for ever. May we be subject to the Lord, not in word only but in deed and truth!

Next comes the great unfolding of Christ's resurrection and its consequences. Some of the Corinthians doubted that the saints rise. They had no question as to the soul's immortality, but ventured to deny that the dead rise. The apostle treats the matter from its root in Christ, and thus decides it for the Christian, being associated with Him, as man is with the head of the race. It is for the apostle fundamental, bound up not only with God's counsels but with the gospel itself, which announces the glad tidings of Christ dead and risen. With this accordingly he begins, proved by the weightiest and fullest testimonies, his own closing them (1 Corinthians 15:1-11). Then (1 Corinthians 15:12-19) he reasons on Christ's resurrection out of (or, from among) dead men as the incontrovertible truth which utterly destroyed their speculation. "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" For this denies Christ's, and if so Paul's preaching, and their own faith; nay, it would make them false witnesses of God Who in that case had not raised Christ, and themselves be yet in their sins: so those put to sleep in Christ must have perished, and Christians alive be the most pitiable of all men. This he interrupts with a sort of parenthetical revelation, terse, pregnant, and profound. "But now hath Christ been raised from out of the dead, first-fruits of those that are asleep. For since through man [is] death, through man also [is] resurrection of the dead." Two heads have thus their families respectively characterised, dying, and made alive. "But each in his own order (or, rank): Christ first-fruits; then, those that are Christ's at his coming; then the end, when he shall give up the kingdom to the God and Father, when he shall have annulled all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he put all the enemies under his feet. Death, last enemy, shall be annulled. For he subjected all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are subjected, it is evident that he is excepted who subjected all things to him. And when all things shall be subjected to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). The resurrection of those that are His is at His coming, and to reign with Him. The end is, when He judges those that are not His, yet raised; and He delivers up the kingdom, all enemies put down, for the everlasting scene, when not the Father only but "God" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) shall be all in all.

Next he renews the reasoning, and refers in 1 Corinthians 15:29 to 1 Corinthians 15:18, and in 1 Corinthians 15:30 to 1 Corinthians 15:19, which clears up the sense. Why by baptism join such a forlorn hope, why share such a life of danger, if dead men are not at all raised? Paul's life was in view of resurrection; as theirs denied it who merely eat and drink. Let such not be deceived, but wake up righteously and sin not. Ignorance of resurrection is ignorance of God and holiness, to the shame of those that speculate. And why raise curious questions? God surrounds us with even natural facts of analogous character: wheat and other grain, after death of what perishes, spring up, not what was sown, but of its own kind and not a different, yet in a new condition. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly. So too is the resurrection; and here again and yet more richly

the last Adam, the Second Man, is contrasted with the first. We too who believe are styled heavenly, for we shall in due time bear that image, as now we bear the image of the earthly (or rather dusty) man, Adam (1 Corinthians 15:29-49).

Christ's life (and in resurrection, if men were to be His associates) alone suits God's kingdom and incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:50). This introduces a mystery or secret of God not revealed in the Old Testament: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for trumpet it will, and the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). And this new Christian truth he connects with Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14, the heavenly things with the earthly; for the Kingdom of God, as our Lord shows (John 3:12), comprehends both. All is wound up with a call to his beloved brethren to be firm, unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord always, knowing that their labour is not vain in Him. This is fitly followed by the various details of 1 Corinthians 16:1-24. As he directed the assemblies of Galatia to collect for the poor saints in Jerusalem, so he wished those in Corinth to do. Each first of the week is a most proper day for the Christian, in the sense of his blessing and of that infinite grace which is its source, to lay by him in store as he may have prospered. The apostle would not use personal influence when he came; but whomsoever they should approve, these he would send with letters to carry their bounty to Jerusalem; and if well for him also to go, they should go with him. How incomparably better is God's way than man's societies and their machinery or devices! Christ with His work is the centre of all. It was only when restoration wrought, that in his Second Epistle he explains why he did not then visit them. But while tarrying at Ephesus, he would have no despising of Timothy if he came. And he lets them know how much he besought Apollos to go to Corinth, who, though not now, would come when he had good opportunity (1 Corinthians 16:1-12). The apostle then charges them to watch, stand fast in the faith, play the man, be strong. "Let all ye do be done in love." They had failed in all: he despaired in nothing (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). They knew the house of Stephanas, that it was the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they devoted themselves to the saints for service; so he besought them to be subject to such, and to every one working together and labouring. This is the more notable, as we never hear of elders in the two Epistles to the Corinthians; for if there had been, they must naturally have incurred special blame. Apart from elders (who needed appointment by those who had discernment and full authority) there were, as we learn, labourers to whom the subjection of the saints was due, as we also find in other Epistles: a fact of the utmost importance for the present circumstances of the church. Any unbiassed reader may satisfy himself of this, who will consider the import of Romans 12:6-8; of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20; of Hebrews 13:17; of James 3:1; and of 1 Peter 4:10-11. Elders or no elders, it is clear that the door was open for ministrations to edification where gift existed without official designation of any kind. Ministry in the N. T. is the Lord's service, and far more varied than what has been so called since the apostles, who sanctioned it to the largest extent if exercised in the fear of God and in love of the saints.

Further, he speaks of Stephanas with two others, whose names are subjoined, coming and by their practical love refreshing his spirit "and yours" he graciously adds. "Own therefore such" (1 Corinthians 16:15-18). Salutations of assemblies and individuals follow, as he affixes his with his own hand (1 Corinthians 16:19-21). But while desiring the fullest flow of holy affections with one another, he pronounced an unsparing curse on any one that loved not the Lord [Jesus Christ]: "Let

him be anathema Maranatha" (our Lord cometh). This assuredly was no licence for such to be in their midst (1 Corinthians 16:22). Not content, in the face of much he had suffered from them, with the prayer "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you," he concludes with "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus, Amen" (1 Corinthians 16:23-24). What more Christlike!

04A.09. Part 9

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 9 §36. 2 Corinthians. The Second Epistle does not admit of sections so defined as in the First, being less ecclesiastical and dogmatic. It is restorative rather than corrective, and overflows with the sense of God’s compassion and encouragement in the midst of tribulation and sufferings. The address here, "to the church of God that is in Corinth," adds (not "with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours," but quite appropriately) "with all the saints that are in all Achaia." It is less external and more intimate: not thanks for gifts and power, but blessing for delivering grace. The apostle’s heart was full. He had drunk deeply of Christ’s sufferings; but now his encouragement also abounded through Christ; and both, he assures them, were for their encouragement and salvation. If they had passed through sufferings, he would have them know what had been his in Asia, "when excessively pressed beyond power, so as to despair even of living." Having the sentence of death within to trust in the God of resurrection, he yet confides, counting now on their prayers for thanksgiving also. And as conscience had begun its good work in them, he can speak of his own, and explain, as he did not in the First Epistle, why he had not gone to Corinth. Their state forbade it, not his levity, nor aught of fickleness, as some said. This leads on to a wondrous assertion of God’s immutable word of grace in His Son, and the no less power of our establishment and enjoyment by the Holy Spirit, with which he ends 2 Corinthians 1:1-24, assuring them now of his love in desiring to see them at Corinth only with joy.

Little did the Corinthians conceive his grief and earnest desire for joy from them (2 Corinthians 2:1-17). Not only had he and they grieved, but sufficient to the one who had caused it by his evil was "this punishment" by the many. They should show grace now, lest he should be swallowed up with grief, and their obedience too in confirming love as they had in judging. In blessed grace and ungrudging maintenance of the church’s place the apostle says, "To whom ye forgive anything, I also; for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [it was] for your sakes in Christ’s person, that no advantage be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices." What a contrast with either the assumption or the indifference of worldly religion! What a defeat he anticipates of Satan’s aim! This again gives occasion for their learning how his heart yearned over them right through. At Troas, though a door was opened in the Lord and he came for the gospel, he had no rest for his spirit at not finding Titus, but went on to Macedonia where he met him, and got good tidings of Corinth. Was this a loss? "Thanks be to God who always readeth us in triumph in Christ and manifesteth through us the savour of his knowledge in every place." The apostle identifies himself with the gospel, a sweet savour to God in the saved and in the perishing. And who is competent for these things? He was not as the many, trading with the word of God; he gave it as purely as he received it from God.

2 Corinthians 3:1-18 contrasts the law with the gospel, and in particular exposes the mixture of the two, the favourite device of those who misread Christ. For did he begin to commend himself? Did he need letters of commendation to them or from them? They were his letter, written on his heart, manifested that they were Christ’s letter. What grace for the apostle so to write of them! What an

honour for them so to hear! His competency was from God Who made us competent as new covenant ministers, not of letter but of spirit; for letter kills, but spirit quickens. Then, in a parenthesis which includes 2 Corinthians 3:7-16, he sets out the law graven on stones, as a ministry of death and condemnation, introduced with glory but annulled; whilst the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness is the surpassing glory, and the abiding in glory. The Lord is the spirit of what in the letter only kills; but where His Spirit is, there is liberty. Law was a veiled system like Moses' face; whereas in the gospel "we all with unveiled face looking on the glory of the Lord are being transformed according to the same image from glory unto glory as by the Lord the Spirit."

Therefore having this ministry, and being shown mercy, we faint not. Grace banished fear and dishonesty, and gave by manifestation of the truth to commend oneself to every conscience of man in the sight of God. So 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 begins. All is out in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Man is lost, man under law most guilty and blinded by the god of this age; God in the glory of His grace has the believer face to face without a veil. Self is not our object, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake. But we have this treasure yet in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not out of us; in everything afflicted, but not straitened, always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. Such is the principle; then comes the fact: "For we that live are ever delivered unto death on account of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our mortal flesh." This life works in others: we believe, and therefore speak, knowing Him Who raised up the Lord Jesus and will raise and present us with those we serve for His sake. Far from our fainting, the inward man is renewed day-by-day. Our momentary light affliction works for us a surpassingly eternal weight of glory, looking as we do at, not the seen, but the unseen and eternal things. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 we have the power of life in Christ tested not only by death but by judgment. The Christian is shown more than conqueror thereby, as, if dead, rising like Christ, and if living, mortality swallowed up of life (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). Nor does Christ's judgment-seat abate the constant confidence; for our manifestation before Him will only prove the perfectness of His redemption, though there may be loss also. The glory begun abides. Then the love of Christ constrains, besides the sense of the terror of the Lord for such as meet judgment in their nakedness, so that we persuade men to receive the gospel. The judgment of charity is, that 'One died for all: therefore all died;" and He died for all "that the living [which is only by faith in Him] should live no longer to themselves but to him who died and was raised." Even Christ after the flesh is known no more, but dead, risen, and glorified. So if one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things are passed, behold, they are become new; and all things are of the God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave us the ministry of the reconciliation, This he explains to the end, characterised by God in this way and now based on Christ's work.

2 Corinthians 6:1-18 describes this ministry of God's grace; not only in its source and distinctive properties and glorious end, but in its irreproachable character and its deep exercises through all circumstances. Assuredly the Corinthians were not straitened in Paul, as he could now freely tell them; it was in their own affections. But true largeness of heart goes with thorough separateness from all evil. The exhortation follows against any incongruous yoke with unbelievers. What has a Christian to do with helping to draw the world's ear? Righteousness, light, and Christ forbid such a part. What agreement too has God's temple with idols? The saints are a living God's temple, more

deeply than the O.T. expressed; wherefore the call to come out of their midst and be separate and touch no unclean thing was the more imperative. How they knew themselves received, God's Fatherhood, and their own sonship, the gospel had already proved. "Having then these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear" (2 Corinthians 7:1) is the real close of the chapter. In 2 Corinthians 7:2-16 the apostle concludes what had been interrupted by the marvellous exposition of the Spirit's ministration of the gospel, the matter of grief which grace had turned into blessing. He enlarges on what 2 Corinthians 2:1-17 only touched, and lets them know what his letter cost him, when he knew its effect on them. It was grief according to God working out repentance to salvation unregrettable. Love is of God, and creates happiness rising above self, sorrow, sin, and Satan. The grief of the world works out death. The teaching is highly valuable, not only in a moral way but in the light of God cast on the assembly's clearance of itself from the evil which it is bound to judge in the last resort. "In every thing ye proved yourselves to be pure in the matter." Thus it is not by any means enough, if we desire God's will, that the offender be truly penitent, but that also the saints, having to do with a grievous case, should humble themselves and in grace bear the shame as if it were their own. How awful the state of such as rebel against the Lord in refusing its judgment, and in shameless sympathy that tends to harden and destroy the guilty one! No wonder that party spirit is so odious to the Spirit of God, and so destructive of true unity. The way was now clear for the apostle happily to treat fully of that collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, which he had briefly introduced in 1 Corinthians 16:1-24. Now that grace was doing its work, he can speak of the grace bestowed on the Macedonian assemblies in their own deep poverty and trial. And beyond hope it was; for they gave themselves first "to the Lord, and to us by God's will." Taking nothing himself from the rich Corinthians, Paul was the more earnest for others; not as commanding, but, through the zeal of others, proving also the genuineness of their love. As they abounded in much, let them abound in this grace too. What a motive and pattern is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! He simply gave in this his mind — he would not say more. It was expedient, or profitable, for those who purposed a year ago, to perform. A willing mind was the great thing without burdening any. Titus too was jealous for them; and Paul vent with him the brother whoso praise was in the gospel through all the assemblies and chosen by them as "our fellow-traveller with this grace." For the apostle was careful to provide things honest not only before the Lord but also before men. Hence he sent a second unnamed brother (22) of oft proved diligence, but now much more diligent "through his [not, I think, Paul's] great confidence as to you." They were to show the proof therefore (2 Corinthians 8:1-24).

Yet another chapter (2 Corinthians 9:1-15) is devoted to the theme. He knew their ready mind, of which he boasted to the Macedonians, that Achaia (of which Roman province Corinth was the metropolis) was prepared a year ago; and he would not that "we, not to say, ye," should be put to shame. Nor does he fail, in awakening their souls to the joy of grace practically, to remind them that God loves a cheerful giver, and would have us abound to every good work, with thanksgiving to God as the result. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift, the spring of all grace by us. In the later chapters (2 Corinthians 10:1-18, 2 Corinthians 11:1-33, 2 Corinthians 12:1-21, 2 Corinthians 13:1-14) he vindicates his authority, entreating them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ; let others boast of natural appearance or of fleshly arms. His arms were powerful according to God for overthrowing strongholds, and leading captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ. He was ready to avenge all disobedience when their return to it was fulfilled. If

boasting somewhat more abundantly of what the Lord gave him, he would not be put to shame. As strong by letters when absent, so he would be present in deed. He had not gone beyond the measure God had apportioned, but hoped, their faith increasing, to be enlarged among them, and yet more to evangelise beyond them, instead of boasting in another's rule as to things ready. He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord; for not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends (2 Corinthians 10:1-18).

Jealous over the beloved Corinthians, whom he had espoused (he says in 2 Corinthians 11:1-33) as a chaste virgin to Christ, he fears lest their thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to Christ. In the most touching way he asks if he committed sin in abasing himself that they might be exalted, and in every thing kept himself from being burdensome to them, though Macedonian brethren supplied his wants. God knew whether it was lack of loving them; but so he did to cut off occasion from some wishing it, against whom he thunders as deceitful workers. To speak of his own devotion, labours, and sufferings, he counts to speak as a fool; but we are indebted to that unworthy occasion for details of the deepest interest. They had compelled him in their folly. Was there any heroism in being let down in a basket through a window by the wall? In 2 Corinthians 12:1-21 he glories in what "a man in Christ" he knows (without saying who, for flesh had no part in it) experienced when caught up to the third heaven. Otherwise he gloried, not in any thing man loves to attach to his name, but "in his infirmities." He knew not even whether it was in the body or out of the body; so completely was it apart from all living associations or nature, before God in the glory of His Paradise. Yet was it as a check to this unequalled distinction (of the deepest moment to all subsequent life and service), lest he should be exalted by the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that there was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Nay more, he tells us that he prayed the Lord thrice for its removal, but had the answer, "My grace sufficeth thee, for power is perfected in weakness." It is dependence in faith, the true and signal secret of all Christianity in practice. "Behold, this third time I am ready to come to you." He had been at Corinth once and long. Only their state, and his desire to come when they were restored, hindered him when ready to come a second time. This is the true force of coming a "third time." How painful to such a heart to rebut the imputation of craft, when they could not deny his personal unselfishness! or of their supposing he was excusing himself to them! All was really in love for their edifying; but he feared lest perhaps on coming he should find them not as he wished, and be found by them such as they did not wish.

2 Corinthians 13:1-14 closes this part and the entire Epistle with an overwhelming appeal, not only spoilt by false punctuation in the Authorised and Revised Versions, but making way for wrong doctrine at issue with the gospel. ' Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me (who is not weak toward you but is powerful among you,* for he was crucified of weakness, yet he liveth of God's power; for we too are weak in him, but we shall live with him by God's power toward you), try yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove yourselves. Or recognise ye not as to yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (2 Corinthians 13:3-5). As this alternative was the last thought which could occur to the carnal vanity which questioned Paul's apostleship, the application turns on their own standing in the faith. As surely as they were in it, he was an apostle to them. If Christ were not in them, they were reprobates and not entitled to speak on such a question. Where was their vapouring now? But his prayer was that they might do nothing evil, and his joy to be weak if they were powerful, praying also for their perfecting, and writing thus

when absent that when present he might spare severity. He adds a farewell message of suited tenderness and care, with a commendation which speaks to the hearts of all believers ever since. Who, accepting it from God, has not profited?

*Any person of intelligence ought to see the impossibility of the sentence ending here, as in the version of 1611. An answer to the "since" or "seeing that" is required, in order to make any tolerable sense. As this is not furnished by the close of 2 Corinthians 13:3, nor by 2 Corinthians 13:4, we have it really supplied by 2 Corinthians 13:5. And this answer is not only simple and satisfactory but full of gracious force and a serious rebuke to their ungrateful and thoughtless vanity. The version of 1881 yields evidence that the Revisers perceived the lameness of the sense afforded by the A.V., but of their own total failure to seize the true connection. For they hang 2 Corinthians 13:3 and 2 Corinthians 13:4 on to 2 Corinthians 13:2, though there is no trace of a link with what goes before to warrant it. 2 Corinthians 13:2 appropriately follows 2 Corinthians 13:1, as both do 2 Corinthians 12:19-21. But 2 Corinthians 13:3 opens a fresh and distinct appeal to the hearts of those who ventured to question his apostleship. "Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me, . . . try your own selves, whether ye he in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate." The R.V. is purposely cited to show how excellent is the sense, when the erroneous punctuation is corrected, and the true connection is allowed. Otherwise the appeal is robbed of power, and a spurious meaning is suggested, to the injury of souls ever open to man's mistake rather than God's truth.

§ 37. GALATIANS. Who can doubt the special aim of the Holy Spirit in this characteristic letter? It is not, like that to the Roman saints, a systematic establishment of God's righteousness in the gospel, on the plain and full proof of man's universal failure. Here we have the vindication of Paul's apostolate and of the gospel of grace against the Judaisers. It is a standing witness, on the one hand, how quickly the professing Christian is apt to surrender even the foundations of his blessedness to legalism; and on the other, of the Holy Spirit's care to raise the divine standard against the enemy, and rally men of faith around it. For God has here given us His own refutation of that early encroachment, so ruinous to the enjoyment of His grace, of Christ's work, and of the believer's standing and power. The Epistle is characterised by unusual severity of warning from first to last, and a total absence of those individual salutations in brotherly kindness which abound wherever it was possible. Not even the loose levity of the Corinthians troubled the apostle's spirit so profoundly, as the fall of the Galatians from grace.

Galatians 5:1-24 opens with Paul, "apostle not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him out of the dead, and all the brethren with me." The legal party objected that he was not of the twelve, nor yet ordained by them in due succession. The apostle confronts this with the fact, that the Lord Jesus and God the Father expressly called him to the apostleship in an immediate way and with resurrection's associations; and that all the brethren with him joined in his words now. Even his wonted form of general salutation has the stamp of the truth the Galatians were imperilling. "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory unto the ages of ages." In Galatians 1:6-10 he bursts like lightning on their central error. "I wonder that ye so quickly change from him that called you in Christ's grace unto a different gospel, which is not

another: only there are some that trouble you and desire to pervert the gospel of Christ." Such as preached aught else, were it himself or an angel or any, he anathematises. It were but pleasing men, which would make him not to be Christ's bondman as he was.

Next, he asserts direct revelation for the gospel he preached, affirmed already for his apostolic authority. It had shone on him, when devoted to the law and a persecutor of the church of God. But His grace revealed His Son in him, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. The essential design was that he should not take counsel with flesh and blood, not even with the apostles before him. So he went elsewhere, and even when he did go up to Jerusalem, it was but for a short visit to Cephas, and seeing only James the Lord's brother, as he solemnly averred. Afterwards he went to Syria, and Cilicia; so that he was only known in Judea by the report, to God's glory by him, that the persecuting Saul now preached the faith he once ravaged. In Galatians 2:1-21 the apostle furnishes fresh light in this connection on his memorable visit with Barnabas to Jerusalem, when he took Titus with him. Assuredly it was to receive neither authority nor truth. He went up by revelation, which is nowhere else intimated, but characterises his special place. Nor was it apostles who laid before him the gospel, but he before the chiefs privately what he preached among the Gentiles. Could any say he was running or had run in vain? Nor was it entertained to circumcise Titus, whatever bondage false brethren might desire to impose. Add to the gospel, and its truth continues no more. It was seen by the reputed pillars that He, who energised Peter for the apostleship of the uncircumcision, energised Paul also for the Gentiles. God's order for both and grace given to Paul being recognised, James and Cephas and John gave Paul and Barnabas right hands of fellowship, only with due remembrance of the poor, in which Paul was zealous too. But from Galatians 2:11 he goes farther, and recounts his open resistance of Peter at Antioch because he was condemned. What a rock for the church, if Christ had really resigned His place to His servant! Away with a pretension so blasphemous, ignorance so deplorable. Christ alone was and is the Rock. Peter shilly-shallied when certain came from James; "and the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation." How solemnly instructive for the Galatians, for all other Christians, for ourselves also! "They did not walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" is the unsparing censure of the apostle. What a withering rebuke of their own folly in listening to the adversaries of him and the gospel! His argument is unanswerable, and stands in abiding record. "If thou being a Jew livest Gentilely and not Jewishly, how forcest thou the Gentiles to judaise?"

It was grievous inconsistency in Peter, who on a most critical occasion proved himself not only feeble as a reed, but false to the Lord's charge in Acts 10:1-48 and his own faith, afraid of those he ought to have fed and guided aright. It was flinching from the common standing of justification by faith, and not by law-works even for born Jews. But the worst of all remained; for he had left law for grace in Christ to justify him, and, in turning his back on this now, he not only made himself a transgressor, but in effect Christ a minister of sin! Paul on the contrary for the Christian says, Through law I died to the law, for all was met in Christ crucified. The sinner was in Him condemned, that he should go free, the flesh only and utterly dealt with by God for him who believes; and himself living, no longer the old I, but a new life, Christ living in him: a life in faith of the Son of God "Who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Adding law makes void the grace of God; for if righteousness be through law, Christ in this case died gratuitously. As Galatians 2:1-21 ends with the great truth of Christ living in the Christian by faith in the Son of God, in contrast with

the law, so Galatians 3:1-29 shows that the reception of the Spirit was not by works of law but by report of faith. How senseless then to perfect in flesh, with which law deals, what they began in Spirit! Thence he turns in Galatians 3:6 to Abraham who believed and had not the law but the promise, "In thee all the nations shall be blessed," but solely by faith. For as many persons as are by works of law are under the curse; for which Deuteronomy 27:1-26 is cited. There, when the two mountains were taken by six tribes on each for blessing and curse, only Ebal had the curses, and not a word of the blessings on Gerizim! Granted that in fact the blessings were pronounced on the appointed mountain; in effect, as God knew, it must fail; and hence the silence of that inspired book. On the principle of law there is no blessing but curse for sinful man. "The just shall live by faith," as Habakkuk 2:4 testifies when all was ruin; where in vain law held out life to him that shall have done its demands. But Christ has redeemed from out of the curse by having become a curse, as elsewhere Deuteronomy attests (Galatians 3:21); that the blessing might come unhindered, the promise of the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:1-13).

Then in a deep unfolding the notion of annexing law to promise is excluded. For the promises were addressed to Abraham, and to his seed, 430 years before the law, and hence cannot be annulled by it. The promise was in grace. Law was added for the sake of transgressions till the Seed came to Whom was made the promise, which has no mediator like the law with Moses between God and man. There are two parties in law, one of them sinful; there is but one in promise, God, and therefore all is sure in the end. They are not against each other, as they must be if joined: each serves its proper aim. There is no righteousness by law; but the promise by faith of Jesus Christ is given to believers. Law was but a servile child-guide; but we are all, Gentiles as well as Jews, God’s sons by faith in Christ Jesus; and Him it is, not law, we put on in baptism, in Whom there can be no distinction in the flesh; and if of Christ, we are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise (Galatians 3:14-29). In Galatians 4:1-31 the apostle points out the immense change wrought for the saints through Christ’s work and the sending of the Spirit. Previously the heir, a child or infant, did not differ from a slave under the elements of the world; but now he was redeemed by the Son and became a son. And so were the Gentile believers sons, with the Spirit in their hearts vying, Abba, Father. Such is the true relationship of the Christian (Galatians 4:1-7). For Gentile saints, after being known of God, to turn to the weak and beggarly elements (i.e., of the law) was really a return to their idolatry in principle. "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you lest I bestowed upon you labour in vain. Be as I [am], for I [am] as ye, brethren, I beseech you: ye have not injured me at all" (Galatians 4:8-12). He was freed from law by Christ’s death. They as Gentiles had nothing to do with law. They indicted no wrong in saying so of Paul. Compare Romans 7:6 and Galatians 2:19. How the new delusion had alienated them from him! Had he become their enemy by telling them the truth? Their zeal should not be only in his presence (Galatians 4:13-18). They needed that he should travail again in birth to have Christ formed in them (Galatians 4:19).

’Tell me ye that desire to be under law, do ye not hear the law?" Then he speaks of Abraham’s two sons: one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman, one born after the flesh, as the other by promise, allegorising the two covenants, and answering respectively to Jerusalem in bondage, and to free Jerusalem which is above, our mother, entitled to rejoice after desolation. We then, as Isaac, are children of promise, and persecuted by him born after the flesh as of old. "Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond. woman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman

shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Galatians 4:21-31). How convincingly the tables were turned on these retrogradists from grace to the law! The beautiful use, which the apostle drew according to divine design from the story of Sarah and Isaac on the one hand, and on the other of Hagar and Ishmael, leads into the teaching of Galatians 5:1-26, the freedom with which Christ freed us. So, therefore, is the Christian to stand, and not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage — the enemy's effort. To receive circumcision was to become debtor to do the whole law and to fall from grace: Christ would profit nothing in that case. We, believers, are justified by faith; and by the Spirit on the same principle of faith we await, not righteousness but its hope, even the glory into which Christ is gone. For in Him neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails aught, but faith working through love; as of God it ever does. Who stopped them when running well, that they should not obey the truth? The persuasion was not of Him that called them. It was a corruption tainting the lump as a whole. For his part, his confidence as to them was in the Lord, that they would have no other mind; and their troubler whosoever he be shall bear the judgment (or, guilt). "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why am I yet persecuted? Then is done away the offence of the cross." For Judaism was ever the sleepless foe. Indignantly he adds, "I would that those who unsettle you would even cut themselves off" (Galatians 5:1-12).

"For ye" he says emphatically, "were called for liberty" — on that condition. "Only [use] not liberty for occasion to the flesh, but through love serve one another" — the gist of the whole law. Were they fulfilling it in biting and devouring one another? To walk in the Spirit (which grace gave, not law) is to fulfil in no way flesh's lust. No doubt the flesh opposes, but so does the Spirit, that we may not do the things which we would: a scripture perverted in the A. V. But if led by the Spirit, they are not under law: grace is the spring. "Now manifest are the works of the flesh, which are fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, angers, contentions, divisions, sects, envyings, [?murders,] drinkings, revels, and such like; of the which I forewarn you, as I forewarned you, that they who do such things shall not inherit God's kingdom." Could they not recognise these sad traits of late? Law acting on flesh provoked them. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control. against such things is no law." Did they really know this fruit familiarly? "And they that are of Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also direct our steps. Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another." What can approach these burning words which close the chapter? The Spirit is the power of good, not the law, moral any more than ceremonial. Law's power is to slay sinners. The next chap. (Galatians 6:1-18) follows it up. Even if a man be overtaken in some fault, does the remedy lie in the law? In nothing but grace. "Ye that are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The general rule is to bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Christ, if they desired a law. The flesh boasts, and only deceives itself while burdening others. Faith proves its own work without claiming that of another. Each shall bear his own burden. Meanwhile there is ample room for love, as for the learner in the word toward the teacher in all good things (Galatians 6:6). God holds to His order: whatever a man sows, this shall he also reap, — corruption from the flesh, from the Spirit life eternal. Let us not be fainthearted then in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. So then as we have opportunity (season), let us work good toward all, and specially toward the household of faith. The conclusion is touching. "Ye see in how great letters I write to you with

my hand." He habitually employed an amanuensis, as was usual in those days. To the Galatians he would write himself; and so in large uncouth letters he wrote the entire Epistle. (Contrast with the aorist here the present in 2 Thessalonians 3:17). Once more he thunders against those who would revive flesh and restore law and circumcision to the denial of the cross of Christ. Only would he glory in that cross which put shame on the world; and he accepted its shame with Christ. In Him is new creation This is the rule for our steps; and peace be on such and mercy, and upon those of Israel who are really God's. Let none trouble him henceforth: he bore in his body the marks of suffering for Christ, whose grace, he prays, to be with their spirit. It is controversial throughout, yet with the deepest feelings of love underneath.

§ 38. EPHESIANS. In writing to the Ephesians the apostle takes his stand on ground wholly different from the Epistle to the Galatians. There he combats return to law in every shape, ceremonial or moral, and insists on grace in Christ crucified and risen, on promise before the law and accomplished only in Christ, so that blessing should flow even to Gentiles, and the promise of the Spirit be received by faith. But to the Ephesians he shows divine and eternal counsels. The Christian is blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 1:3); and this by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was both man and Son of His love. The same God and Father chose us in Him before the world's foundation, far above earthly ways and beyond promise. He chose us that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4). If He would have us there, He could not but have us like Himself. But He was pleased to fore-ordain our relationship, even for adoption or sonship, through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will (Ephesians 1:5) for the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). In Him (for we were evil) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7), which He made to abound toward us (not like Adam for the earth) in all wisdom and intelligence (Ephesians 1:8). He also made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself (Ephesians 1:9) for administration of the fulness of the fit times: to head up the universe in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; in Him in Whom we also were given inheritance, for if sons of God, we were heirs. We were thus fore-ordained according to the purpose of Him Who works all things according to the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory. "We" are the believing Jews that had pre-trusted in the Christ (Ephesians 1:12). In Him ye too (Gentile saints), having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is earnest of our inheritance for the redemption of the possession, for praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:14). Jew and Gentile are alike thus blessed in the highest degree, far beyond the promises to the fathers. So delicate and precious and rich is the apostle's preamble, that one does best to give it just as it is. The glory of His grace embraces the whole sweep of the purposed blessing; the riches of His grace, what more than meets all our need now; the praise of His glory, when we enter on the inheritance. But the choice of God and fore-ordaining go back into eternity before there was a universe to inherit with Christ. The summing or heading up in Him of the whole heavenly and earthly will be administered when the various seasons run out, and the inheritance, heavenly and earthly, will be displayed; and we, of all others, share Christ's glory over all, and have the earnest as well as seal already in the Holy Spirit given to us.

Then we have Ephesians 1:16-23 the apostle's prayer for them, founded on the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory (Ephesians 1:17), of Whom he desires the enlightenment of the eyes of their heart to know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us that believe, according to the working of the might of His strength which He wrought in the Christ, when He raised Him out of the dead and seated Him at His right-hand in the heavenlies, far above the most exalted of creatures now and ever, and subjected all under His feet, and 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 1:23). The prayer almost imperceptibly passes into the teaching of Ephesians 2:1-22. To the hope of God's calling as in Ephesians 1:3-6, with its accompaniments in Ephesians 2:7-8, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (for He takes it in them as in the Christ) in Ephesians 2:9-11, with the way Jews and Gentiles come in, and the Holy Spirit's relation to both blessings, he adds the wondrous power displayed in raising and exalting Christ. Now in Ephesians 2:1-10 he shows it to be the same power that wrought in the Ephesian saints, and so in all Christians, quickened with the Christ, raised up together, and made sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that God might display in the coming ages the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Thus were and are they saved by grace through faith, His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before prepared that we should walk in them. All were alike dead in offences and sins. God thus wrought to bring believers into this new estate of living association with Christ on high. From Ephesians 2:11 the apostle would have those once Gentiles remember their then far off condition, without one of Israel's privileges. Now they were made nigh by the blood of the Christ; and in the same nearness were the believing Jews. For Christ, our peace, not only took away all obstacles, but made both one, forming the two in Himself into one new man, one body. Though Jews had once been outwardly nigh, and Gentiles afar off, through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Strangers and foreigners the Gentile believers were no more, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of God's household, all alike being built on quite a new foundation — that of the apostles and prophets (of whom he speaks in Ephesians 4:11), Jesus Christ Himself (not Peter) being the corner-stone. In Him all the building framed together increaseth unto a holy temple in the Lord; "in whom ye also," he says, "are builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit."

Thus we have the church viewed as Christ's body, and God's house, in which distinct respects Paul's Epistles often regard it. The article seems necessarily wanting in Ephesians 2:21, though excellent old MSS. insert it; but according to correct usage, as the building is not complete, it could not be there. Yet this does not warrant "each several," as in the R. V. For though as the ordinary rule p?sa without the article requires "every," there are known exceptions, as "all Jerusalem" (Matthew 2:3), 'all the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36), "all Israel" (Romans 11:26). It is not a proper name that really accounts for this; a whole viewed in its parts excludes the article, yet means "all." The mistranslation is therefore not only superficial, but directly upsets the unity of the building on which the apostle here insists as everywhere else.

Ephesians 1:1-23 revealed the counsels of God in Christ risen and seated on high, followed up by the apostle's prayer to the God of our Lord Jesus; and Ephesians 2:1-22 showed us how grace has brought us in, not only as individuals but collectively, and the temporary setting aside of Israel, believing Jews and Gentiles alike to be Christ's body and God's habitation in the Spirit. Ephesians

3:1-21 connects with the subject Paul’s special administration of this mystery or secret.

Therefore are the Gentiles the objects of grace in a way wholly unheard of in other generations, as now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit — the same power which builds all the saints together for God’s dwelling. It was by revelation made known that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which Paul was become minister according to the gift of His grace given him according to the working of His power. This of course could not be, nor be revealed, till the cross had closed the Jewish system and opened the door in Christ ascended for the Creator of all things to make known heavenly counsels and ways in Him to any and everybody that believed. Equally clear is it that when Christ comes for His own to be with Him in the Father’s house, and subsequently appears to execute judgment on the Beast and his vassals, on the Antichrist and all other enemies, He will restore Israel specially and bless the Gentiles in general under His blissful reign over the universe, even Egypt and Assyria being conspicuous

Meanwhile the gospel where these distinctions are obliterated and unknown goes forth, and the unsearchable riches of the Christ announced, as Paul did pre-eminently and far beyond all prophecy. This was in order that now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God according to a purpose of the ages (or, eternal) which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in Whom we have boldness and access in confidence through the faith in Him. The apostle would not have them discouraged at his tribulations for them: it was their glory, which roused the enemy (Ephesians 3:1-13).

"For this cause" (repeating the phrase which opens the chapter, and carrying out the parenthesis into a new prayer founded on its wondrous intimations) he bows his knees to the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ, an addition favoured by many MSS., Vv., etc.] of Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. Here, however, it is not as in Ephesians 1 that a spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given to the saints to know the hope of His calling and the glory of His inheritance and the greatness of His power in Christ risen and exalted. It is to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith, rooted and grounded in love, that they might be able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height (he does not say of what, but evidently of the mystery), and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that they might be filled unto all the fulness of God. This is not for spiritual intelligence of God’s counsels and of what God had wrought in Christ to give them effect, but for present power of the Spirit in realising Christ dwelling in their hearts, and thus entering into fellowship with all the saints into the boundless glory, and His love deeper than the glory which will display it another day. Now to Him that is able to do far exceeding above all we ask and think, according to the power that worketh in us (and not only for us), to Him be the glory in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:14-21).

Paul, the prisoner in the Lord, beseeches the saints on the ground of all he has made known, to walk worthily of the calling wherewith they were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the joint bond of peace. This leads him fully to set forth unity: "one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father

of all, who is over all and through all, and in you [or, us] all" (Ephesians 4:1-6). The relationship determines the duty: what then must be ours, so blessed of God? It is easy to see that Ephesians 4:4 sets out the vital, as Ephesians 4:5 the professing, unity; while Ephesians 4:6 is universal in its early clauses, yet the most intimate grace in the last. We are exhorted to be faithful in every case.

Next, the various workings in each for the blessing of all to Christ's glory are shown in Ephesians 4:7-16. All is founded on Him ascended on high, as this depended on His descending into the lower parts of the earth, and also ascending to the highest, that He might fill all things. He it is Who gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto work of ministry, unto edifying of the body of Christ. What is the term of this? Until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at a fullgrown man, at the measure of stature of the fulness of Christ. For His gracious aim is that we be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of the teaching [that is] in the sleight of men for the spread of error; but, holding truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, Who is the head, the Christ; from Whom the whole body, fitted and compacted together by every joint of supply, according to the effectual working in measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body unto its own edifying in love.

It is not here, as in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the Holy Spirit testifying in this creation (and hence by tongues, healings, etc.) to God's glory in Christ, Who has defeated Satan before the universe. It is Christ in His love to His own, sending down from His heavenly seat the gifts of His grace to His body and to every several member. Thus here only we have the assurance that, while His members are on earth, His supplies of grace cannot fail. The foundation has been laid so well that it were folly to expect it relaid; but all that perpetuates and edifies, it were unbelief to doubt till He come. With this goes the promise of the other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to abide for ever in and with us (John 14:1-31), Who guides into all the truth. Hence the very babes in Christ are said (1 John 2:20) to have unction from the Holy One. No Christian need distrust.

Thereon the general exhortations proceed. They are warned against any allowance of their former walk as Gentiles, alienated from God's life in every way, inward and outward. Not so did they learn the Christ, if albeit they heard Him and were taught in Him according as truth is in Jesus. What is this? Their having put away as to their former behaviour the old man corrupt as to its lusts of deceit, and their being renewed in the spirit of their mind, and their having put on the new man which according to God was created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore putting away falsehood (this goes beyond lying) they were to speak truth, as being members one of another. They were not to allow continued anger. Instead of stealing they were to give, and to speak what was good for edifying, and not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by Whom they were sealed for redemption's day. So all bitterness and heat, wrath, clamour, and abusive language, with all malice, must be put away from them; and they were to be kind one to another compassionate, forgiving each other, even as God also showed them grace (Ephesians 4:17-32).

Grace toward faultiness, however, is not all. Ephesians 5:1-33 opens with the more positive call to be imitators of God as children beloved, and walk in love; as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for an odour of sweet smell. It was perfection in Him — for us, but to God; and it is our express pattern of love. But the danger of uncleanness is as carefully urged as of violence just before; and this in the levity of speech as in lust. Thanksgiving is

a great antidote; as is our sense that those who so indulge are incompatible with the kingdom of the Christ and God. Grace to believers in no way precludes God's wrath on the sons of disobedience. We, who were once darkness but now light in the Lord, should be far from such partnership, and walk as children of light, the fruit of which is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. The Spirit comes in, not in Ephesians 5:9 but later in Ephesians 5:18 as power, after love and light have been fully treated as the source, principle, and character of the walk for the new creation, proving what is agreeable to the Lord. Are any disposed to sleep? The Christian is therefore to awake and rise up from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon him: an evident allusion to Israel's portion by-and-by. Hence the need of walking carefully as wise, buying up the fit time intelligent in the Lord's will, and filled with the Spirit in songs of praise of a Christian sort, certainly not with the world's dissolute excitement. Entitled as we are always and in all things to give thanks to Him Who is God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us not fail in doing thus, submitting ourselves to one another in Christ's fear (Ephesians 5:1-21). This leads to the application of the same principle in our relationships; where the subject one is regularly first exhorted in each pair, wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters (Ephesians 5:22-33, Ephesians 6:1-9). The wife and husband give occasion to a grand unfolding of Christ's love for the church or assembly as the model. He "loved the church and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of the water in virtue of the word, that he himself might present to himself the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." Christ thus loved the church before He gave Himself up for it; and not content with this infinite self-surrender to sanctify it, He purifies after a divine fashion, as He will consummate His love in the glorious issue. His love sees to it all, and He uses the word now, as He will personally at length present it to Himself according to His own perfectness. So is the husband to love his own wife, and the wife to fear the husband.

Children are not only to submit but to "obey" their parents in the Lord. If the law bade them pay honour, how much more the gospel? But fathers are not to irritate their children, but bring them up in the Lord's discipline and admonition. So were slaves to obey their masters according to flesh, but "as to Christ." What a privilege, and beyond all other emancipation! Masters were to do the same things, in the equity they expected, forbearing threat, and knowing they had a common Master in the heavens.

Then follows (Ephesians 6:10-20), after the call to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, the whole armour of God we are to put on. It is not the righteousness we become in Christ, but practical as against the enemy. The sword of the Spirit, being God's word, is our one offensive weapon. That panoply we need that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. "For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heavenlies." We are contrasted with Israel arrayed against the Canaanites. Wherefore he bids us to take up the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, as it is now till the Lord take His great power and reign. First, we are to be girt about our loins with truth, the inward movements thus braced before God; then, to put on the breast-plate of righteousness, the confidence of an irreproachably right course; next, the walk animated by the gospel's peaceful spirit; besides (or, in) all, we must take the unwavering faith in God, which is the shield to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one; and receive the helmet of salvation in the assurance of

what God wrought for us. But even God's word will not avail against the foe unless the Spirit guide us in wielding it. Thus all demands simple and constant dependence on God. Hence "praying at all seasons with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching "hereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and for me," added the blessed apostle, "that utterance may be given me in the opening of my mouth with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am ambassador in a chain, that I may be bold in it as I ought to speak." In what a place of nearness to God stand the faithful — in common interest with Him, and hence with the greatest of apostles as with the weakest of saints, for Christ's glory! Hence as the apostle shared Christ's love to them all, so he was assured they in their love would delight to hear all particulars of him; he sent Tychicus therefore to comfort their hearts, as a joint and band in the body. The salutation is in keeping: "Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness." Without the Father and the Lord, what is anything else? Without incorruptness, even the love, or rather what is called love, were vain.

§ 39. PHILIPPIANS. No where is special aim more evident than in this Epistle. In saluting the Philippian saints the apostle associates Timothy with himself as "bondmen of Christ Jesus," and them "all," with overseers and deacons (Php 1:1-2). For the assembly there was not immature like that in Corinth; it possessed those local charges, for which experience was due, such as apostolic authority set over the saints in due time. But the absence of the apostle, a prisoner in Rome and object of their loving remembrance, gave occasion to much that is characteristic in it for the Christians, soon to lack that care altogether. No epistle breathes so distinctively of confidence in God and joy in all his remembrance of them; and this, not founded on the enriching powers of the Spirit as to the Corinthians, nor on the heavenly counsels of God as to the Ephesians, nor on the fulness of the Head as to the Colossians, nor yet on the broad and deep foundations of the gospel as to the Romans. This letter surveys and reciprocates what Christ is for every day's communion, conduct, worship, and service It is therefore in reality, and in all forms, and in the highest sense, Christian experience from first to last. Their state warranted, as it called forth, the full opening of his heart to them. In Php 1:3-11 he thanks his God because of their uninterrupted fellowship with the gospel, that He Who began a good work in them will complete it till Jesus Christ's day. It was right for him to think thus as to them all because they had him in their hearts. Both in his bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, were they not all partakers in his grace? For God was his witness how he longed after them all in the bowels of Christ Jesus. And he prayed that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, unto their proving the things that are excellent, that they might be pure and without a stumble for Christ's day, being filled with fruit of righteousness that is through Jesus Christ unto God's glory and praise. He looked for the due result of Christ and His work in them, not merely that they should be kept from inconsistency and failure.

Then Php 1:12-30 he speaks of his bonds and how God had thereon wrought in His good way, as man in his evil. He would have them know that his matters, sad as they looked, had come rather for furtherance of the gospel; so that his bonds became manifest in Christ in the whole praetorium and to all the rest. Nor was this all. For the most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord by his bonds, dared more abundantly to speak the word without fear. It was not without alloy. Some indeed also preached Christ for envy and strife, and some too for goodwill: these of love, knowing that he was

set for the defence of the gospel; but those out of faction announced the Christ, not purely, thinking to arouse affliction for his bonds. But grace prevailed, and his heart had joy in Christ.

"What then? Notwithstanding [or, Only that], in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yea and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn to me for salvation through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die gain; but if to live in flesh [is mine], this [is] to me worth while. And what I shall choose I know not. But I am pressed by the two, having a desire for departure and being with Christ, for [it is] very much better; but to remain in the flesh [is] more necessary for your sake. And having this confidence I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for furtherance and joy of faith, that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence again with you" (Php 1:18-26).

How clearly faith by grace made him, bondman though he was, master of the situation! His desire drew him away to Christ: the need of the saints detained him. God gave him, as it were, the decision for their sake. "Only behave worthily of the gospel of Christ, that, whether coming and seeing you or absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand in one spirit, with one soul striving together with the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by the adversaries; which is to them evidence of destruction but to you of salvation, and this from God; because to you was granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him, having the same conflict as ye saw in me and now hear of in me." Living the gospel, living worthily of it, was his earnest desire for them, yea, suffering for Christ.

Php 2:1-30. Zeal was not wanting in Philippi, yet does it not endanger unity, lowliness, and love? Where is the corrective but in Christ? "If then any comfort [be] in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye have the same mind, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing, nothing in faction or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind esteeming one another better than themselves, regarding not each his own things, but each those of others" (Php 2:1-4). This brings in the image of Christ. "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who subsisting in God's form did not count it an object for seizing to be on equality with God, but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, having come in likeness of men; and, when found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him and granted him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus should bow every knee of [beings] heavenly and earthly and infernal, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to God the Father's glory" (Php 2:5-11). For the Philippians were in contrast with the Galatians (Galatians 4:18), and obeyed, not as in his presence only, but now much more in his absence. They are exhorted accordingly to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, now that they had not the apostle's care; for it is God that was working in them both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. What source of confidence so great, along with distrust of self! Murmurs and disputes were to be far from them, that they might be blameless and simple, God's children irreproachable in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they appeared as lights in the world, holding forth life's word for a boast to the apostle against Christ's day that he ran not nor laboured in vain. Again he refers to death before him, but here as a libation

poured on the sacrifice and ministration of their faith to his joy, and theirs also. Yet he hoped in the Lord to send Timothy to them, as he graciously felt for his refreshment by knowing how they got on; for only he shared Paul's care genuinely. Alas! even then all were seeking their own things, not those of Jesus Christ. They knew Timothy's service with Paul in the gospel work. Whatever the cost to himself, he would send one so dear to him and them, when he could report matters.

Meanwhile he sent Epaphroditus, his fellow-worker and fellow-soldier (what links of honour!), but their messenger and minister to his need (what communion!), not only as longing after them all, but distressed at their hearing of his sickness, So he was, adds the apostle, nigh to death; but God had mercy not on him only but on Paul also, that he might not have sorrow on sorrow. Yet him he had sent, that they seeing him might rejoice, and he himself be the less sorrowful. What unselfish love all round, the mind that was in Christ Jesus! Him therefore they were to receive in the Lord with all joy, and to hold such in honour; because for the work's sake (whether Christ the Lord, or God, were in question) he came nigh to death, risking his life to supply what lacked in their service toward Paul (Php 2:12-30). Truly this is Christian experience.

Php 3:1-21 presents our Lord in a way quite different from that of Php 2:1-30. It is not the uttermost humiliation in obedience of the Son's Person become man, emptying Himself and humbling Himself to the death of the cross: that service of love beyond compare, which creates, fashions, and maintains Christian devotedness in the saints. Here the central truth is Christ glorified, as the object set before the believer to detach him from every idol, to shine on the path with sure and heavenly light, to fill the heart with His own excellency, and to keep the glorious goal before him, whatever the trials of the way. The apostle exhorts his brethren for the rest to rejoice in the Lord. He deserves and desires it; and well may we. Did any complain of sameness? To write so was not irksome to this wondrously endowed soul; for them it was safe. Yet he finds room with energetic contempt to denounce the Judaisers, as the dogs, the evil workers, and the concision, of whom they had to beware. He declares that the circumcision are we who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh; though if any had such ground of confidence, the apostle had more. It is of fleshly religion he speaks here and throughout, not of fleshly licence (Php 3:1-5).

Next, he states his own case. Was he not circumcised the eighth day, of Israel's race, of Benjamin's tribe, a Hebrew of Hebrews? as to law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to righteousness that is in or of law, found irreproachable? But the Christ he had seen in glory made him regard this gain as a loss. Nor was it a hasty estimate, but so he counted all things because of the excellence of the knowledge of Him, his Lord, for whom he suffered the loss of all things. He was still counting them dung, that he might win Christ and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness which is of law, but that which is by faith in Christ, the righteousness of God on condition of faith. The same Paul in Romans 9:1-33 would have the Jews know that, far from disparaging, he exalted the privileges of Israel beyond their estimate; here he shows that the Christian has in Christ far better things than Israel's hopes (Php 3:5-9). And so he continues, "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformed to His death, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection from out of (the) dead" (Php 3:10-11).

Nothing then satisfied him short of that portion. Flesh and earth are quite left behind. Therefore he adds, "Not that I already attained, or have been already perfected, but I pursue, if I may apprehend (or, get possession of) that for which also I was apprehended by Christ." We shall then be like Him and in the same glory. Yet he carefully tells his brethren that, as this was not true of him yet, "one thing" (he does); "forgetting the things behind [not past evils, but present progress], and stretching forth toward those before, I press unto the mark for the prize of the calling upward of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:12-14). All the full-grown should have this mind; and, if in any thing they were otherwise minded, God would reveal this also to them; but whereto they were arrived, let them walk alike. How wholesome even for saints in good estate! Nor does the apostle hesitate to bid them imitate him and mark those that followed his example. Others alas! did very differently, enemies of Christ's cross, and earthly-minded, whose god is the belly, whose glory is in their shame. For our citizenship subsists in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall change the body of our humiliation and conform it to the body of His glory, according to the working of the power He has to subject even all things to Himself (Php 3:15-21). Salvation here looks on to that final change.

Php 4:1-23 opens with strongly expressed affection, and the call to stand fast in the Lord. Two sisters he exhorts severally by name to the same mind in Him; and he beseeches his true yoke-fellow, Epaphroditus probably, to help those women in that they shared his own conflicts in the gospel, with Clement too and the rest of his fellow-workers whose names are in the book of life. How sad their lot whose names were not there! They did not love the Lord, whatever their labours (Php 4:1-3). The saints in general here again he calls on to rejoice in the Lord "always," and again would say, "Rejoice." How blessed from Paul the prisoner in Rome under Nero to saints at Philippi suffering in Christ's behalf! Yet he would have their gentleness known to all (in view of the Lord at hand), their anxiety in nothing, their requests to God in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; and he assures them that the peace of God (and it is constant), which surpasses all understanding, should guard their hearts and their thoughts in Christ Jesus (Php 4:4-7). For the rest, he urges brethren to think, not on the dark side but on whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if any virtue or any praise: what they both learned and received and heard and saw in him, let them do; and the God of peace, which is yet more than the peace of God, blessed though it be, should be with them. This indeed would be Christian experience — to live Christ (Php 4:8-9).

Then, as we easily see from Php 4:10-20, he speaks of his joy in the Lord at their renewed thought for him, though he spoke not of want, having learnt to be content in whatsoever state he was. For he knew both to abound and to be in want, and declares he can do all things through Him that empowers him. But he appreciated their fellowship with his affliction, which they only had shown him thus in the early days of the gospel: not that he sought the gift, but the fruit that increased to their account. He could say that he had all things and abounded, that he was filled, having received from Epaphroditus their things, which he does not hesitate to call "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." On their part or on his, it was to live Christ. "And my God," he adds, "shall fill up your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father [be] the glory unto the ages of the ages, Amen." Then he salutes "every saint" in Christ Jesus, as he unites withal that of the brethren who were with him, and indeed of all the saints there, specially those of Caesar's household; for so did Christ work in

His own. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" is the suited close.

04A.10. Part 10

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 10 §40. Colossians. The distinctive aim is as legible here as elsewhere. It is not Christian experience as in the Epistle to the Philippian saints, nor the blessedness of the saints in the heavenlies in Christ as to those in Ephesus, but the glories of Christ in respect of both earth and heaven, as man and as God. Nor is any notion more contrary to truth than to conceive that to the Ephesians an amplification of this to the Colossians, even if both were admitted to be genuine. That they are in the closest mutual relation is apparent; for the body of Christ is as prominent in the Ephesian letter as is the Head in the Colossian. But for this very reason each has its own special object; and both are of the highest interest and importance, as giving the truth in question fully and without confusion. Why they were severed by the Epistle to the Philippians it is hard to say; for internal considerations point to the writing of the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians about the same time; whereas that to Philippians has no such link, and while it may have preceded them as Bp. Lightfoot contends, it rather seems from its tone to have been the later of the three.

However this be, which is comparatively immaterial, here we have the complement of the letter to the Ephesians, as it appears evidently written at nearly the same time. Here we learn the fulness of Christ for the saints, Christ in them; as there were revealed the privileges in Christ for the saints and the church. They thus lend one another the most necessary and remarkable help. But they also differ quite as strikingly; for to the Colossians the apostle dwells on Christ our life, even where the word may not be used, and only once (Colossians 1:8) speaks of the Spirit; whereas to the Ephesians he unfolds the Holy Spirit’s functions as he does nowhere else. The apostle did not write alone as to the Ephesians, but joins with himself "Timothy the brother to the holy and faithful brethren in Christ that are in Colosse." After the usual wish but curtailed, thanks are here given at once to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, continually praying for them, having heard of their faith and love on account of the hope that is laid up for them in the heavens (Colossians 1:1-5), "of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel which came to you as in all the world, bearing fruit and growing, even as also among you since the day ye heard and rightly knew the grace of God in truth; even as ye learnt from Epaphras our beloved fellow-bondman, who is a faithful servant of Christ for you, that also declared to us your love in [the] Spirit." The rich unfolding of God’s call and inheritance found in Ephesians 1:3-14 has no counterpart here, because of the dangers which menaced those addressed. Nor here is it only "for the hope." "For this reason we also, since the day we heard, do not cease praying and begging that ye may be filled with the right knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work and growing by the right knowledge of God; strengthened with all strength unto the might of his glory unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father that made us meet for sharing the portion of the saints in light; who rescued us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:9-14).

Before proceeding into the setting forth of the glories of Christ's person that follow, remark that the walk, power, and thankfulness are directly, not of Paul and Timothy that prayed for them, but of the Colossian brethren. Thus then, while present fruit and growth are sought, thanks were to be that the Father qualified "us," not the writer nor those written to only but all Christians, for sharing His presence in the light. The Vulgate, followed by Roman Catholic theologians, etc., is utterly wrong in the perversion "made worthy"; as are most Protestants too in blotting out to faith this actual standing to make it a gradual process.

"Who [Christ] is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, because by (or, in virtue of) him were all things (or, the universe) created that are in the heavens and that are on the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or lordships or principalities or powers; they all have been created through him and for him; and he is before all and by (or, in virtue of) him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, who is [the] beginning, firstborn out of the dead, that he in all things might be pre-eminent" (Colossians 1:15-18).

"Image" observe, not likeness. The Word was God. Like would be only resembling; "image" represents, as Christ perfectly represented here below the invisible God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," as He said to Philip. So, when born of woman, He was firstborn of all creation. Even Solomon, His type, was by sovereign grace 'made" firstborn, though younger than many of David's sons. The glorious reason follows for Christ — because He created all. How conclusive! No matter when born, He was chief of creation. The A. V. is right: the R. V. dangerously wrong in giving "in him were all things created." It expresses not the instrumental means as near the end of the verse, but the intrinsic power by which the work was done, here of universal creation. The mystical idea of the Revisers, for which there is no ground, seems refuted also by the tense which points to historical fact, as distinguished from the abiding continuance of the past act in the latter clause. Besides, it opens the door for universalism in opposition to all truth. Nothing can be clearer than the universality of creation here attributed to our Lord, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible: they, the whole of them, have been created "through" Him, and not only so but "for" Him as the end in view. And as He existed before all, so does the universe hold together by, or in virtue of, His power. But a wholly new glory succeeds, on which the church specially depends, and from which she derives her being and character. "And he is the head of the body, the church; who is [the] beginning [which is distinctive here, and not said of Him either when a divine person only, or when the Word became flesh, but only as risen], firstborn out of the dead." He rose the conqueror over sin and death to be the Beginning, and the suited Head of the body, that in all things He might become chief in rank. Anything short would have dishonoured both Him and the Father.

Next comes His work of reconciliation in its future scope for the universe, and in its actual and complete application to the saints, due to the glory of His person. 'Because all the fulness was pleased in him to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things to him- (or it-) self, having made peace through the blood of his cross — through him, whether those on the earth or those in the heavens. And you, once alienated as ye were and enemies in the mind by wicked works, yet now he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblemished and unimpeachable before him, if at least ye abide in the faith grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, that was preached in all the creation under heaven, of which I Paul became servant. Now I rejoice in the sufferings for you, and fill up that

which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh for his body, which is the church, of which I became servant according to the dispensation (or, stewardship) of God that was given me unto you to complete the word of God: the mystery that had been hidden from the ages and the generations, but now was manifested to his saints, to whom God would make known what [are] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory, whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ whereunto also I labour in conflict, according to his working which worketh in me mightily" (Colossians 1:19-29).

Here we have a twofold reconciliation (answering to His twofold personal supremacy over creation as a whole, and of the church), of which last not even His incarnation, however blessed and essential, but His death was the basis; for not till His cross was sin for ever judged before God. Again, the apostle mentions his twofold service, corresponding to Christ's person and reconciling ministry of the gospel in its unrestricted extent, ministry of the church in filling up the blank (left in the word of God) by the revelation of the hidden mystery, or secret unknown in Old Testament times. It here emphasises the Gentiles having part in it, not you in Christ, but "Christ in you, the hope of glory" on high, instead of Christ reigning over the earth, with Israel His centre and all the nations blessed according to the promises and the prophecies. For that the apostle toiled mightily, as he also endured afflictions for the sake of Christ's body, the church (atonement His only, but those afflictions of holy love left for His own to share), that he might present every man full-grown in Christ, of which toil He was not only the object but the power, being Head. So above man, so opposed to fallen nature, is the truth of Christ, as to involve conflict as well as toil, in such as serve Him. What can one do better than transcribe the apostle's burning words? "For I would have you know what conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and as many as have not seen my face in flesh; that their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding unto right knowledge of the mystery of God, in which are the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge hidden. And this I say that no one may delude you by persuasive speech. For though in the flesh I am absent, yet in the spirit I am with you, rejoicing and seeing your order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted and being builded up in him, and confirmed in the faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in [it] with thanksgiving. See lest there shall be one that leadeth you astray through philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are filled full (or, complete) in Him, who is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye were circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; buried together with him in baptism, in which ye were also raised together, through faith in the working of God that raised him out of the dead. And you being dead in the offences and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he quickened you together with him, having forgiven us all the offences, having blotted out the handwriting in ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us, and hath taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross; having stripped he made show of the principalities and powers, openly triumphing over them by it. Let none therefore judge you in eating or in drinking, or in respect of feasts, or new-moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body [is] of Christ. Let no one cheat you, in a voluntary humility and worship of the angels, intruding into things which he had not seen, vainly puffed by the mind of his flesh, and not holding fast the head, from whom all the body, being

supplied and knit together by the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:1-19).

None on earth knew as the apostle how all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in the mystery, or secret, God now reveals in Christ. Philosophy which flatters men's minds was as vain to penetrate and unfold it as the law which condemned his unrighteousness and left God in the dark. Man was thus exposed to worship of the angels, not those who beheld by faith all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ bodily, and themselves made full in Him Who is the head of all principality and power; and this in virtue of a redemption which gives in Christ the fullest force to the old rite of circumcision and the actual sign of baptism. For the truth goes farther than His death and resurrection, and declares that God quickened ourselves together with Him, having forgiven us all our offences. Hence the reflected light of ancient ordinances, as but shadow, passes away for such as hold fast the Head unfailing in His gracious supply.

Hence he thus applies it: — "If ye died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as alive in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances (Handle not, nor taste, nor tough, which things are all for corruption with the using), according to the injunctions and teachings of men: things such as have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility and unsparingness of the body, not in a certain honour, unto satisfaction of the flesh" (Colossians 2:20-23). But more, "If ye then were raised together with Christ, seek the things above where Christ is sitting at God's right hand: mind the things above, not those on the earth. For ye died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4) The Christian is not only quickened, but quickened and raised together with Christ; and thus he has new life in its highest character. It is hidden because Christ is hidden, hidden with Christ in God. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we too be manifested with Him in glory. How close and blessed is the association!

Practical consistency is doubly pressed. "Put to death then your members that [are] upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil lust, and covetousness, which is idolatry, on account of which things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience; among whom ye also walked once when ye lived in these things. But now ye put off also all the things, wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, shameful speech out of your mouth. Lie not to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new that is being renewed into knowledge, according to his image that created him; where there can be no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ [is] the all, and in all (Colossians 3:5-11). "Thus Christ and His work, and our association with Him dead and risen, become the standard of every-day walk for the Christian. Higher there cannot be, if our union with Him on high be added; lower is not acceptable to God Who thus blessed us in Him, but a slight to His grace. Nor is it only deliverance from the corruption and the violence of the flesh, as we already had from its philosophy and its religion; the positive is not omitted. "Put on then, as elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving each other, if any should have a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye. And over all these [put] love, which is the bond of perfectness; and let the peace of Christ rule (or, arbitrate) in your hearts, to which also ye were called in one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other, with psalms and hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace

in your hearts to God. And every [thing] whatever ye do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and [the] Father through him" (Colossians 3:12-17). It will be noticed that the peace and the word are Christ's: all here is to exalt Him, and detach from every rival.

Then from Colossians 3:18 follow special relationships on earth, but in the Lord: wives and husbands, children, and fathers; bondmen, and masters; (Colossians 4:1 being strangely dislocated from the close of chapter 3). The Lord, the Lord Christ, is the key-note. He is the masters' Master in heaven. From Colossians 4:2 is the call to perseverance in prayer and watching with thanksgiving, and prayers for Paul that he might speak the mystery of Christ, to which he attributes his bonds, that he might manifest it as he ought to speak. He exhorts that we walk in wisdom toward those without, redeeming the fit time; and that their speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt. Tychicus and Onesimus would make known to them all about Paul and things at Rome; and the former would report their matters to him. Then follow from Colossians 4:10 the salutations of many fellow-labourers by name, with instructive comments, greeting to the brethren in Laodicea and the assembly in the house of Nymphas, direction as to the Epistle and a companion one, and a charge to Archippus not to be slighted. And as in his early letters, so in this late one, Paul's salutation is with his own hand. He reminds them of his bonds, and prays that grace be with them. It is altogether a needed and noble Epistle.

§ 41. 1 THESSALONIANS. This Epistle has an interest peculiar to itself, as being the first inspired writing of the apostle. It is addressed to an assembly gathered a short time before by his (with others') labours, fresh in zeal and all due spiritual affections, but necessarily immature in knowledge. This led, it would seem, to the remarkable character of the inscription, "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, to the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." There they are viewed in the closest and highest association, babes in the Father and the Son (1 John 2:24). The workmen used toward them were giving thanks always for them, with mention in their prayers. Could it be otherwise with those who remembered unceasingly, not their "work" only but its "faith," their "labour of love," their "endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father"? All the great springs of power wrought in their souls and ways, and this in God's sight: what a testimony, as brethren beloved by God, to their election (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4), and to the power of the gospel, truly in the Holy Spirit and much assurance, according to the life of those who preached it (1 Thessalonians 1:5)! Hence they became imitators of them and of the Cord, having accepted the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit, so as to become a model to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:7). Nay, more: the word of the Lord had sounded out from them, not only in these two Roman provinces, but in every place their faith God-ward had gone forth; "so that we have no need to say anything, for they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you." What a wonder then, or at any time! "And how ye turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await his Son from the heavens, whom he raised up from the dead, Jesus the deliverer from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10). Yes, it is the faith, the walk of love and truth, and the hope. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-20 the apostle depicts the true workman in guileless suffering and unselfish love, as pleasing God, seeking no glory from men, but gentle as a nurse and faithful as a father, that they should walk worthily of God, "who calleth you unto his own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:1-12). "And for this cause also we give thanks to God

unceasingly that, having received God's word reported from us, ye accepted, not men's word but even as it is truly, God's word, which also worketh in you that believe." This only brings into living relationship with Him, and keeps there; proved by endurance of suffering for it, as the assemblies in Judea, and the apostles, yea, in the highest degree the Lord Himself, from the envious hatred of the unbelieving Jews on whom is come wrath to the uttermost (1 Thessalonians 2:13-16). It is true that Satan may hinder, and grace may call us elsewhere; but he presents the Lord's coming as the unfailing joy when all the fruits of love shall, without fail, bloom in His presence Who produced them. "For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thessalonians 2:17-20). We all then should look thus to His coming, which more than makes up for every drawback. From 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 we learn that as persecution followed the apostle, so it pressed on the young saints in Thessalonica; and Timotheus was sent by him to them, that none might be moved by these afflictions, though he had forewarned of all, and thus the tempter might be foiled (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5). But Timotheus on his return filled the apostle with good tidings of their faith and love (1 Thessalonians 3:6-8), as the apostle attests his joy before God, and prays "our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus to direct our way unto you; and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all, even as we also toward you, unto the establishment of your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13). When He comes with His saints, not before, will be manifested in perfection that holiness which flows from and is maintained by love. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 the apostle presses purity and love, proper to the disciples of the Lord Jesus, and called for by habits which ignored both. Not only is He the avenger of unclean wrongs, but God gave us His Holy Spirit as power in sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8). So the saints are themselves God-taught to love one another, ambitious of being quiet and doing their own affairs, and working with their own hands in order to a reputable walk and need of nobody. Not till here does the apostle correct the fancy that the dead saints would lose much at the Lord's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The Thessalonians were so absorbed by that hope as to conceive that only those who survived till then would be in its full blessing. Had they overlooked His own death and resurrection? Did they leave out of His triumph Stephen, James (John's brother), and many another fallen asleep, to say nothing of the Old Testament saints? The apostle assures that God will bring with Jesus those put to sleep through Jesus: so mistaken was it that we, the living that remain to His coming, shall anticipate those put to sleep. Then he explains as a new revelation how this is to be effected. "For the Lord himself with a shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, will descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What cheer so great, and all together too?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-28 takes up the manifestation of the Lord with His own when He judges the world; that is, His day, which was no new truth but familiar in all prophecy. His day so comes as a thief in the night, and with sudden destruction. It does not so overtake Christians who are sons of light and of day. Such then should watch and be sober, putting on suited armour; because God set us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, that, whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with Him. "Wherefore encourage one another," etc. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10). Then follow short but precious exhortations: to recognise those labouring and taking the lead; to be in peace among themselves; to admonish, encourage, sustain, and be long-suffering; none to render evil for evil, but always to pursue the good mutually and toward all.

’Always rejoice; unceasingly pray; in everything give thanks, for this is God’s will in Christ Jesus concerning you. The Spirit quench not; prophesyings despise not; but prove all things; the good hold fast; from every form of wickedness hold aloof. Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and your spirit and soul and body be preserved as a whole blamelessly at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also perform" (1 Thessalonians 5:11-25).

Then the brethren are asked to pray for the apostle and those with him; as all the brethren were to be greeted with holy kiss. With remarkable solemnity he adjures them by the Lord that the Epistle be read to all the [holy] brethren, and wishes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with them. None thought less of himself than the apostle; yet none had so deep a sense of the all-importance to the saints, everyone, of these special communications from the Lord as the Epistles; and the first from Paul implies this in the highest degree. Compare also 2 Thessalonians 3:17.

§ 42. 2 THESSALONIANS.

Here the address is in substance as in the First Epistle, but a little modified to meet the need. Hope was enfeebled by a Judaising error intended to alarm (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Hence after the salutation the apostle with his two fellow-labourers says, "We ought to thank God always for you, even as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth." But there is nothing now to mark in their endurance of hope as before, though it is added that "we ourselves boast in you in the churches of God for your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the tribulations which ye sustain." They were still faithful, though their hope was darkened. Apprehension of the day of the Lord had displaced their longing joy in His anticipated coming.

Hence he thus early in this letter points out that those afflictions they were enduring had nothing to do with that day, but were an evident token of the righteous judgment of God, to the end of their being counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which they were suffering. That day is, on the contrary, to destroy the wicked and usher in the kingdom of God, when those that suffer now shall reign with Christ. So he appeals to its indisputable principle: "If at least it is righteous with God to requite tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled repose with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with angels of his power, in flaming fire rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus [Christ]." For that day is directed against not one class but two, not only the nations ignorant of God, but the Jews who rejected the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus.

Why then fear? It was for both so described, who were such as should pay penalty in "everlasting destruction from the Lord’s presence, and from the glory of his might, when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and to be wondered at in all that believed . . . in that day." Can anything be plainer than that here we have the retributive character of that day in correction of unfounded alarm? "To which end we also pray always for you that our God may count you worthy of the calling, and fulfil every good pleasure of goodness and work of faith in power; so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and [the] Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:1-12). It will be apparent, the more the words are examined, that he does not speak thus far of our Lord’s coming to meet the saints caught up, but of His judicial revelation (or, His day), when He and they shall be seen together in glory, as to which they

had been misled. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 the apostle directly refutes the false teaching; for this it was: not ignorant and mistaken inference about the Lord's coming or its issues, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15. Here it is a spurious notion for which the highest claim was made, bringing terror on the living saints; there it was a hasty deduction of their own as to the dead saints. "Now we entreat you, brethren, by [or, for the sake of] the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, to the end that ye be not quickly shaken in [or, from] your mind, nor yet be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). Thus the blessed hope of His coming to gather them to Himself is the motive for asking them not to be disquieted by the groundless notion, not without fraud, that His day had arrived with its terrors.

How could it be? The saints were still here, not gathered up to Him; and the frightful evils which His day is to avenge were not yet manifested. "Let not any one deceive you in any manner; because [it will not be] unless there have come the apostasy first, and there have been revealed the man of sin, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself above every one called God, or object of veneration, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that while yet with you I told you these things" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5)?

Before that day there must be, first the falling sway, or the abandonment of the truth, next the revelation of the lawless one, in contrast with the mystery or secret of lawlessness at work in the church even when the apostle wrote. These three must not be confounded. The man of sin is the future adversary of the Lord, the Man of righteousness, the Antichrist of the First and Second Epistles of John, the wilful king of Daniel 11:36-39, and the second Beast of Revelation 13:1-18, identical with the False Prophet of Revelation 19:1-21, as he is the antithesis of the true Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:1-22, if we heed the apostle Peter (Acts 3:1-26). The restraining power and person (for both are true) is the Holy Spirit in His governing action providentially, not limited to the Roman empire (for He still restrains, though the empire exist not); and when it reappears under the dragon's influence, it is exactly when the Spirit ceases to restrain. Till then the powers are ordained of God; after it, Satan will be allowed to set up the lawless man as God even in His temple, whom the Lord Jesus will slay (or, consume) with the breath of His mouth and annul by the manifestation of His coming, having already gathered His saints to Himself on high. No solid ground appears for regarding either the apostasy or the man of sin as successional, like the mystery of lawlessness. They are both future at the consummation of the age, the former preparing the way for the latter. Nor is it well founded to view the "consuming," if that word were read, as gradual through the word: compare Isaiah 11:4, Isaiah 30:33. The Lord's antagonist is unique and arrayed with portentous power and signs and wonders of falsehood, according to Satan's working retributively to deceive and destroy those who refused the love of the truth and had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:6-12). In contrast with such, it drew out thanksgiving always that God chose the brethren from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and faith of the truth. This was shown when He called them "through our gospel" to obtaining our Lord Jesus Christ's glory. So they are exhorted to hold fast what they were taught, whether by word or by "our epistle;" and as in closing chap. 1, so here in chap. 2 he prays that our Lord, and our God and Father Who had so loved and blessed, might encourage their hearts and stablish them in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18 opens with asking their prayers that the word of the Lord might run and be glorified, even as also with them, and for deliverance from unreasonable and evil men, for faith is not of all. But the Lord is faithful; what a strength to stablish the saints and keep from evil! And hence it was that the apostle trusted that what he enjoined they both were doing and would do, and prays that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. He was waiting above; let them wait here below. But the act of withdrawing from disorderly idlers, serious as it is, should not be confounded with purging out the wicked person in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, which last only is excommunication. They were therefore not to esteem one that shirked work as an enemy, but rather to admonish as a brother. Leaven, on the contrary, has to be peremptorily purged out as unclean. Again, he prays the Lord of peace Himself to give them peace through every. thing in every manner, and Himself be with them; for such things are apt to disquiet and lead to errors if not judged. As he adjured them by the Lord to read the First Epistle to all the holy brethren, so here he salutes by his hand as the mark in every epistle, and wishes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with them all.

§ 43. 1 TIMOTHY. That the Pastoral Epistles should have a common character distinct from those to the saints is easily understood; and that each has its own peculiarity is a plain matter of evidence to the attentive reader. The difference is conspicuous in the two letters to Timothy; for the first is as careful to insist on order as the second is to provide for a state of disorder, that the godly might even then have divine directions for their walk, bound as they were and we are, to take account of so sad a change. That to Titus comes in character between the two extremes.

1 Timothy 1:1-20. "Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus according to command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timotheus, genuine child in faith; grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." The prefatory words, as usual, give a clear insight into the scope of what follows. The apostolic title is as important for authority here as for the truths of the gospel and of the church to the Roman and to the Corinthian saints, to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. "According to command" assimilates this letter and that to Titus, while it differentiates both from the second Epistle to Timothy. "God our Saviour" is also very notable here and to Titus, bespeaking the universal testimony of God’s grace in the gospel, and strongly contrasted with Judaism. God in love goes out actively to man in the death of the Mediator. Christ is the hope, and unfailing if cherished. The exhortatory injunction to Timothy was first and foremost to guard the truth from all alien teaching, and specially fables and interminable genealogies which are such as yield questionings rather than God’s dispensation that is in faith (1 Timothy 1:3-7), the end of it being love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith. It is inseparable from Christ.

These then are the substantial blessings of the gospel, and missed by such as turned aside to vain discourse, wishing to be law-teachers. Therein was the early plague of imagination, and of legalism which assails grace as antinomian while itself tending to that evil, whatever its own contrary claim. It is not that the lawful use of the law is denied, which is to convict lawless and insubordinate persons (1 Timothy 1:8-11). The gospel alone witnesses of Christ to save sinners, of whom the apostle specifies himself as first, to whom, in his ignorant unbelief, mercy was shown — Christ’s whole long-suffering (1 Timothy 1:12-16). This draws out his praise, after which he repeats the injunction laid on Timothy, that he might war the good warfare, maintaining faith and a good conscience. For such as put away the latter make shipwreck of the former; of whom he holds up

Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom he had delivered to Satan for their dishonour to God (1 Timothy 1:18-20). How practical and personal it all is! And what is there but a sham and a shame if it be not so?

1 Timothy 2:1-15. Here we find the public attitude of Christianity. All should breathe of loving goodwill toward man and the chiefs of the world, even if heathen and persecuting. "I exhort therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority, . . . for this is good and acceptable before God our Saviour, who wisheth that all men be saved and come unto full knowledge of truth. For there is one God, one mediator also of God and men, a man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all, the testimony in its own times; to which I was set preacher and apostle (I speak truth, I lie not), teacher of nations in truth and love" (1 Timothy 2:1-7). Grace rises above all natural thoughts, feelings, and ways, and calls on those who believe to bear a living witness of "God our Saviour," Who is willing to save all that bow to Jesus, the ransom for all. Such is the testimony; and now that the cross on man's side proves the guilt of all (Jews and Gentiles), the same cross on God's side proclaims salvation to all that believe.

Paul was herald of this grace, but moreover apostle in full authority, and teacher in patient wisdom, that even besotted Gentiles might believe and know the truth. Yet reverence and divine order become those who profess the truth. "I will therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up pious [or, holy] hands, without wrath and disputation." All the faithful were holy brethren; and it was no longer the question of a Jewish sanctuary any more than of a Gentile high place. They were free and invited to pray elsewhere. The women were to cultivate modesty and discretion (instead of fashion and finery), with good works their true ornament. To learn is their place, not teaching nor authority, but quiet subjection; for which he cites the case of Eve, who, deceived, brought in transgression, whatever mercy may do even in her chief natural sorrow.

1 Timothy 3:1-16. Then Timothy has directions for the local charges of bishops (or, overseers) and deacons. "Faithful is the saying: if one is eager for oversight, he desireth a good (or, comely) work." The requisite qualities (1 Timothy 3:2-7) are moral or spiritual, rather than the possession of an express gift. Free from reproach, husband of one wife, sober, discreet, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach; not quarrelsome over wine, not a striker, but gentle; not fond of money; ruling his own house well, having children in subjection with all gravity (for how could one command respect in God's house who had it not in his own?). And again, not a novice, nor one destitute of a good report without. All this is of so much the more moment as it has been slighted habitually by the greatest systems down to the least. But we cannot wonder where the office itself is burned to ecclesiastical and even worldly show. Those to be entrusted with the diaconate are briefly described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, and in this case the women or wives, who might be useful or a hindrance.

Occasion is given, not here to a doxology, but to a solemn presentation to that church in which the apostle, Timothy, elders, and deacons, and indeed all saints, each called in his special place, have to walk. "These things I write to thee, hoping to come to thee rather soon; but if I delay that thou mayest know how one ought to behave in God's house, which is a living God's assembly, pillar and support of the truth. And confessedly great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in flesh, was justified in Spirit, was seen of angels, was preached among nations, was

believed on in [the] world, was received up in glory." Godliness depends on and is the fruit of the truth in Christ, the secret no longer hidden but revealed; which as a whole, therefore, is in ways wholly distinct from and above a Jewish Messiah reigning in visible power, but known as we Christians know Him. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.

1 Timothy 4:1-16. With this the apostle draws a dark contrast. "But the Spirit speaketh expressly that in latter times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons by hypocrisy of legend-mongers branded as to their own conscience, forbidding to marry, [bidding] to abstain from meats which God created for reception with thanksgiving by those faithful and well acquainted with the truth; because every creature of God [is] good, and nothing to be rejected if received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified through God's word and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:1-5). Asceticism is no more Christian than moral laxity, though it assumes a fairer form. It is a pretentious assault on the Creator and Preserver of man by setting up a superior sanctity, which ends in turpitude against nature. Monachism is unconscious war against God. Timothy was called to be a good servant of Christ Jesus by laying the contrary good teaching of benign and faithful providence before the brethren, and avoiding what he calls profane and old wives' fables. For piety or godliness is profitable for everything, having promise of the present life as well as of that which is to come: our God is Preserver of all men, especially of the faithful. He must not be deterred by such as objected to his youth, but meet the reproach by an example in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Reading, exhortation, and instruction are enjoined till Paul came. The gift that was conferred on him he was not to neglect, but to be diligent in these things, and wholly in them, that -his progress might be manifest to all. A divided heart rums the service of Christ. Self-vigilance, too, is imperative, to save both himself and others.

1 Timothy 5:1-25. Here we have the proprieties of that work, which cannot be slighted without danger and harm. An elder he was not to rebuke but exhort as a father, younger ones as brethren, elder women as mothers, and younger ones as sisters, with all purity (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Widows were to have special and careful consideration (1 Timothy 5:3-10), and younger ones to be shunned, in which case suited directions are laid down (1 Timothy 5:11-16). Elders or bishops were to rule, and those who ruled well to be counted worthy of double honour, especially those labouring in word and teaching: a scripture important to bear in mind; as it is also to receive no accusation against one, save with two or three witnesses. Those that sin should be convicted before all, that all the rest too should fear. He adjures Timothy solemnly to observe these duties without prejudice and without favour, cautious against haste in sanctioning others, lest it might compromise him. He even deigns to counsel liberty where his scruples might injure health, before he closes the warning he had begun, lest he should unwarily be a partaker of other men's sins.

1 Timothy 6:1-21. Christian slaves are not forgotten, as to whom grave and gracious counsels are given, in the face of different teaching, which is exposed sternly, though the last clause of 1 Timothy 6:5 is a spurious accretion. Godliness or piety with contentment, the reverse of making it a means of gain, is great gain. For as we brought nothing into the world, neither can we carry anything out. Having food and covering, we will be, or let us be, content therewith. How true that those who will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition! For the love of money is a (not exactly "the") root of every evil, after which some, too eager, wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. Timothy is then urged, as God's man, to flee these things and to pursue righteousness,

godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness, to combat the good combat of faith, to lay hold on eternal life, according to the good confession he confessed. Then follows a deep and lofty injunction which crowns this Epistle, and urges his keeping it spotless and irreproachable till the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in its own seasons the blessed and only Potentate shall show, the King of those that reign and the Lord of those that rule, Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; Whom none of men hath seen or can see, to Whom be honour and might everlasting. Amen.

Thereon Timothy is told to charge the rich to rest, not in uncertain wealth, but on the living God; to be rich in good works, laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold of what is really life. Timothy, in fine, is to keep the entrusted deposit, avoiding profane vain babblings and oppositions of falsely named knowledge. How trenchantly and in all moral earnestness the apostle speaks before he wishes him grace!

§44. 2 TIMOTHY. The second Epistle to Timothy assumes a deeper character because of the grave disorder of a general kind which was before the eyes of the Holy Spirit. The regular means would not meet that which already and most seriously disclosed departure from God. Hence in the address it is no longer "according to command," etc., but "by God's will according to promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus," anticipating in measure that on which the apostle John falls back for the last time. Individual fidelity is the more required, yet in no way giving up but maintaining the divine association of saints, which the Spirit forms here below.

2 Timothy 1:1-18. The value of unfeigned faith rises before the apostle's heart in this last word of his to his beloved child, to whom he again wishes grace, mercy, peace. He thanks God whom he serves from his forefathers in a pure conscience, with increasing remembrance of Timothy and his tears, and longing to see him that he might be filled with joy. He speaks even more decidedly of the faith which dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother and in his mother, as in his child also. Ho puts him in mind to stir up the gift of God in him through the imposition of the apostle's hands, and bids him not be ashamed of the Lord's testimony, nor of Paul His prisoner, but suffer evil with the gospel according to God's power. He it was who saved us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace that was given us in Christ Jesus before everlasting ages, but now manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, annulling death as He did and bringing to light life and incorruption through the gospel, unto which Paul was appointed herald and apostle and teacher of Gentiles. For this cause he was suffering thus, but not ashamed; "for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard for that day my deposit." Hence he says, "Have an outline of healthful words which thou heardest from me in faith and love that is in Christ Jesus; the good deposit guard through the Holy Spirit that indwelleth in us." Scripture alone is reliable, as afterwards expressly said; not human tradition, of all things the most uncertain. Timothy knew the cowardice of many — that all those in Asia, specifying two, had deserted Paul. How different Onesiphorus, for whom and whose house he asks mercy, because he often refreshed him, and when in Rome the more diligently sought him out when a prisoner, besides his loving service in Ephesus!

2 Timothy 2:1-26. Faithful as Timothy had been, the apostle is now most earnest, "Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things thou heardest from me among many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be able to teach others also.

Thou therefore take thy share of suffering evil as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on service entangleth himself with the businesses of life, that he may please him that enlisted [him]. But if one also contend [in the games], he is not crowned unless he have contended lawfully. The labouring husbandmen must first partake of the fruits." These maxims need only to be correctly represented to carry their weighty sense. It was no rite, but truth which had to be communicated; yet suitably an earnest devotedness is pressed, and subjection to the Lord's will; and, as the labourer, first to share the fruits.

"Remember," says he, "Jesus Christ risen from the dead, of David's seed, according to my gospel, wherein I suffer evil unto bonds as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound." Royal rights gave Him no exemption. On the contrary, death was His portion, and what a death! Him Paul followed and imitated as far as this could be, as he urges on all in 2 Timothy 2:11-13, and on Timothy to put them in remembrance of these things, instead of wordy fights worse than profitless. His earnest zeal cut straightly the word of truth, warned by two others whom he names as samples who had strayed in asserting the resurrection as past, overthrowing faith under so spurious an exaggeration This gives occasion to an instruction of great and general value. "Nevertheless the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are His; and, Let everyone that nameth the Lord's name depart from unrighteousness." From individual comfort and responsibility he goes on to corporate condition and duty. "Now in a great house are vessels, not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earthenware, and some to honour and some to dishonour. If one therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable for the Master, prepared unto every good work. But flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." If the Lord's secret is with Himself, responsibility is mine as calling on His name: I am bound to have done with iniquity. No presumed usefulness can justify my persevering in wrong. But does not God's house abound in anomalies? Am I to leave it? No, I dare not cease from the public profession of the Lord's name with all the baptised; but I am here to purge myself from the vessels to dishonour in that house, and, instead of isolation, to follow every Christian duty with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It may cost much, but it is plain and obligatory in all times and places. And while moral care is ever incumbent, He claims my soul also, with a peaceful and gentle bearing, "in meekness instructing those that oppose, if haply God may give them repentance unto acknowledgment of truth, and that they may wake up out of the snare of the devil, taken as they are by him, for His will."

2 Timothy 3:1-17. Next comes a solemn warning of the outlook in Christendom, for many would expect progressive good on earth. "But this know that in the last days difficult (or, grievous) times shall be there. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemous, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, uncontrolled, fierce, haters of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, pleasure-lovers rather than God-lovers, having a form of piety (or, godliness) but deniers of its power; and these turn away from." One might have shrunk from a course so peremptory, had the apostolic charge been less plain. It was direct to Timothy, but for every Christian also. The evil was at work even then, and the apostle severely characterises not only the corrupt misleaders, like Jannes and Jambres, but the misled as silly women laden with sins, led by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to right knowledge of truth. As the false or senseless teachers have their limit set, Timothy is told how

he had closely followed Paul's teaching, course, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecution, sufferings. Such is the ministry of Christ the Lord, with persecution endured, and the Lord delivering out of all! What is more, the apostle assures that all who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted, but wicked men and impostors shall advance for the worse, deceiving and being deceived. How sad, yet how true! What is the resource or safeguard for Timothy and for all saints? "Abide thou in those things which thou didst learn and wast persuaded of, knowing of whom thou didst learn them [they were no mere traditions of unknown source]; and that from a babe thou knowest the sacred letters [those of the Old Testament] that are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture [of New Testament or of Old] is God-inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction that is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished thoroughly unto every good work."

2 Timothy 4:1-22. Not less solemn is the apostle's direct charge. "I testify earnestly, before God and Christ Jesus that is about to judge living and dead, both His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; convict, rebuke, encourage with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will be when they will not endure sound teaching, but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear, and will be turned aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer evil, do evangelist's work, fully perform thy ministry." Be it observed that Christ's appearing, not His coming as such, is though distinct connected with His Kingdom. He comes to receive His own to Himself and for the Father's house; He appears and establishes His kingdom, when all shall see Him and them in the same heavenly glory. "For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is all but come. The good combat I have combated, the course I have finished, the faith I have kept: henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me in that day; and not to me only, but also to all that love [have loved and do love] His appearing." Here again, as His coming is the expression of sovereign grace, His appearing is the display of His righteous remembrance of faithfulness, or, of course also, marks the want of it.

Then the apostle bids Timothy be diligent to come unto him quickly; he valued his loving presence, and knew that Timothy reciprocated it. He speaks of Demas with grief. Whatever he might be as known to God, he deserted the apostle through love of the present age. Crescens and Titus had their work, and only Luke was with the apostle. He wished Timothy on his way to take up and bring Mark with him. There indeed he had joy, if sorrow over Demas. For Mark, says he, is useful to me for ministry. He had no longer Tychicus whom he sent to Ephesus. How interesting in these ministerial solicitudes, to have the apostle — while writing an inspired pastoral epistle — telling Timothy to bring the cloak which he left behind in the Troad with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments! Hence we learn of the Christian liberty the apostle exercised as to these outward things of body and mind. He preferred to have the cloak brought than to buy another, and he asked for his books there, which had their interest or use for him, though looking for death he knew not how soon. He would not so speak of the scriptures. If he put special stress on 'the parchments," or unwritten material of a costly and durable nature, was it to have his Epistles correctly copied and multiplied?

Next, he alludes to the hostility of Alexander the coppersmith, not in a prayer, but in the grave conviction that the Lord would render to him according to his works; for he showed much evil

against the apostle, who warns Timothy also to beware of him. He pathetically names how all deserted him on this repeated imprisonment when his first defence came on; but the Lord stood by him, turned it for all the Gentiles to hear, and delivered him from most imminent danger, as He surely would from every evil work, and preserve him for His heavenly kingdom. He wishes salutations to his old friends Prisca and Aquila, and to Onesiphorus' house. He tells of Erastus at Corinth, and Trophimus left sick at Miletum; for a sign of healing (as the rule) did not apply to a Christian, who came under the Lord's government. He gives the greeting of Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren; he prays that the Lord should be with the spirit of Timothy, and grace be with him and others there.

§ 45. TITUS.

There does not appear to be enough of external marks to decide when the apostle wrote this Epistle to his genuine child and fellow-labourer. But internally we may gather that it was after the First Epistle and before the Second to Timothy, with which letters it has closer links of connection than with any others. For on the one hand it treats like 1 Timothy of official government; on the other it speaks like 2 Timothy of the hope of life eternal which the God that cannot lie promised before times everlasting. As in the former, it is our Saviour God who commands; it is not the law, but faith of His elect, a common faith.

Titus 1:1-16. "Paul, bondman of God, and apostle of Christ Jesus according to faith of God's elect and acknowledgment of truth that (is) according to godliness in hope of life eternal, which the God that cannot lie promised before times everlasting, but manifested in its own seasons his word in a preaching wherewith I was entrusted according to our Saviour God's commandment, to Titus genuine child according to a common faith: grace end peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour" (Titus 1:1-4). Truth according to godliness is to be acknowledged.

National or birth privileges, so prized in Israel as in the world, vanish before a revealed and believed Christ, in whom was life eternal before all ages, but now in virtue of His word preached in its own due time, as authoritatively entrusted by a God of saving love to the apostle, who writes to Titus with his usual Christian salutation. "For this cause I left thee behind in Crete that thou mightest thoroughly set right things remaining, and appoint city by city elders, as I directed thee: if one is unimpeachable, husband of one wife, having children faithful, not accused of excess or unruly. For the overseer must be unimpeachable as God's steward, not self-willed, not passionate, not a wine-sitter, not a striker, not a base-gainer: but hospitable, loving good, discreet, just, pious, temperate, holding to the faithful word according to the doctrine, that he may be able both to encourage with the healthful teaching and to rebuke the gainsayers. For there are many unruly vain-speakers and beguilers, chiefly those of circumcision, who must have the mouth stopped, who upset whole houses, teaching what they ought not for the sake of base gain. Said one of themselves, a prophet of their own, Cretans, always liars, evil wild beasts, lazy gluttons (or, bellies). This witness is true; for which reason rebuke them severely, that they may be healthful in the faith, not heeding Jewish fables and commandments of men turning from the truth. All things (are) pure to the pure; but to those that are defiled and faithless nothing [is] pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. God they profess to know, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and for every good work worthless" (Titus 1:5-16).

Thus we see that elders (not gifts) required apostolic establishment, direct or indirect; and that moral weight was sought, and a good report in themselves and their households, to cheer those who valued healthful teaching and to rebuke adversaries. For already disorder was at work largely, and evils had entered within like the world's without. Epimenides is cited as a prophet, not of God but of their own, frankly and unsparingly denouncing what Titus was to rebuke severely, helped on as it was by Jewish professors who set Jewish fables and human ordinances before them, not the truth. Thus man and his deceits cover impurity, while our souls are purified by obeying the truth unto unfeigned brotherly love. To the pure all things are pure; to the defiled and faithless is nothing pure, yea, both their mind and their conscience are defiled. Professing to know God only aggravates the case of those who deny him in their works, being loathsome in themselves, disobedient to God, and for every good work reprobate. What a picture of the Christian confession before the first generation passed away! How like that which we have to face to-day! Alas, there is yet more now and worse.

Titus 2:1-15. Titus, however, was not only to appoint elders, such as the apostle describes, and so to carry out the moral government which the Lord enjoins suitably to the need of souls; he is instructed also in his own charge to the same end. Hence his duties are laid down toward elder men and elder women, young women and young men. Bondmen have a large place: and it is after dealing with them that the apostle speaks so grandly of the saving grace of God that appeared for all men, and its all-important teaching for such as received it meanwhile and await the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Separateness and zeal for good works become those redeemed to Himself, a people purified. He was to deal out exhortation and rebuke with all authority.

"But speak thou the things that beseem the healthful teaching, that elder men may be sober, grave, discreet, healthful in faith, in love, in patience; that elder women in like manner [be] in mien beseeming sacred things, not slanderers, not enslaved to much wine, teachers of comeliness, that they may train the young women to love husband, to love children, discreet, chaste, home-workers, good, subject to their own husbands, that the word of God be not reviled. The younger men in like manner exhort to be discreet, as to all things affording thyself a pattern of comely works; in the teaching incorruption, gravity, sound word not to be condemned, that he who is opposed may be abashed, having no evil to say about us; bondmen to be subject to their own masters, to be well-pleasing in all things, not gainsaying, not purloining, but showing all good faithfulness, that they may adorn the teaching of God our Saviour in all things. For the saving grace of God appeared to all men, teaching us that, having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live discreetly, and righteously, and godlily in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify for himself a people for his possession zealous for comely works. These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all command: let no one despise thee" (Titus 2:1-15).

Here we learn how momentous it is, that those who are the objects of God's grace in the gospel should be to its praise by a walk in every relation of this life formed, strengthened, and guided according to Christ; and how inconsistency or disorder in these respects gives occasion for the enemy to blaspheme. How touching is that grace which is developed in its rich and direct bearing immediately after the exhortation as to slaves! Beyond doubt it was for all the faithful, end for every

relation among them; but how considerate our Saviour God's care to tell it out at that point in the chapter! The law of God was imposed on one people; the grace of God appeared with its saving character to all men, as it teaches "us" who believe that, having denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live discreetly as to ourselves, righteously toward others, and godlily in the highest respect. Nor is this all; but awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And how assuring for the heart to remind us here, that He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for works good and comely!

Titus 3:1-15. But there are other relations more external which are not overlooked. The self-will, which breeds emulation and strife in the homes and in the assembly, is not less disorderly, evil, and destructive in the world. "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to revile no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing all meekness toward all men." It was not so always in our case. Grace it is that makes the difference in us that believe. "For ourselves too were once senseless, disobedient, going astray, slaves to various lusts and pleasures, spending our time in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness and the philanthropy (or, love to man) of our Saviour God appeared, not from works in righteousness which ourselves did, but according to his mercy he saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of Holy Spirit, which he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, justified as we were by his grace, we should become heirs according to hope of life eternal. Faithful [is] the saying; and as to these things I would have thee insist that those that have believed God be mindful to maintain comely works. These things are comely and profitable to men; but foolish questions and genealogies and strifes and legal contentions shun, for they are unprofitable and vain. An heretical man after a first and a second admonition shun, knowing that such a one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:1-11). It is sect-making, heterodox or not.

How mighty and worthy of admiration is the goodness and the special affection of our Saviour God that appeared in Christ! What a contrast with men's philanthropy, which might be in Jew, Heathen, or Islamite, of whom either gives a little out of his abundance, or compounds for sins by a superstitious and self-righteous poverty to enrich the priesthood! The Christian was proved in himself utterly evil and ruined, when God's love wrought in saving goodness according to His mere and sovereign mercy: wherein He saved us through washing of regeneration, which totally changed our state from that of fallen Adam to the risen Christ, and renewal of Holy Spirit, not only in a sinless life given which loves holiness, but in the Spirit's power which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. But thus it could not be till He wrought redemption and was glorified; and thus it was that, being justified by His grace as well as purified, we should be heirs according to hope of life eternal. "Hope" it is, for that life has not its full consummation till the body is as instinct with it at Christ's coming as the inner man is already by faith; for only thus has hope its glorious fruition. The apostle would have Titus occupied with these things, which deliver from evil and give us communion, not only in the good and comely ways of divine mercy, but with God Himself. The conscience too is exercised that there might be moral conformity in good or comely works, the fruit of love, shunning the idle and barren speculations of gnostic philosophy and legalist battles, where peace with God is unknown. But there is another evil to be avoided, not only "heresy," as a split from the unity of the Spirit is called (see also 1 Corinthians 11:19,

Galatians 5:20), but any sanction of him who is self-condemned in leaving the church of God. The close follows. "When I shall send Artemas or Tychicus unto thee, be diligent to come unto me at Nicopolis, for there I have decided to winter. Zenas the lawyer and Apollos zealously forward, that nothing be lacking to them; and let ours also learn to maintain comely works for necessary wants, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Salute those that love us in faith. Grace [be] with you all" (Titus 3:12-15). Paul desired the presence of Titus, but not at the expense of the saints and the work in Crete whither he was sending his fellow-labourer, Artemas or Tychicus. But jealousy of other workmen not so connected was alien to his heart; nay, he would have all learn to maintain comely works to help on this and other fruitful ways for the necessary wants. He gives the salutation of all, and wishes it to those who dearly loved them if in faith, and that grace should be with all, which all needed.

§ 46. PHILEMON.

Here we have a letter of marked distinctiveness, placed after the pastoral Epistles though clearly written about the time when the great communications were made to the saints in Philippi, Ephesus, and Colosse. Its occasion was the return of Onesimus, a runaway slave, now a Christian brother, to his master Philemon; which calls out by the Spirit the most admirable application of grace and truth in Christ. It stands in full contrast with law, and exemplifies the gospel inn's practical power and effect, turning a once worthless man's wrong into the exercise of divine affections in consonance with redemption, the holy fellowship of the faithful, and the deep and delicate proprieties withal of their social relations.

'Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timotheus the brother, to Philemon the beloved and our fellow-workman, and to the sister Apphia and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the assembly at thy house. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ" (Philemon 1:1-3). Each word and the entire scope alike express grace, not official authority. It is as Christ's prisoner Paul introduces himself, as farther on he appeals. Timothy figures simply as "the brother." Philemon is addressed as "the beloved" according to his known character (Philemon 1:1), and honoured as a fellow-labourer in the Lord's work. And, what is most unusual, his wife is associated in the address, not "the beloved" as in the A.V. and the later copies, but "the sister" as in the ancient and best MSS. That she should be addressed was most fitting in the circumstances, and the mode is no less becoming. Next is Archippus, designated as "fellow-soldier" in sharing the conflicts of the truth; and lastly the church at Philemon's, which the apostle includes in the address to fill up the communion his heart desired with the usual benediction. From Philemon 1:4 he lays the ground for his appeal with thanksgiving. "I thank my God, always making mention of thee at my prayers, hearing of thy love and the faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus and unto all the saints, so that thy fellowship in the faith may become effective in acknowledgment of every good work that is in us Christward. For I had [the true reading] much joy and encouragement over thy love, because the bowels of the saints have been refreshed through thee, brother." He puts forward Philemon's love, but in no way omits to add his faith, so that his sharing in the faith might work every good, "not in you," which though true is commonplace and feeble, but "in us" according to the best authorities, that is, in other Christians from Paul to Onesimus as regards Christ, owning his joy and cheer in what Philemon had been shown to be in refreshing the affections of the saints.

Then in the body of his letter (Philemon 1:8-20) he tenderly presses his suit. "Wherefore, having much boldness in Christ to enjoin on thee what is fitting, for love's sake I rather exhort, being such a one as Paul, aged and now too prisoner of Jesus Christ, I exhort thee for my child whom I begot in my bonds, Onesimus, that was once of no use to thee, but now of use to thee and to me, whom I send back to thee* in person, that is, mine own bowels; whom I would have kept with me, that for thee he might minister to me in the bonds of the gospel. But apart from thy mind I wished to do nothing, that thy good might not be as of necessity but of willingness. For perhaps for this reason he parted for a time, that thou mightest have him back for ever, no longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a brother beloved, specially by me, but how much more by thee, both in flesh and in [the] Lord. If then thou holdest me as partner, receive him as me; but if aught he wronged thee or oweth, put this to mine account. I Paul write with mine own hand, I will repay: that I say not that thou owest me besides even thyself. Yea, brother, I would have profit of thee in [the] Lord: refresh my bowels in Christ. Being confident of thine obedience I write to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say."

* The common text here reads, "Thou therefore [receive] him," etc.

"But withal prepare me also a lodging, for I hope that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workmen. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit." The apostle in no way denies or forgets his position, but he prefers to exhort for love's sake, on one side as Paul aged and now also prisoner of Christ, on the other for his child begotten in his bonds, Onesimus. Grant that he was once a useless slave to Philemon, was he not now of good use to both Philemon and Paul, and sent back to his master himself, as it were Paul's very heart, though he would have kept him with himself to do him service on Philemon's behalf in the bonds of the gospel? Only apart from Philemon's mind he would do nothing, that his good might be of free-will, not of constraint. And how beautiful the turn that grace gives! "Perhaps for this reason he was parted for a time, that thou mightest have him back for ever, no longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a brother beloved, specially by me, but how much more by thee, both in flesh and in the Lord." So simply is it urged in all its power that one can but repeat rather than explain. Then follows the point of fellowship. "If then thou holdest me a partner, receive him as me; but if aught he wronged thee or oweth, put this to mine account. I Paul write with mine own hand, I will repay: that I say not to thee, that thou owest me besides even thyself." For it would seem that Philemon too was indebted to the apostle for receiving the truth.

"Yea, brother, I would have profit of thee in the Lord," he says, referring to the name of Onesimus, "refresh my bowels in Christ." Would he refuse to Paul what he had done hitherto to the saints in general, as in Philemon 1:7? "Being confident of thine obedience I write to thee, knowing that thou wilt do even more than I say." Who can doubt that Philemon would receive Onesimus lovingly, and set him free to the joy of all? But it is on no ground of human rights, or natural benevolence, but showing him "the kindness of God," the grace of Christ, the fellowship of the faith. It is the counterpart of the riband of blue on the fringe of the garment, the heavenly ornament in our character on earth, grace governing in our relationships here below, as it reigns in God's dealings with us for eternity.

§ 47. HEBREWS. The distinctive character of this Epistle is at least as plain and as important as that of any other. It is expressly anonymous; for he who wrote it, though himself an apostle, did so as a teacher, resting its authority on the Old Testament, supplemented by the Son of God come and deigning to be Apostle in the highest sense and rank. This gives a divine and heavenly character to the communications, which were to Israel, represented now by a believing remnant, and sanctified for glory with Him on high, till the new age arrive, when the then remnant shall become a strong nation, and the new covenant formally and fully comes into force with the two houses of Israel as such. Then the Lord Jesus, Who was Apostle and Prophet on earth, and is the Great Priest in the heavens and above them, shall reign as King not only in Zion but over all the habitable earth. It may be observed that even this Epistle, like the rest, says nothing of that royal position so amply revealed by the Old Testament Prophets. It dwells on the present and intermediate place of Christ above, and thence passes to the heavenly calling of the saints.

Hebrews 1:1-14 opens with His personal glory as Son of God, abundantly attested by the Psalms and the Prophets; as Hebrews 2:5 and onward follows with His glory as Son of Man, according to Psalms 8:1-9, in answer to His work of redemption, qualifying Him to be a merciful and faithful High-Priest as none else could be. Hence in Hebrews 3:1-19 the believers, addressed as holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling out of the chosen nation, are exhorted to consider Jesus the Apostle and High-Priest of our confession, before Whose worth, dignity, and power, Moses and Aaron were but shadows. The saints, like Israel, are passing through a wilderness of temptation and danger. Profession may be only profession, and thus many not only slip but fall and perish. Living dependence on God is essential; and the beginning of confidence to be held fast firmly unto the end. Unbelief is the great snare. Hebrews 4:1-16 pursues this: we, who have believed are not in God's rest of glory but going on to it. Adam did not enter, though God sanctified the sabbath as its sign; Joshua did not lead into it, but only into a Canaan that typified it; for long after, David spoke of it as still future. Meanwhile we have to fear even seeming to come short; and we need to give diligence, for the time still calls for this. The rest remains. And God has provided two invaluable means to bring us through: His word (answering to the apostleship); and Jesus the Son of God, a great High-Priest before God as He went through the heavens. Thus we may approach the throne of grace with boldness, that we may receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help. In Hebrews 5:1-14 the Aaronic priesthood is compared to show the incontestable superiority of Christ's. He Who erst commanded learnt obedience, not only as man, but in suffering beyond all. Perfected through death and resurrection, He is addressed or saluted of God as High-Priest after the order of Melchizedek. The danger for the saints here is of remaining babes, instead of growing to full age (or, perfection) by receiving the solid food of Christ. Hebrews 6:1-20 solemnly warns against not pressing on to this status of majority, lest, even after great privileges were known, the mere elements* expose to falling away and irretrievable ruin. But the writer was persuaded better things of those who had shown life in love, as he desired for them full assurance of hope, for God had laid indefectible ground for strong consolation. Then Hebrews 7:1-28 expounds the surpassing excellence of Christ's office as Melchizedek priest, not in exercise (which is set forth as Aaronic) as it will be, but in its order. For this answers fully and now to what His prototype was in figure, His being one sole intransmissible priesthood in contrast with Aaron's order.

* It is an unhappy rendering to say "first principles:" for these we never "leave." It is really "the word of the beginning of Christ" — what was known before His death, resurrection, and ascension.

Hebrews 8:1-13 gives a summary of the aforesaid, and adds the greater excellency of Christ's ministry as Mediator of a covenant better than the Mosaic; not man's failing to obey, but God's effectual work in grace, the very title of "new" writing death on the "old." In the earlier verses of Hebrews 9:1-28 is shown that under the law the way into the holies was not yet manifested: man could not go in, as God had not come out. Christ has verified both. In Him God came out, in Him man is gone in. How transcendent is the Christian's blessedness who reaps the fruit of both by His sacrifice and priesthood! In this chapter the fact of a testator and "testament" is turned to good account (Hebrews 9:16-17); everywhere else it is "covenant," as the context proves. Christianity is not man tested, but God who has wrought for His own glory in saving grace toward man. Hebrews 10:1-39 applies the blessing fully to those who believe, and this on the basis of Christ's one perfecting sacrifice. Hence He sat down in perpetuity at God's right hand, as He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. Why wonder? It is God's will, Christ's work, and the Holy Spirit's witness. The believers, with whom the inspired writer joins himself, are exhorted to act now on these precious privileges in Hebrews 10:19-25, and warned of the peril of apostasy in slighting or abusing Christ's sacrifice by sinning wilfully, as they were in Hebrews 6:1-20 of not going on to full growth. But they are again reminded of better things, and told not to cast away their confidence, though they had need of endurance. It is not all the truth that the once unjust are justified by faith (Romans 4:5); for "the just shall live by faith."

Hence in Hebrews 11:1-40 we have the roll of faith differently but invariably displayed in God's noble army of confessors long before Israel, of whom the Lord Jesus is the Leader and Completer (Hebrews 12:2). As to chastening, they were neither to despise it nor to faint under it. The danger here is failing from, or lacking, the grace of God (i.e., losing confidence) through unbelief in His love; and Esau's profanity stands as a beacon. Then we have a grand contrast of what Israel cams to at Sinai, with our having come by faith to the entire scene of blessing flowing out of Christ and His redemption: first Zion the highest point of royal grace on earth; then the heavenly city, not the old but new Jerusalem; next the indigenous dwellers on high, myriads of angels, all their assemblage; further the assembly of firstborns enregistered in heaven; and God Himself Judge of all; then we come down to the spirits of just men made perfect (the Old Testament saints), and to Jesus with fullest mercy and joy for the earth as Mediator of a covenant that is not only "new" but as "fresh" as ever; and lastly to the blood of sprinkling in contrast with Abel whose blood brought curse, this Christ's everlasting blessing. He changes even a warning into a promise to faith. But let us have grace by which to serve God acceptably with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire. What has not His grace done and given!

Hebrews 13:1-25 closes the Epistle with urging that brotherly affection abide, hospitality, and kindness to sufferers; that marriage be honourable in all (or, every way), and conduct be free from love of money. Next departed guides are to be remembered; but if they were gone, Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Hence they were to be set against various and strange doctrines. Grace confirms the heart, not meats which profit not devotees even. Jesus that suffered without the gate, Whose blood avails within the holiest, is the key of the Christian position. "Therefore let us go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." The middle place, beloved of Judaisers and philosophers, is the place of apostate Jews, and now of effete

Christendom. "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually;" yet sacrifices in doing good have also their real place. Again living guides are to be obeyed. This is their use, to lead others who might not readily see the path of Christ. They shall give account, not of the souls led, but of how they led them. No one valued the prayer of saints more than he who here asks it, after his first imprisonment and before the second. With Timothy set at liberty he hoped to see them again. How suited is the prayer in Hebrews 13:20-21, not only to them and the writer, but to this Epistle! It seems to be beyond just question what Peter in his second Epistle refers to (2 Peter 3:15), as written by Paul to Christian Jews, to whom Peter addressed both of his (1 Peter 1:1, and 2 Peter 3:1).

§ 48. JAMES. The peculiarity of the Epistle before us is evident. The address marks it plainly and indelibly, "to the twelve tribes that are in dispersion." The entire breadth of the chosen people is brought before us, and this in the largest spirit of faith; for in fact there was no such people since the Assyrians executed judgment on the idolatrous ten tribes, first rent away from Rehoboam. Faith did not give it up, as we see in the O.T. when Elijah testified for Jehovah against Baal (1 Kings 18:31, also 2 Chronicles 30:1; and Daniel 9:7); and so we see in the apostle Paul (Acts 26:7). Here only is it the direct address of an inspired Epistle. It is expressly far wider than the apostle Peter's word inscribed to the "elect sojourners of the dispersion," not only because these were limited to a part of Asia Minor, "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [proconsular], and Bithynia," but still more deeply and restrictedly by the spiritual character notified, which excludes all but Christians like those contemplated in the great Epistle to the Hebrews.

Here it is not so, though such as had the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ are distinctly recognised (James 2:1); and the writer describes himself from the beginning as "bondman of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). But the peculiar condition that still obtained in Jerusalem is here supposed — at any rate till the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. The synagogue was frequented as yet (James 2:2), and the haughty bearing is not overlooked of the rich toward the poor (rich in a faith which those had not). Oppressive they themselves were in a worldly sort, nay also disposed to blaspheme the excellent Name that was called on the heirs of the Kingdom.

Hence we see already the plain traces of an unreal profession of faith, which in the apostle John's much later Epistle appears after a yet more solemn guise. But James takes up its earlier shape when faith was becoming a creed, intellectual and traditional. So it naturally would where Christians abounded in close connection with their unbelieving brethren, not only in social but religious life also. For there seemed no such urgent reason to require separation as idolatry necessitated for the Gentile confessors among the heathen. This goes far to explain the denunciations in James 4:1-17, James 5:1-20. The Epistle from its nature according to its address deals directly with open fleshly and worldly wickedness in a way unexampled among the other apostolic writings. Here it is in keeping with the direction of the writer; which is as singular in the N. T. as the book of Jonah in the Old. Both are exceptional, for the latter has for its object the testimony and mercy of God to a Gentile power, in a circle of holy writ pre-eminently if not exclusively occupied with Israel; as the former is God's testimony still to the twelve tribes, in a volume which opens and goes through with the incredulous Jews stumbling at the Stumbling-stone, and His message of grace sent meanwhile to the Gentiles who were to hear. Yet the end of the Lord is that He is full of pity and merciful; so that, as Old and New Testaments bear witness, all Israel shall be saved at His purging judgment, and the nations shall rejoice with His

people, when the rejected Christ shall arise to rule as Jehovah, King over all the earth, as the like never was, nor shall ever follow, though absolute rest and righteousness will be the worthy result for all eternity.

James 1:1-27 after greeting those in view calls them to count it all joy when they fall into various temptations or trials. This presumes faith practically, looks for patience or endurance as the fruit, and exhorts that it have a perfect work, that they might be perfect and complete, lacking in nought. But if any of them lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all freely (or, liberally) and upbraids not, [as He well might]; and it shall be given to him. Hence he is told to ask in faith, as this is due to God, nothing in doubt. For the doubter is like surge of the sea wind-driven and tossed (for let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord), a double-minded man unstable in all his ways (James 1:1-8). In Christ alone here as everywhere else we see the perfection of patience and of communion with God. Present circumstances are of such small account, that the brother of low degree is to glory in his elevation by grace, and the rich in his humiliation, as passing away like flower of grass. No sooner did the sun rise with its scorching, than it withered the grass, and its flower fell, and the comeliness of its look perished: so also shall the rich fade in his ways. Emphatically therefore is it added, Blessed the man (not that stands high in the world but) that endureth temptation; for, having been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which He promised to those that love Him (James 1:9-12). Worldly feeling is in no way spared. We are called by glory and virtue.

Next, we are warned of a wholly different temptation from within. "Let none say when tempted, I am tempted of (or, from) God. For God cannot be tempted by evils, and himself tempteth none. But each is tempted when drawn away and enticed by his own lust; then lust having conceived beareth sin; and sin when completed bringeth death. Err not, my beloved brethren. Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom can be [or, is] no variation nor shadow of turning. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a certain first-fruits of his creatures" (James 1:13-18). It is not redemption which is here applied, but the new life by divine and sovereign grace; and suitable practice is demanded earnestly.

Confidence in our Father is inculcated as well as dependence, no less than distrust in self; consistency too as now having by grace a new and divine nature, and watchfulness against our own lusts. Hence the word from James 1:19-27, "Ye know [it], my beloved brethren; but let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for man’s wrath worketh not God’s righteousness. Wherefore, putting away all filthiness and abundance of wickedness, receive in meekness the implanted word that is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, beguiling yourselves: because if one is a word-hearer and not a doer, he is like a man considering his natural [or, birth-] face in a mirror; for he considered himself and hath departed and immediately forgot what he was like. But he that looked into the perfect law of liberty and remained there, being not a forgetful hearer but a work-doer, he shall be blessed in his doing. If one think to be religious while not bridling his tongue but deceiving his heart, his religion is vain. Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Who could possibly set forth more plainly truth so clear, pithy, and needed day by day? We want readiness in receiving from God, vigilance against haste of speech and the high spirit, to be consistent with our relationship to Him.

Self-judgment greatly helps us to profit by the word which, meekly received, enters in power, and reproduces itself in action. Where it is merely hearing, all is forgotten speedily, instead of being blessed in one's doing. But where by grace the word fixes the heart's heed, it is a perfect law of liberty, and God's will is loved for its own sake and His. The tongue is bridled because it is ours; and its licence is just the opposite of pure and undefiled service whether in active care for the sorrow-stricken, orphans and widows, or in true and holy separateness from the world which seeks self and slew the Saviour.

James 2:1-26 confronts the faith of our Lord — Lord of glory, with respect of persons. A graphic sketch of their synagogue, where the grandee was as honoured as the lowly was despised, convicts them of partiality with evil thoughts (James 2:1-4). What a contrast between God's choice and promise, and the natural effect of wealth, toward God and man (James 2:5-7)! The royal law was thus set at nought by such transgressions, yea, the whole law compromised; for whatever may be in this way, thus to offend in one point is to be guilty of all. And the law of liberty (the renewed soul going heartily as he was bidden) is alike right, given to enjoy mercy, while the judging spirit will meet the judgment it measures out (James 2:8-13). This introduces the withering exposure (in James 2:14-26) of faith boasting without moral reality. Such faith condemns a man instead of saving him. In vain are kind words without corresponding ways. If one say, Thou hast faith, and I have works, the answer is, Show me thy faith without works, and I from my works will show thee my faith. Need it be pointed out that Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25 expounds how the ungodly is justified before God? Here it is the fruitless confessor condemned before man. The point here is, Show me. The demons believe; but there is no life, only ruin. Faith without works is idle; whereas the cases of Abraham and Rahab were works so truly of faith that without living faith they were evil. For at God's word one was ready to sacrifice his son, the other to betray king and country: faith quickened and transfigured them. From opposite sides, how blessedly the two scriptures agree! In James 3:1-12 is a full warning against speech without dependence on God or His grace; and first in public teaching. "Be not many teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive greater judgment. For we all often offend. If one offend not in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body too." Bits in horses' mouths, rudders of ships, are small but of great power: so yet more with the tongue, more untameable than any animal of land, air, or sea. It is apt to be, not inconsistent only, but hypocritical.

Instead of things so unworthy, the exhortation is to show out of a good course of life one's works in meekness of wisdom, the reverse of bitter emulation and strife with the result of disorder and every other evil. But the wisdom from above (and what else is of moment?) is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, uncontentious, unfeigned. And righteousness's fruit in peace is sown for those that make peace (James 3:13-18). The contrast of wars and fightings is traced in James 4:1-17 to the self-pleasing and lust of the natural heart, and the corruption which flows from that friendship with the world which is enmity with God. "Think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the Spirit that abode in us desire enviously?" Rather "He giveth more grace; wherefore ho saith, God setteth himself against haughty ones and giveth grace to lowly." Submission to God is urged, and resistance of the devil who will flee, but drawing near to God: all as settled things (aorists). Then we have the remarkable call to "sinners" for cleansed hands and purified heart. in humiliation before the Lord, with true mourning and heaviness for His lifting them up (James 4:1-10).

Evil-speaking one of another is next (James 4:11-12) reprehended as judging the law and the law-giver; to judge it is not to be its doer, but setting up against God Himself. Like self-will appears in forgetting our entire dependence on God from day to day, and in the affairs of this life (James 4:13-17). The simple yet divine motto closes, "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The law no doubt is generally characterised by what is negative, as Thou shalt not do this or that; Christianity, just as manifestly, by the positive exercise of doing good, the life of God in man. Here it is insisted on.

James 5:1-20 brings in the coming of the Lord to warn the rich oppressors, and to comfort the suffering Jewish remnant that believed. The labourer awaiting harvest is made a homily of patience; and the prophets and Job still more (James 5:1-11).

Profanity is denounced, prayer proscribed to the evil entreated, singing to the happy. Again, we see how the elders intervened where any fell under a sickness inflicted governmentally, and the sick one confessed such sins and was forgiven. Indeed the general principle is pressed of confessing one to another (not a word about this to elders even while there); and the value of fervent supplication, of which Elijah was so signal an example. We also learn the privilege of restoring those who err from the truth or the right ways of the Lord, leaving it to shallow, hard, and proud men to pique themselves on putting away (James 5:12-20).

04A.11. Part 11

God’s Inspiration of the Scriptures Part 11 § 49. 1 Peter. As the address in the Epistle of James differs from that of Peter, whose two Epistles are directed to the same Christian Jews, elect sojourners of the dispersion in part of Asia Minor, so the character of both is most distinct, as may be now soon in the first of the two. They were as he says "elect according to God the Father’s foreknowledge in [virtue of] sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ." Thus does the apostle contrast their standing with Israel, who had only a fleshly and external separation to Jehovah, and were bound to obey the law under the sanction of the sprinkled blood of victims which kept death before them, as the sure penalty in case of their disobedience. The opening is like that of the Epistle to the Ephesians, yet with a marked difference from the first and throughout. Here it is not "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, according as he chose us in him before the world’s foundation that we should be holy and blameless before him in love," etc. It is, "Who according to his much mercy begot us again unto a living hope through resurrection of Jesus Christ out of the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in the heavens for you that are guarded by God’s power through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5). It is not "the mystery," but the "heavenly calling," for saints who pass through the wilderness and await their heavenly inheritance at Christ’s appearing; it thus far resembles the Epistle to the Hebrews. Exultation meanwhile should be, as grief for a little through varied trials which terminate at His revelation. But we love Him, though we never saw, Him; and though we do not see Him, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in distinctive contrast with Israel’s faith and hope. We receive soul-salvation and wait for that of our bodies. The prophets predicted; the Holy Ghost now witnesses in the gospel; the Lord will be revealed to crown all in glory. Thus between the two, room is made for the gospel and Christianity. We therefore, cheered by what is accomplished, gird up our loins in the Spirit, and hope perfectly for the grace to be soon brought us in Jesus Christ’s revelation (1 Peter 1:6-13).

He says then as obedient children, conforming not yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance, but according to the holy One that called you, may ye be holy in all conduct; because it is written, Be ye holy, because I am holy. And if ye invoke as Father Him that impartially judges according to the work of each, pass the time of your pilgrimage in fear, (not because ye doubt your deliverance, but) knowing that not with corruptibles, silver or gold, ye were redeemed from your vain course of life handed down from fathers, but with Christ’s precious blood as an unblemished and spotless lamb, foreknown before the world’s foundation, but manifested at the end of times for you that through Him believe in God that raised Him out of the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God (1 Peter 1:14-21) The chapter closes with pointing out that having purified their souls by obedience of the truth to unfeigned brotherly love, they were out of a pure heart to love one another fervently, being born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible through God’s living and abiding word. It was not now a question of Israel’s sons, but of God’s. And as the new relationship was through His word received in faith, it was on the ground of His

sovereign grace in presence of the total failure of His ancient people. Because all flesh is as grass, and all its glory as grass and its dower; but the Lord's word abides for ever. And this is the word which was preached unto them. Relationships to each other among believers follow these to God and Christ; they are most excellent, intimate, and enduring (1 Peter 1:22-25). Saints might suffer but ought to be of good cheer.

1 Peter 2:1-25. Hence they were, putting away all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and slanders, to long for the pure milk of the word as new-born babes, that they might grow thereby to salvation, if indeed they had tasted that the Lord is good: without this all was vain. As we see, salvation here as elsewhere is viewed as only complete when glory comes; but as by God's word we were born again, so are we nourished. He is the Living Stone, rejected by men but with God elect, precious; and they coming to Him as living stones were being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Isaiah 28:16 is cited; for the work of grace in Zion by-and-by is no less true for the believers now, to whom the preciousness belongs, while the nation stumbles in disobedience; whereas the faithful gain to the highest degree and are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, to set forth the excellencies of Him that called them out of darkness into His wonderful light. What Israel are to have when they believe is forestalled, and much more now (1 Peter 2:6-10). Christians as such are the sole priests whom the Lord now recognises. As pilgrims and sojourners they are besought to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, with their behaviour seemly among the Gentiles, that wherein they slander them as evil-doers, they might, as witnesses, out of their good works glorify God in a day of visitation (1 Peter 2:11-12). Christians are meant to be separate to the Lord, and ever waiting for Him and glory above, instead of being sown to Jehovah in the land, for great is the day of Jezreel.

Again, he lays down submission to the powers that be, closing with a pregnant summary: honour all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king (1 Peter 2:13-17).

Domestics are next exhorted to subjection with all fear of their masters; and the Christian principle is enjoined, "If doing good and suffering ye shall endure, this is grace with God." Hence Christ in suffering every way and perfectly is set as model to us, who had gone far astray but now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:18-25).

1 Peter 3:1-22. Then wives and husbands are exhorted in the same strain of grace as objects of God's government at work morally (1 Peter 3:1-7). Finally, all were to be of like mind in sympathy, brotherly love, tenderness, and humility, not returning evil in deed or word, but contrariwise blessing in the sense that such is our calling and hope. The Psalms are freely used to confirm it, warning against self and assuring us of the Lord's care. Even if we should suffer for righteousness, how blessed! We need not fear or be troubled, but should sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, always ready to answer everyone that asketh a reason about the hope that is in us with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that, wherein they slander us as evil-doers, those may be put to shame that calumniate our good behaviour in Christ (1 Peter 3:8-16).

Next he urges the manifest truth that it is better, if the will of God will it, to suffer well-doing than evil doing; for Christ also once suffered for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God, put to death indeed in flesh but quickened in Spirit, in [virtue of] which [Spirit] also He went and preached to the imprisoned spirits, heretofore disobedient when the long-suffering of God waited

in Noah’s days while the ark was a preparing, wherein few (that is, eight) souls were saved through water; which figure also now saves us, baptism, not putting away of filth of flesh, but a request of a good conscience Godward through Jesus Christ’s resurrection, Who is at God’s right-hand, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to Him (1 Peter 3:17-22). The notion of Christ’s descent to Hades after death and there preaching to saints, sinners, or angels, is a mere dream, not only without scripture but contrary to it, and irreconcilable with revealed truth. The passage refers solely to His Spirit preaching to the antediluvians through Noah. As they then disobeyed the word, they are in prison, awaiting the still more solemn judgment for eternity; so must those; be who refuse the gospel now preached.

1 Peter 4:1-19. Christ suffering for us in flesh is here pressed on us, who also need it the more because of our having lusts, which He had not. The past surely should suffice those who are now renewed, and have lived with the unrestraint to which Gentile surroundings exposed. If now reviled, because they refused such vileness, those who did so should give account to Him that is ready to judge quick and dead. For therefore were glad tidings preached to dead also [of course while alive], that they might be judged according to men in flesh, but live according to God in Spirit. If they submitted to that judgment of themselves as guilty men, they emerged by faith with a new life whereby they lived according to God in Spirit. It is the other side of what the antediluvians experienced who disobeyed Noah’s preaching of righteousness (1 Peter 4:1-6). They were dead now, who by faith bowed to the judgment of their condition and also laid hold of the promises to a life Godward. This bringing before the apostle the end of all things as drawn nigh, he calls the saints to be sober and watch unto prayers; to cherish before all things fervent love among themselves, because love, instead of bruiting abroad, covers a multitude of sins; to be hospitable one toward another without murmurings. Even as each received a gift, they were to minister it to one another, as good stewards of God’s manifold grace: if one speak, as God’s oracles; if one minister, as of strength which God supplies; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, Whose is the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen (1 Peter 4:7-11). In 1 Peter 4:12-19 is the word not to take as strange the fire among them that cometh for their trial, as though a strange thing happened to them; but in communion with Christ’s sufferings to "rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice exultingly. If ye are reproached in Christ’s name, blessed [are ye], because the [Spirit] of glory and the Spirit of God rests on you." This is the highest suffering in God’s sight, not merely for righteousness, but for Christ. Let none of you, he proceeds, suffer as murderer or thief or evil-doer or as overseer of other’s affairs; but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but glorify God in this name. Because [it is] the time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; and if first from us, what [is] the end of those disobedient to the gospel of God? And if the righteous is with difficulty saved, where shall the ungodly and sinful appear? Wherefore also let those that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing to a faithful Creator.

1 Peter 5:1-14. The last chapter opens with exhorting the elders among them, himself a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who was also partaker of the glory about to be revealed, in exact keeping with the Epistle. Feed, says he, the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight not by necessity but willingly, nor yet for base gain but readily, not as lording over your allotments but being models of the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, ye shall receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Peter 5:1-4). How every word shines with the light

and love of God, yet how forgotten in Christendom! The younger he bids be subject to elders, and to bind on humility toward one another; for God sets Himself against proud ones, but gives grace to the lowly. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in season, having cast all your anxiety upon him, for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:5-7). Again he says, Watch, be wakeful: your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. It is not the wiles of a serpent here, still less the ruler of the authorities of the air, but the wilderness enemy. "Whom resist, stedfast in faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brotherhood in the world. But the God of all grace that called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after suffering a little, himself shall make perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle: to him [be] the glory for the ages of the ages. Amen." Did not the apostle remember and apply Luke 22:32? No doubt he was carrying out his charge over the circumcision that believed in the sphere where Paul laboured so much. And it is full of interest to note that the faithful Silvanus, the companion of the one, now conveyed this Epistle of the other, wherein he exhorts and testifies that this is the true grace of God "wherein ye stand, (or, in which stand)." Again "Mark my son" is now Peter's companion, quite restored to the confidence of the other apostle who had blamed him of old. "She that is joint-elect" appears to be the true force; but whether Peter's wife or another in Babylon whence he writes, we cannot say. He asks for a warm and holy greeting, and peace too mutually, to "you all that are in Christ."

§ 50. 2 PETER. Not less characteristic of the great apostle of the circumcision is his Second Epistle. They are both occupied with God's moral government; but the former is in view of saints now suffering for righteousness, and for Christ, waiting for His appearing; the latter in view of false and corrupt teachers (2 Peter 2:1-22), and of scornful philosophic adversaries (2 Peter 3:1-18), alike unrighteous, who shall not fail to meet His judgment in that day. Both are eminently practical and hortative, redemption and new risen life being the basis in the one case, as Christ's purchase aggravates the wickedness in the other.

2 Peter 1:1-21. "Symeon Peter, bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ to those that obtained like precious faith with us by (or, in) righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." These cited words of address are distinctive, notable, and instructive. He does not speak of their being reckoned righteous "through faith," as many misunderstand, but attributes their receiving faith such as the apostle had to God's faithfulness to His promise. For there is always a remnant of grace among Abraham's seed, and of none other. So it had been in the guilty history of Israel; and so it was then, after the Jews rejected their own Messiah. And the dispersed share like precious faith with those who by grace followed Him intimately. If the Blesser here, "our God," became our "Saviour Jesus Christ," it is the more impressive; as undoubtedly He was not Messiah only but the Jehovah God of Israel. To "Grace and peace be multiplied to you," he now adds "in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Peter 1:1-2). The increasing stress called for it then and since.

Grace had already done so wondrously for them that he looks for growth accordingly and spiritual power (2 Peter 1:3-11). "As his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by (or, by his own) glory and virtue, through which he hath given us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of a divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust. Even for this very reason too bringing in besides all diligence, in your faith furnish virtue, in virtue knowledge, in knowledge temperateness, in temperateness endurance, in endurance godliness, in

godliness brotherly kindness, in brotherly kindness love. For if these things be and abound in you, they make [you] neither idle nor unfruitful as respects the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; for he with whom these things are not is blind, shortsighted, having forgotten the purging of his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye shall never stumble; for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished to you." In the full provision of grace he would confirm their souls, but this in order to earnest diligence and the supply of all deficiency; that instead of questions through habitual negligence and short-coming, they should enjoy an unclouded sense of their election and calling, and their anticipated entrance into Christ's everlasting kingdom be supplied along the way.

Yet, glorious as the kingdom will be, Christianity has higher things in Christ to which our apostle but alludes. In view of speedily departing he casts on no apostle to succeed, still less on an imagined apostolic succession as men say, nor any safeguard but the word of God, as did Paul also. No cunningly devised fable do we follow to make known the power and coming of our Lord, but were sanctioned witnesses (not a?t?pta? only but ?p?pta?) of His majesty, and heard the Father's voice utter His delight in His beloved Son. This made the prophetic word more sure, to which those addressed did well to take heed, "as to a lamp shining in a squalid place, until day dawn and [the] morning star arise in your hearts." They were not to slight prophecy with which they were more or less familiar as Jews. But Christ now known by the gospel yields better and brighter things to which he encourages them. Hence he would have arise in their heart the heavenly light of the day of grace, and of Christ Himself the Star of the morning, the Christian hope before the day of Jehovah. Here they might be weak, as most have been even though not Jews previously. Prophecy is truly about the earth: our proper portion is with Christ in heaven. But they must not take prophecy of scripture as being of its own (or, isolated) interpretation. This might suit man's limitation; but God gave it as a whole converging on Christ and His glory. "For never by man's will was prophecy brought, but men spoke from God, borne on (or, moved) by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:12-21).

2 Peter 2:1-22. Here the apostle sets out the ruin of the Christian confession by false teachers, as before it had been for Israel by false prophets. He avows no illusive hopes. Far from getting all the nations to the banner of Christ, there should be the "falling away," the apostasy, and worse still (as we read in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17). "They shall bring in destructive sects, denying even the Sovereign Master that bought them, bringing on themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1). The Lord Jesus bought, not the hidden treasure only, but the entire field, the world. He tasted death for every thing. All are His not only by divine right of creation but by His death that purchased all with the utmost solemnity. This however does not mean redemption, which delivers the captive from the enemy, but simply that they are purchased. Believers are both bought and redeemed; all the rest are bought only, and among them those corrupters of whom the apostle speaks unsparingly as bringing the way of truth into disrepute. Their sure and exemplary judgment he confirms by varied instances. "And many shall follow their licentiousnesses, because of whom the way of truth shall be blasphemed. And in covetousness with feigned words they will make gain of you; for whom the judgment from of old is not idle, and their destruction slumbereth not" (2 Peter 2:2-3). The first witness of coming judgment he draws from sinning angels that were left till the Lord judges Satan at a later day; but God has already consigned them to pits of deepest gloom for that

judgment. The next is the old world of ungodly on whom He brought a flood when He preserved Noah a preacher of righteousness. The third is the overthrow that consumed ungodly Sodom and Gomorrah when He delivered righteous Lot. Thus the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trial and keep unjust men for punishment in judgment-day, but chiefly those that go after flesh in lust of uncleanness and despising lordship (2 Peter 2:4-10). A most energetic moral denunciation follows (2 Peter 2:11-17) of their audacity and self-will, corruption, luxury, and wanton licentiousness ensnaring unstable souls, and yet more. Forsaking the right way, theirs is the path of Balaam with no less folly; and for them the gloom of darkness is reserved. The plain proof is given from 2 Timothy 2:18-26. Their high-flown words of vanity only allured and ensnared others into their own slavery of corruption, however they might promise liberty. Their last state of return to evil was all the worse for a knowledge that gave a temporary escape from the world's pollution. It was as a dog turning back to its own vomit, and a washed sow to rolling in mud.

2 Peter 3:1-18. This deals rather with scoffing unbelief of closing days against the promise of the Lord's coming. Peter would have them remember the words spoken before by the prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through "your apostles." It was all foretold. Materialism would prevail, what is now called Positivism; not hypocritical corruption as in 2 Peter 2:1-22, but philosophical or infidel materialism as the only truth and certainty (2 Peter 3:1-4). The apostle refutes it first by the inspired account of the deluge: things have not continued as they are from creation's start. The antediluvian world perished by the flood: whilst the now heaven and earth by His word are stored up, kept for fire unto a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:5-7). He intimates what is no small thing for understanding the coming day of the Lord, that one day is with Him as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day; though accomplishing immense change at once, it also extends through a long period. And it is His grace in now saving, not slackness, that defers it. But it will come unexpectedly as a thief; in which (day) the heavens shall pass away with rushing noise, and elements with fervent heat shall be dissolved, and earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up (2 Peter 3:8-10). It is still the day, but its evening as it were, when this catastrophe shall come.

Hence his appeal to the saints. "All these things being thus to be dissolved, of what sort ought ye to be in holy ways and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, by reason of which (day) heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and elements in fervent heat shall melt? But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, as ye wait for these things, use diligence, spotless and blameless to be found by Him in peace; and count the long-suffering of our Lord salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, as also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which (epistles) some things are hard to understand, which the untaught and unestablished wrest, as also the rest of the scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:11-16).

How weighty the application to holy and pious and devoted service! and how interesting in more ways than one the reference to "our beloved brother Paul;" who, while he mightily explained the prophets, went so far beyond as to divine counsels, hard to Jews especially, which the ignorant and unstable distorted to their ruin. It is clear that inspired Peter calls Paul's epistles "scriptures," all of which were so misused. And more than that; he speaks of Paul's having written to the Christian Jews, as Peter also in both his Epistles. What can this be, but the Epistle to the

Hebrews? Compare Hebrews 12:26-27 : the one apostle referring to the morning, the other to the evening, of the same day of the Lord.

"Ye therefore, beloved, knowing beforehand, be on your guard lest, led away along with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him [be] the glory both now and unto eternity's day. Amen." All over it is Peter's fervour, but aged and mature, waiting for that death by which he should glorify God.

§ 51. 1 JOHN The unique character of the Epistle before us cannot but impress every intelligent Christian, one might say any attentive disciple. Like that to the Hebrews, it has no formal address: like that of Jude, it is meant for, as that was addressed to, all saints everywhere, both too in view of the deepest evil among professing Christians; by Jude, of apostates who had crept in; by John, of many antichrists who had gone out. But our Epistle is distinguished by the fullest development of the life eternal in Him who lived among men, in the closest intimacy with His own here below, the same life which was with the Father before He was manifested on earth.

'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we gazed on, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the life eternal, the which was with the Father, and was manifested to us): that which we have seen and heard we report to you that ye also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship too is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; and these things we write that your joy may be filled full" (1 John 1:1-4). This introduction is based on the grand one to the Gospel in John 1:1-18; but with the marked difference that there it was the Word in the beginning, God with God before creature came into being; here it is "that which was from the beginning," the Word of life become flesh, that tabernacled among us in the most familiar love; that the chosen witnesses, and such as believe their report and like them have life eternal in Him, might have the same blessed fellowship, fellowship with the Father and with His Son in the fullest joy now and evermore. No higher joy than this fellowship will be in heaven; and it is our unbelief if it be not ours now on earth.

Then comes the divine nature, testing our reality in 1 John 1:5-10; it is "the message" that follows the manifestation.

"And this is the message which we have heard from him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus [Christ] his Son cleanseth from all sin. If we say that 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 cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we sinned not, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Thus having had the love of the Father and the Son, we must face God as light, as every converted soul proves. One following Christ walks no more in darkness but has the light of life. The question here is where we walk, not how. We are brought to God Who is light and therein walk henceforth, poor as the walk may be; but if that is so, we have fellowship one with another, all so walking (and no longer in the dark of an unknown God), with the assurance that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin. Its efficiency is as great to purge as God's light to detect all sin, and

this we now share with every saint. We confess, and God forgives and purifies. But if we pretend to walk in the light while still in the dark, our life is but a lie; if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves: else the truth would lay it bare. If we say that we did not sin, we go farther wrong still and make God a liar, for His word attests the contrary.

1 John 2:1-2 supply the resource if one should sin. "My little children, these things I write to you that ye sin not. And if one sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world." His person and His work abide in unchanging value; but He meets our inconsistencies by His advocacy on our behalf on high. And we have "Father" here as in the introduction, not "God" us in the testing of our nature and ways by His light between the two paragraphs. The question is then raised how to know that there is true knowledge of God. The first proof is obedience in 1 John 2:3-6, keeping His commandments, and yet more His word. All profession without obedience is false; while he that speaks of abiding in Him ought himself also so to walk as He walked. The second proof is love in 1 John 2:7-11. It was an old commandment without power when our Lord was here with His disciples; it became a new one when He died and rose. Always true in Him, it was then and thus "true in him and in you, because the darkness is quite passing, and the true light already shineth." Here too, claim to be in the light, while hating one's brother, proves that one is in nothing but the darkness of fallen nature. Christ must be our life, whether to obey or to love.

Next we have the family of God, all having their sins forgiven for Christ's name (1 John 2:12), distinguished as fathers, young men, and babes (pa?d?a) in 1 John 2:13, and repeated with enlargement, save for the fathers, in 1 John 2:14-27, closed by 1 John 2:28 which unites them again as "little children" (te???a) by the call to abide in Him, that when He shall be manifested, we (John etc., not "ye") may have boldness, and not be put to shame from before Him at His coming. The great principles and the details of this parenthesis are full of weight, beauty, and interest: the fathers characterised by knowing Christ as here, to which the apostle adds nothing; the young men by vigour in overcoming Satan and loving the Father, not the world; and the babes warned against the many antichrists, but knowing all as having unction from the Holy One, and as it abode in them, so were they to abide in Him.

Practical righteousness is touched in the last verse of 1 John 2:1-29 as flowing from being born of God, when the apostle turns to another parenthesis in 1 John 3:1-3, where the Father's love, our present relationship as children, and the hope of Christ's manifestation are richly brought out in a few words. For indeed we need all grace to practise righteousness, which depends on the divine nature; but the hope too has purifying power. He then contrasts the sinner with Christ in Whom was no sin and Himself manifested to take away our sins: as every one that practises sin practises also lawlessness; for sin is a deeper and wider thing than transgressing the law. So whoever abides in Him sins not; whoever sins has not seen nor known Him. Thereon the family of God are warned against deceivers; and righteousness is insisted on, and the devil and the Son of God confronted as are the children of God with those of the devil, 1 John 3:1- being the transition to love, and Cain the ensample of hatred and unrighteousness.

Thus they were not to wonder if they were hated by the world which remains in unremoved death. We on the contrary know that we have passed out of death because we love the brethren; whereas hatred is in principle murder, and no murderer has life eternal abiding in him. But love

must be real, not in the tongue only, from its utmost self-sacrifice down to little deeds of every day. We must also beware of a bad conscience, so as to have boldness toward God, and receive what we ask, in an obedient spirit, believing on the name of His Son and loving one another. "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he gave us." This leads into the unfolding of the Spirit in 1 John 4:1-21 as to truth and love. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits if they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus [Christ come in flesh] is not of God; and this is the [spirit] of the antichrist whereof ye have heard that it cometh, and now it is already in the world" (1 John 4:1-4). Ye are of God, says he to the little children, and have overcome them; they are of the world, their all; we (the inspired like himself) are of God, as perfectly giving His word: a momentous thing then and ever since. "Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." When the truth is thus clear and settled, we can freely speak of love.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth hath been begotten (or, is born) of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not knew not God, because God is love." It is not standing here by faith, as Paul urges, which is also true, but participation in the divine by Christ as our life. "Herein was manifested the love of God in our case, because God hath sent his Only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as propitiation for our sins." Ought we not then to love one another? No one has ever beheld God; our love should now attest Him, as Christ when here declared Him (compare John 1:18). "Herein we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." For His Spirit is the power of all communion. Yet is the apostle careful to allege the surest fact, lest we should get lost in feeling. "And we have beheld and do testify that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world."

Hence the simplicity and the directness and the breadth of Christian truth. It is not only those who had beheld Him while here; nor was the deepest blessing the fruit of singular spirituality or attainment. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God." How this strengthens the weak, and reproves the careless! Does it allow of doubt? "And we have known and believed the love which God hath in our case. God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God and God in him." Nor is this all: "Herein hath love been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment, and he that feareth hath not been made perfect in love. We love [?him], because he first loved us." Unreality is thus exposed. If one say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loves God love also his brother. The possession of a divine nature is the great contrast with the world in 1 John 3; but here in 1 John 4:1-21 we have the further and high privilege of God’s dwelling in us, leading to our dwelling in Him, and His consequent dwelling in us as power spiritually. With this 1 John 5:1-21 connects itself. Who is my brother? "Everyone that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born (or, begotten) of God; and every one that loveth him that begot loveth him also that is begotten of him." But John will not allow love apart from obedience: "Herein we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep his

commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." They unite in a new nature, life eternal, the substratum of the entire Epistle. "For all that is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? "

Then he adds the work, or rather the person characterised by it. "This is he that came through (d??) water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by (??) the water only, but by the water and the blood. And it is the Spirit that witnesseth because the Spirit is the truth. Because there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and the three are to the one (end)." Life is not in the first man, but in the Second, Who both atones and purifies. So blood and water came out of His pierced heart when dead; and the Spirit bore witness through John who saw and knew its truth, that we might believe: three witnesses, yet one testimony. Full salvation is in Christ and in Him alone for the believer. On this therefore the apostle reasons and appeals in 1 John 5:10-12. It is God's testimony about His Son; and he that believes on Him has the testimony in himself, if all else failed; for the life is in Him for security and association with Him, as we have it really for present exercise and fellowship every day. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Very weighty is the sum here: "These things wrote (or, write, ep. aor.) I to you that ye may know (e?d) that ye have life eternal, ye that believe on the name of the Son of God." It is conscious knowledge.

Then he urges confidence in prayer, and specifies it on behalf of a brother not sinning to death; if so, one should refrain. To suppose that the sin here in question is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and the death meant is eternal judgment or the second death, not only is unfounded but destroys the force of this scripture. It is the moral government which our Father carries on whilst we are here, as we may trace in 1 Corinthians 11:30-32, as also from the early time of the O.T. (Job 33:1-33, Job 35:1-16). It may go beyond cleansing in order to one's bearing more fruit as in John 15:2; so both apostles teach. The threefold assertion of "we know" in 1 John 5:18-20 grandly and with suitability concludes the Epistle. "We know that every one that [is] begotten of God sinneth not, but the begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we should know him that [is] true; and we are in him that [is] true, in his Son Jesus Christ." Here it is Christian knowledge, not objective only but conscious; and this next not merely in moral character as born of God, but of Him in the fullest contrast with the world as a whole lying in the wicked one. Then we have the conscious knowledge that the Son of God is come, the object of all blessing where all was evil and wretched, and He has given us an understanding that we should know the true One. And we are in the True, in His Son Jesus Christ, for they are inseparably one. Day of the worst evil as it was, what can match the calm confidence of victory over sin and Satan, of belonging to God and His nature above a lost world, of a spiritual understanding to know Him that is true, and to be in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ? "This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols." The deceptive power of the enemy in the evil day is recognised; and we need the divine safeguard. "But be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

§ 52. 2 JOHN.

These two lesser Epistles of the beloved disciple could yield no such large or minute testimony to Christ as the first and longer one; but they are no less admirably suited to fulfil the work given him to do on our behalf, who face the dangers and difficulties of the last time. Each has from God its own special object. The Second Epistle is mainly to warn and direct where the doctrine of Christ was not brought; as the Third is to cheer and confirm those who zealously helped the true witnesses of Christ, and none the less but the more if self-seeking men sought to exclude and malign them. As in the First Epistle, the truth, even Christ, is insisted on as of all moment in them both. But the evident peculiarity of the Second is that the Holy Spirit addresses this inspired letter to "an elect lady and her children." This is so novel as to indicate an extraordinary crisis which called for it. And the crisis is that "even now are many antichrists." The lady and her children were exposed to danger in this respect: which is so great in itself, and so aggravated by the absence of a Christian head of the family, that it pleased the Lord to send them a solemn caution, and indeed a peremptory command. Nor do we hear of any assembly near at hand. We can easily understand that the antichristian may have been a friend, perhaps in former days used to preach and teach Christ, nay possibly to their conversion. In any case it seemed no small self-denial to close their door. Was she not a woman, and as such forbidden to teach, or to exercise authority over a man? Hers was but a private household. Why should she and her children be required to discharge so stern a duty? The apostle meets any such excuses

"The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all who have known the truth, for the truth's sake which abideth in us and shall be with us for ever. Grace shall be with us (or, you), mercy, peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced exceedingly that I have found of thy children walking in truth, according as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as writing to thee a new commandment but that which we had from the beginning, that we should love one another. And this is love that we should walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment, according as ye heard from the beginning that ye should walk in it. Because many deceivers went out into the world, those that confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh: this is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we* lose not what we wrought but receive a full recompence. Whosoever goeth forward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine, he hath both the Father and the Son. If any one come unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not at home, and give him no greeting; for he that biddeth him greeting partaketh in his wicked works. Having many things to write to you, I would not with paper and ink, but hope to come unto you, and to speak mouth to mouth that our joy may be filled full. The children of shine elect sister salute thee" (2 John 1:1-13).

* The various readings here in ancient and good MSS. are due to a misunderstanding of the sense: "ye" was adopted to make it easier, Compare 1 John 2:28, which has the same sense; and here all agree to "we."

All heterodoxy is evil; but not to bring the doctrine of the Christ, perfect man and true God in one person, is fatal and admits of no compromise. Neither a mother nor her children can plead innocence if they yield. It is high treason to admit friendly terms, if we own Christian ground. The lady might be ever so orthodox: but to welcome to the house one who, claiming to be a Christian teacher, denied Christ's deity or humanity (i.e. their union in one person), is to give up the foundation implicitly; and he or she who receives out of courtesy, liberal feeling, or any other

human motive, becomes partaker of "his wicked works," even if the evil doctrine be declined. The truth of Christ admits of no neutrality. Truth, love, and obedience must be in those who, believing in Christ, have life eternal and the Holy Spirit. We go right as Christians only as the eye, the heart, is true to Christ. Not "transgressing" but going forward, instead of abiding in the doctrine, loses all. "Transgressing" is spurious: it was development rather, which cannot consist with the truth. For the active mind of man confides in its own ability, loves to discover what is new, writhes against absolute subjection to the written word, and fails in reverence to Him, Who became not more truly man than He is the Son only known by the Father. To allow a lowering thought because the Lord deigned to become a bondman, and this also to be a propitiation for our sins, is to accept Satan's basest lie, and to affront God's love and truth in the tenderest point. This alone accounts for the peremptory command laid on a Christian woman and even her children, when exposed to such temptation from the evil one. And if it applied so unsparingly in the circle of private life, how much greater the guilt if the Christian assembly deliberately shrank from fidelity to Christ and His personal glory!

§ 53. 3 JOHN The Third Epistle deals with the good side in the evil day. We are entitled to have and enjoy it in the worst of times. As the lady and her children were appropriately warned not to yield through fear of being counted narrow, bigoted, and uncharitable, with no less fitness the apostle writes to the gracious Gaius that he might persevere in his loving care for all faithful servants of Christ, whatever be the party or personal opposition of any. John here too insists that it be love in truth and walking in it. One must have the truth intact before we can speak of love or exercise it: else we may be helping Satan against Christ under the name of charity. Even here truth has the first place; how indeed could it be otherwise?

"The elder to the beloved Gaius whom I love in truth. Beloved, I desire that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health according as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced exceedingly when brethren came and testified to thy truth according as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy I have not than these things, that I hear of my children walking in (or, in the) truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest toward the brethren, and this strangers, who testified to thy love before the assembly; in sending forward whom worthily of God thou wilt do well; for they went out for the Name, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may be fellow-workers with the truth. I wrote to the assembly; but Diotrephes that loveth the first place among them accepteth us not. For this reason when I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words; and not content with these, neither himself accepteth the brethren, and those that would he forbiddeth and casteth out of the assembly. Beloved, imitate not what is evil but what is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath been testified to by all and by the truth itself; and we also testify; and thou knowest that our testimony is true. I had many things to write to thee, but I am unwilling with ink and pen to be writing to thee; but I hope soon to see thee, and we will speak mouth to mouth. Peace to thee; the friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name" (3 John 1:1-14). The hearty love of the apostle goes forth to Gaius, because his love was governed by truth. The right rendering corrects making his prosperity to be the prime desire, but that in or about all things it might be, and even his health too, as his soul was prospering. For how often, when the soul gets lax, God uses trial and sickness for good! His exceeding joy was brethren's testimony to Gaius' cleaving to the truth and walking in it; as he had no greater joy than to hear of this in his

children. Nor does he fail to name Gaius' fidelity toward those labouring in the word, though strangers, not only in hospitality on the spot, but in setting them forward "worthily of God." And these labourers were worthy, for the Name was their motive; and they declined the world's favours. Even the apostle was glad to range himself as a fellow-worker with them and the truth. But his writing to the assembly provoked the pride of Diotrephes who disliked these earnest witnesses for Christ, so as not to accept his words, and to go the length of babbling wickedly against an apostle. How soon the ruin came, and how audacious! Nor was it in word only, but in hostility to the stranger brethren and to those who honoured them for their work's sake, We discern here the spirit of the evil house-servant who beat his fellow-servants, and may be assured that Diotrephes was not (like John, Gaius, and these visitors) longing and looking for Christ; to him it would be an enthusiasm if not a delusion. For the Lord traced such misconduct to this very cause, to the heart saying, My lord delayeth. But his evil way should not be forgotten when the apostle came: for the church is holy ground. Gaius was to imitate not the evil but the good; so to do is of God.

Then he speaks of Demetrius as one testified by the truth itself and his own testimony, which he knew would have the greatest weight with Gaius. It was a green spot in the midst of ruin. If we have seen much of Diotrephes that cannot be overlooked to our sorrow and shame, let us make so much the more of a Demetrius and a Gaius. All turns on the truth. Diotrephes no doubt assumed to respect order, but had no heart for the truth: else he had valued the working of the joints and bands in furthering and spreading it. His notion of order proved itself unsound, because of his indifference to the truth; for not content with opposing the visiting brethren, he ventured to despise the apostle's word on their behalf and ill-treated such as walked in truth and love. But be the declension ever so real and painful, the truth abides to walk in, and the love that is of God is its sure accompaniment. Such is the consolation in this the last Epistle of our apostle. If there was an elect lady with her children to warn gravely, Gaius and a Demetrius were there to be encouraged, with devoted labourers who went out for the Name, taking nothing from the Gentiles. That evil too should rise more impudent than ever can surprise none who heed the solemn admonition of the Lord and His apostles.

§ 54. JUDE. The characteristic form and aim of this Epistle will become clear to every attentive believer. No other resembles it so closely as the Second of Peter; so much so, that many learned men have contended that the one must be copied from the other, and that the copy at any rate must be spurious. But this reasoning only betrays their spiritual ignorance and presumption. Both Epistles are not only of profound interest but evidently inspired of God; and each has its own specific object in the mind of the inspiring Spirit. Hence the distinctions graven by divine wisdom cannot fail to be seen to the great profit of him who reads in the dependence of faith which gives intelligence. In the Second Epistle of Peter we have seen that the dominant truth is God's righteous government, not as in the First Epistle dealing with the saints in their daily path and with the house of God too, but with the unjust and the guilty world even to the day of the Lord, in which the now heavens and the earth, kept for fire unto a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men, shall be burnt up. Jude was given to portray the same evil in the yet deeper and more solemn aspect of departure or apostasy from God, and so from the faith and holy will of God, rather than from righteousness. This gives occasion to the nicest points of difference which have escaped these carping critics, who, instead of admiring the perfect word in its astonishing

consistency with the requisite variety, blindly turn it against the Holy Spirit to their own sin and shame and folly.

"Jude, bondman of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to the called, beloved in God, [the] Father, and kept by (or, for) Jesus Christ: mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied" (Jude 1:1-2). There can be little doubt that "beloved" represents the true and certainly more ancient text. It is also singularly in keeping with the tried and perilous circumstances of His called ones exposed to evil within, which they are summoned to resist at all cost, and therefore need the comforting assurance of His love (compare Jude 1:21), and of their preservation for Christ, as an abiding state. There is also the remarkable "mercy" in the address to all, as to Timothy in his delicate and difficult path: all the true-hearted have it here in the most emphatic way looked at as a state.

"Beloved, while giving all diligence to be writing to you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write to you, exhorting [you] to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men got in privily that were of old prescribed unto this sentence (or, judgment), ungodly, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:3-4).

It was the writer's joy to be writing of our common salvation, the blessed alphabet of the gospel; but the danger of the saints laid on him the necessary duty of exhorting them to contend earnestly for the faith. In days of apostasy the urgent call was to the converted, where shallower faith would be absorbed in the unconverted: the saints themselves were exposed to deadly peril. The faith itself once delivered to them, once for all, was not menaced only, but undermined within. For there had got in unnoticed certain men that of old were beforehand written of; and their ungodliness had the special trait of turning the grace of our God into licentiousness, and of denying the right of Jesus Christ as sovereign Master that bought all, and as our Lord that redeemed us who believe. Compare 2 Peter 2:1, who only speaks of the former; but Jude adds and specifies "our Lord" as well as their changing the grace of our God into dissoluteness.

"But I would remind you, though once for all knowing all things, that [the] Lord, having saved a people out of Egypt's land, in the second place destroyed those that believed not" (Jude 1:5) This is quite peculiar to the epistle before us, because it marks the doom of apostates. Peter does not allude to it, but speaks of "an old world" not spared, and Noah, preacher of righteousness, preserved with seven others, whilst a flood overwhelmed "a world of ungodly ones." Can we conceive of more exact thought and language in the two letters? Both draw warning from angels, but we readily see that even here each writes with exquisite propriety which unbelief overlooks. "And angels that kept not their own beginning (or, original state), but abandoned their proper dwelling, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under gloom unto [the] great day's judgment; as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, having in the like manner with them greedily committed fornication and gone after strange flesh, lie there an example, undergoing judgment of eternal fire" (Jude 1:6-7). Jude points out departure from original position, whether of angels or of the cities in question. They went away from nature; and they suffered accordingly in a manner wholly uncommon. Peter, true to God's purpose there, writes of "angels having sinned," and of cities made an example to those that should live an ungodly life, and of "righteous Lot" saved (for the righteous man tormented his righteous soul from day to day), the Lord knowing how to deliver godly men out of trial and to keep unrighteous ones unto judgment day to be punished.

"Yet likewise these dreamers also defile flesh, and set at nought lordship, and rail at dignities. But Michael the archangel, when disputing with the devil he discussed about Moses' body, did not dare to bring against [him] a railing judgment but said, [The] Lord rebuke thee. But these rail at whatever things they know not; but whatever they understand naturally, as the irrational animals, in these things they corrupt themselves (or, perish)" (Jude 1:8-10). Here Jude depicts the apostate spirits of Christendom in their giving up all respect for authority, and railing against it; and cites Michael in particular, as Peter does angels generally with those that sinned, for marked contrast; and speaks of them as like irrational animals, receiving unrighteousness' reward, and so dilates on their grievous immoralities

Then we have the awfully concise judgment which Jude pronounces on that which outwardly bears the Lord's name. "Woe to them! because they went in the way of Cain, and rushed greedily into the error of Balaam's hire, and perished in the gain-saying of Korah. These are spots (or, hidden rocks) in your love-feasts, feasting together, fearlessly pasturing themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumnal trees without fruit, twice dead, rooted up; raging sea-waves, foaming out their own shames; wandering stars for whom hath been reserved the gloom of darkness for ever" (Jude 1:11-13). Peter too alleged the way of Balaam who loved the hire of unrighteousness; but Jude prefaces that prolific error with Cain's apostasy from God, and finishes all with the rebellion of Korah against Moses and Aaron, the known types of Christ the Apostle and High Priest of the Christian confession. This is and will be perdition: ministry or service arrogating to itself what pertains to the Lord Jesus only, the closing apostasy, but carrying throughout the sad marks which show that the corruption of the best thing is the worst corruption.

Very striking too is Enoch's earliest warning against "these" who perish at the end of the age. "And Enoch, seventh from Adam, prophesied also as to these, saying, Behold, [the] Lord came amid his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly [of them] of all their works of ungodliness which they ungodlily wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners spoke against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts, and their mouth speaketh swelling things, admiring persons for the sake of profit" (Jude 1:14-16).

Pretentious and ill-willed adversaries of scripture have availed themselves of the Book of Enoch in the Aethiopic which was brought into Great Britain by Bruce and translated by Abp. Laurence, as if the supposed original of that work could be the source of the quotation. They failed to observe that it yields conclusive proof that it is no prophecy but an imposture; for the concocter, trying to incorporate this very passage from the Epistle, could not even do his evil work correctly. He makes the Lord come in judgment of His saints: a false doctrine in direct antagonism to all scripture, which Jude of course in no way says or implies. It speaks only of condign judgment executed on the ungodly in works and words.

"But ye, beloved, remember ye the words that were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they said to you, In [the] end of the time shall be mockers walking after their own lusts of ungodlinesses. These are they that make separations, natural (or, soulish), not having [the] Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in [the] Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in [the] love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal. And some convict, when contending, but others save, snatching out of [the] fire, and others pity with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 1:17-23) The gracious

encouragement in the darkest day is manifest and rich. Mockers, who set themselves apart like the Pharisees, are branded as natural men: the Spirit leads to, and in, fellowship as well as to faith and love. Therefore are saints to build themselves up on their most holy faith. Only here is it so designated What a rebuke to such as would lower the standard and accept laxity to please a party, avoid decision, and shirk reproach! A loose time calls on us more strenuously to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, and for prayer in power of the Holy Spirit, that we may keep ourselves in the love of God, awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal; for indeed we need both every step of the way through. This will the better enable us to help souls in slippery places such as are described in Jude 1:22-23, though the text is as tangled here in the copies as those whose well-being we should seek, imperilled as they are more and more. The conclusion is in beautiful harmony with the Epistle. "But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory; to an only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, might, and authority, before all time, and now, and unto all the ages. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25). It is not, as in 2 Peter, looking for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, but that sovereign grace which will translate us into His presence like Christ Himself, associated with Him actually, yea bodily then and for ever, as now in spirit.

§ 55. THE REVELATION.

It needs little discernment to see that the characteristic design of this book is judicial beyond every other in the N. T. Some may wonder that he who was inspired to present "the grace and truth which came through Jesus Christ" should also by the Spirit write the great book of divine judgments But even the Gospel (John 5:27) prepares the way for it; for it reveals the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, the giver of life eternal to him who believes, but the same who as Son of man is the executor of judgment on all who disbelieve and dishonour Him Hence He is seen as Son of man in the opening vision of Revelation 1:1-20. There are exceptional words of grace, as we may observe where the saints at His name break forth into a song of praise parenthetically in the preface of the book (1 latter part of Revelation 1:5, and all Revelation 1:6); and so again in the conclusion (Revelation 22:17), where the Spirit leads the bride in welcoming Him, when He proclaims Himself the bright, the morning Star. How appropriate are both exceptions!

Yet government is the predominant truth, as even in the commencing address "to the seven churches that are in Asia," Grace to you and peace from Him that is, and that was, and that is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. How different from the revelation we have in the Epistles! Christ’s coming too, described in Revelation 1:7, is in view of judgment on the earth, without an allusion to the Christian hope as in John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, etc.

After the divine seal in Revelation 1:8, John carefully (as the prophets were wont) gives his name, but describes himself in strict keeping with the book, not as the disciple whom Jesus loved, but as their brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Christ (or, Jesus), being in Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It was on the Lord’s day, the first of the week or resurrection day, that he became in the Spirit; and he who knew so intimately the gracious tones of the Good Shepherd heard behind him a voice as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send to the seven churches, whose localities follow. A glorious vision

truly, but judicial; for He walked Son-of-man-like in the midst of the golden lamps thee represented the churches: the description of His clothing and person confirm it. It is not intercession nor supply from His fulness, still less cleansing their feet, but majestic scrutiny according to their standing in divine righteousness. He who erst lay on His bosom fell as dead at His feet; but the Lord laid His right hand on him, saying, Fear not: I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and, behold, I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and have the keys of death and of hades. Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and what is about to take place after these things. The mystery of the stars and lamps is explained; the seven stars as angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamps as seven churches.

Revelation 2:1-29, Revelation 3:1-22 give "the things which are," as Revelation 1:1-20 the things John saw. Briefly then, Ephesus is the church, though opposed to evil and zealous, yet declining from first love, and threatened, if not restored by repentance, with the Lord's removing the lamp out of its place (Revelation 2:1-7). Smyrna suffers not from pretended apostles but from the blasphemy or reviling of Judaizers, Satan's synagogue, and tribulation even unto death (Revelation 2:8-11). Pergamos dwells where Satan's throne is, and holds Christ's name and faith, yet has such as hold she doctrine of Balaam and that of Nicolaitans likewise. Hence, if not repentant, the Lord comes quickly to fight with them (Revelation 2:12-17). With Thyatira is the change as to the call to hear, which thenceforward follows the promise suited to the overcomers in each. Then the personal coming of Christ is also presented appropriately, now that the state was characterised by the horrible yet pretentious Jezebel, though a remnant had not this doctrine (Revelation 2:18-29). Sardis has a name of life but dead, with its works not complete, and threatened, as the world is, with Christ's coming for unwelcome surprise like a thief (Revelation 3:1-6). Philadelphia has in their weakness Christ before them in spiritual power and liberty: they kept His word and denied not His name; and in particular kept the word of His patience, that is, as He patiently waited to came, so did they for Him (Revelation 3:7-13). Laodicea is the saddest contrast of self-complacency, indifference, and lack of self-judgment, so that they lacked all that should distinguish the Christian; and therefore the Lord was about to spue them out of His mouth (Revelation 3:14-22).

"The things that are" is a striking expression of these churches, and of itself suggests a protracted state. But see the wisdom of God, who would not allow any revelation inconsistent with constantly waiting for Christ as the hope. Hence their existence was a fact: but God took care to give light through their varying phases, and the Lord's estimate of all, when one looked back, and nothing was said of the future to put off the heavenly hope. For the elements were there from John's day, and any delay in fact only gave occasion to see more and more of developed display. They were seven, the known figure of spiritual completeness in good or evil. The first three do not express the future coming of the Lord as a terminus, like Thyatira and those that follow, save Laodicea which was the last; and these, though beginning successively on the protracted view, go on severally but together from the rise of each to His coming. "The things that are" last as long as there is soy church-condition recognised by the Lord on earth. First, declension and threatened displacing; second, era of persecution and martyrdom by the heathen; third, worldly power, but false teaching; fourth, mediaeval popery with faithful protests; fifth, formal Protestantism; sixth, return to Christ and the heavenly hope; seventh, fatal lukewarmness rejected with disgust. There is no other to follow on earth.

What stronger confirmation could be than that "after these things" the apostle in Revelation 4:1-11 is called up by a door set open in the heaven to be shown "the things which must take place after these things," i.e. subsequent to "the things that are" or the church-state up to its end? "And straightway I became in the Spirit" for heavenly things, as in Revelation 1:10 for the Lord seen judicially dealing with the churches, the sole corporate witness for God on earth. Here again he saw the throne, and the displayed glory of the Eternal Who sat on it, with a rainbow of emerald hue round about it, the emphatic pledge of covenanted mercy while He governed in providence. But a wholly new sight too is there given to meet his eyes: round about that throne twenty four thrones filled by twenty four elders, mature in the mind of Christ. These symbolise the chiefs of the royal priesthood, not the courses but their chiefs, clothed with Christ as their meet robe, and on their heads crowns of divine righteousness. There they sit in peace, though out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. It was no longer the throne of grace, to which Christians on earth approach boldly to obtain mercy and find grace for seasonable help. Nor was it the millennial throne of God and of the Lamb, with river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding out of it. It was unlike either; and, between both, manifestations of God’s displeasure. But the enthroned elders, who had ever seen them before? Not even Stephen, nor Paul. John as the Christian prophet, who saw in the Spirit the church-state closed on earth, saw also the overcomers in heaven thus symbolised as the chiefs of the royal priesthood, and thoroughly at home in God’s presence as if they had been there always. Their translation to heaven is thus implied by those seated on the thrones associated with the central throne of God; it is not described, because it was of sovereign grace, and so not falling under the judicial ways of this book. Already had it been announced by the Lord in John 14:1-3, with details given to correct the mistakes of the Thessalonian saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8. Cp. also 1 Corinthians 15:51-53. This vision anticipatively sets before us what will be verified above when the heavenly saints are no more on earth but on high, and the earth becomes the object of God’s providential judgments. Hence seven torches of fire burning before His throne, which are the seven Spirits of God: the Spirit not in His personal unity baptising the saints into one body, but in His varied powers governmentally and in consuming energy to deal with what opposed God’s glory. Another remarkable proof of the great change at this time is, that before the throne was a. sea of glass like crystal. While here below, these elders were cleansed by the washing of water by the word. A sea "of glass" attested that there was no need of purifying more: theirs was now fixed purity. And the cherubim or living creatures are prominent in the midst of the throne or around it, the emblematic agencies (whoever may be the agents) of God’s government in power, firmness, intelligence, and rapidity, endowed with swift movement, and large and inward discernment, as suited to that critical time, seraph-like too in constant celebration of the thrice holy Eternal God Almighty. But the elders worship intelligently as knowing Him, prostrate themselves, and cast their crowns before His throne, owning His creative power and providence. In Revelation 5:1-14 it is plain that the sealed book is the question: who can open it? None but the Lamb so overcame to unroll its judicial announcements, in order to the reception and rule of His inheritance, now utterly alienated. Hence, when He takes it from the Sitter on the throne, "a new song" from elders and living creatures now united rises to Him who bought out the heirs with His blood from every nation and tongue. Nor this only; they are made to our God a kingdom and priests to reign over the earth. The key-note struck calls forth the anticipated deliverance of all creation, "all things" following the joint-heirs. See Colossians 1:20-23, as well as Romans 8:19-23. On the Seals and Trumpets one may here be

brief. They each reveal a complete course of judgments on the guilty world while Christ is still on high: the first comparatively ordinary and secret, but in the order prescribed; the second loudly sounding and severe up to the moment when Christ takes His great power and reigns. Each too has a striking parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh in its respective series; wherein we are given to see that God is active in goodness, not to gather into one body Jews and Gentiles, but to prepare out of Israel and out of the Gentiles distinct groups for blessing, when the Heir of all things enters triumphantly on His inheritance. Under the later series we hear the proclamation of the coming kingdom in its wide extent in Revelation 10, and in Revelation 11 the connection with Jerusalem and its temple, inner worship, but as yet a sackcloth prophetic testimony, and the western enemy beginning to be descried. In a general way this ends what we may call the first volume of the Revelation.

Revelation 11:19 belongs as a sort of preface to Revelation 12:1-17, the ark of God's covenant being first seen in His temple above, not yet found on earth, with even increased signs of His displeasure. But the sources of earthly change appear in heaven also, the sun-clad woman in travail, and the great red dragon in the forms of Roman power. The Son is born, but, instead of reigning now, caught up unto God and unto His throne; while she flees into the wilderness for 1260 days. But the great dragon with his angels is cast out of heaven, to the joy of the heavens and of those that dwell in them. But woe to the earth and the sea during the little while of his great wrath! Still the woman-mother, symbolising Israel (not the bride), is preserved. But two great vessels of his hostile energy appear on the scene to do his worst (Revelation 13:1-18): the Roman Beast or empire revived, for its deadly wound was healed to the wonder and worship of all the apostate earth; and the second Beast in the land imitating Christ's power as King and Prophet, the sign-making false prophet, each greatest in the sphere of the dragon's power. For the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:7 no longer acts: Satan is allowed his way for a short space, before judgment falls more openly.

Then in Revelation 14:1-20 seven dealings of God come out in their order: 1, a special and large remnant of Jews, who follow the Lamb, seen with Him on mount Zion; 2, the everlasting gospel to every nation and tongue in view of His judgment; 3, the fall of Babylon declared; 4, as also the cup of God's wrath for any who worship the Beast; 5, the blessedness from henceforth of the dead that die in the Lord, for the tables are now turned; 6, the harvest of discriminating judgment; and 7, the vintage of unsparing vengeance on the vine of the earth, its religious falseness and evil.

Then in Revelation 15:1-8, Revelation 16:1-21 the supplementary Bowls of God's wrath, the seven plagues the last. These are highly figurative like the Trumpets, but intense; and a parenthesis appears between Revelation 6:1-17 and Revelation 7:1-17 as before. Only here it consists of Satan's last efforts, with his two vassals also, to gather the kings of the whole habitable earth for the war of the great day of God the Almighty. Even here we may see an inner parenthesis of the Lord coming as thief: not as Bridegroom, for this had been after Revelation 3:1-22 and before Revelation 4:1-11 for the heavenly saints, as that will be for those converted afterwards, as well as for His other purposes.

Revelation 17:1-18 and Revelation 18:1-24 are devoted to the fuller description of Babylon, the great whore and the city that had kingship over the kings of the earth, the fall of which had been already announced in Revelation 14:1-20 and Revelation 16:1-21. First, we have her relations with

the Beast, ruling, or hated and destroyed; then, is her fall when the Lord God judged her; and all glasses on earth were her mourners, but heaven called to rejoice, as we hear the loud Hallelujahs on high in the beginning of Revelation 19:1-21, the last notice of the elders and the living creatures. For now the Bride prepared herself for the marriage of the Lamb; and we hear also of those that are called to the marriage supper, the O. T. saints presumably, who with the Bride constituted the elders. Next, the heaven is seen set open; and the Faithful and True on the white horse comes to judge and war in righteousness, clothed now with a garment dipped in blood. His unmistakeable name is the Word of God. And the armies in heaven followed Him on white horses clad in pure white byss, the righteousnesses of saints (not of angels). But it was not theirs to wield the sharp sword against the nations; His it is to tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty, though He with them will shepherd men inflexibly. But He alone has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. And the carnage that ensues, what a supper for all the birds in mid-heaven! For if the Beast and the False Prophet were consigned alive to the lake of fire, the kings of the earth and their armies fall victims under the sharp sword. The symbols are obvious. So it is in Revelation 20:1-15 clearly: plain narrative prevails therein. The restraint of Satan is one of the marked traits of the age to come. Nothing like it has been since man was created; nor will it be again when he deceives and destroys for a little while after the thousand years' reign is over. He too will then be cast into the lake of fire. But the grand fact is, Christ then reigns over the earth; as He is the exalted and displayed Head over all creation, heavenly and earthly. It is the administration of the fulness of the times, He shining where all else had failed (Ephesians 1:10). Prominence is given to those who had suffered unto death, not only in the first half-week, but still more in the last when the Beast rose into supremacy during Satan's great rage. Only it is an oversight to leave out that John saw thrones with sitters on them, and judgment theirs, before he saw the souls of those who were martyred raised up to join them. The sitters were changed when Christ met them in the air and took them into the Father's house, seen above from Revelation 4 and on, till they follow the Lord out of heaven as His armies for His appearing and day. Two classes of martyrs here follow like them to reign, who now rise as we see. They all comprise the First Resurrection, and so reign with Christ for the thousand years.

Some wonder at the loosing of Satan after that; but why? The coming age, though immensely different from this evil age, is a dispensation; and men would not be tried adequately without the old tempter being allowed to assail them. But though the unconverted may long yield a feigned obedience, ever so long a reign of righteousness and power, peace and blessing, will not turn them to the living and true God. And they too, as men before, listen to the Serpent for their destruction, and muster from the distant quarters of the earth against the beloved city, and the camp of the saints who separate from the mass and congregate there, in marked contrast with the darnel and the wheat growing together in this age. Nor is it the wicked of that age only that are consumed, but the earth and the heaven fled from His face Who next is seen, seated on a great white throne to judge the dead, the wicked now raised who had no part in the first resurrection. Having rejected Christ, they were judged each according to their works in the other books; and each was cast into the lake of fire, the second death. This was no coming of Christ, for there was no earth then to return to. It was the standing before the throne of those to be judged who had not eternal life, while earth and heaven had fled. Christ had come long before: these appear before Him for their doom.

Then comes in its due order the end of all, a new heaven and a new earth, not in the inchoate sense of Isaiah 65:1-25, Isaiah 66:1-24 where it is applied to the renovation of Jerusalem, created a rejoicing and her people a joy, with the earth and the animals too and vegetable creation delivered. But 2 Peter 3:1-18 even and Revelation 21:1-8 go much farther, and show us the everlasting state, which is marked by the sea existing no more, condition incompatible with natural life on the globe. All its former inhabitants who were saved, including the righteous during the millennial reign, were now in unchangeable blessedness for the ages unto the ages. The holy city, new Jerusalem, for so the Bride is designated, retains her pristine place and beauty. The mediatorial kingdom is closed, and God is all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Corinthians 15:28). Righteousness dwells now, above and below, in perfect peace; it is no longer righteousness ruling as in the kingdom till the last enemy be destroyed. Hence, apart from the church, God's tabernacle, we have simply God and men, they His people, and Himself (like His tabernacle) with them, their God, every tear wiped away, death no more nor grief, but all things made new absolutely. What a bright testimony to the water of life He freely gave! What an awful proof that He is not mocked, in all the wicked cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, the solemn back-ground of the state without end!

It is plain that nothing can historically follow the vision of eternity in those eight verses. But just as there was a supplement to the series of judgments of earthly character about the corrupt city Babylon, so there is one now about the holy city, the Bride of the Lamb, during the millennium. As the city of confusion, full of idolatry, and murder of the saints, was shown in her illicit connection with the kings and the Beast, so we have now the pure and blessed place she, the heavenly bride of the Lamb, is to fill during the millennium, with the homage paid her by the kings and the nations walking by her light; for the glory of God enlightened her, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. Those who take these verses (Revelation 21:9-27, Revelation 22:1-5) in continuity with the eight before are involved among other errors in the folly of conceiving kings and nations throughout eternity. They fail to profit by the break with which Revelation 21:9 opens, and the plain analogy afforded with Revelation 17:1, etc. From Revelation 21:9-27, Revelation 22:1-5 is a retrogressive vision, letting us see the relation of the heavenly to the earth, its nations, and its rulers, during the thousand years. The rest of the last chapter (Revelation 22:6-21) consists of both grave warning and divine cheer. Christ's coming, notwithstanding the predicted events, is declared to be soon, and the time near. Blessed those that wash their robes that they may have title to the tree of life, and through the gates enter the city: without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie. But how precious when the Lord Jesus provides for testifying these things in the churches: alas, how far from being duly done by His servants!

Here then Jesus presents Himself, not only as the Root and the Offspring of David, but as the bright, the morning Star. An outburst of faith is heard at the end, as we heard another suited to the beginning of the book. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come." It is the Spirit animating the church to welcome Christ's coming; nor only her that knows her bridal relation, but the simplest Christian — "and let him that heareth say, Come." The rest of the verse calls on him that is athirst to come (not to say, Come); yea, he that will, to take life's water freely. This is the call to the unconverted, the gospel call.

Again, after the gravest menace directed against adding to or taking from the words of this prophecy He that testifies responds, Yea, I come quickly. May we by grace join the apostle John in saying, Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

CHAPTER 6.

CONCLUSION.

Having now brought to a close the test of divine design in the several books of the New Testament as well as of the Old, I commend the work to the blessing of God on the reader.

It is usual in such treatises to notice objections laid by unbelief against the scriptures. If this were added in any adequate degree to the present volume, it would increase its bulk very considerably. As it already exceeds 600 pages, I think it better to let the positive truth produce its own impression, which difficulties of the kind have no real title to destroy; seeing that the most certain truth, save in matter or in its abstract forms, is necessarily open to such questions. It ought not to be so where God has spoken or caused His word to be communicated in writing. But this is what scepticism disputes or refuses. Legitimate criticism may seek to gather the true test from reliable documents, in time differing more or less through human infirmity or fault. But it rightly supposes an original divine deposit. No intelligent person would mix this question with God's inspiration: various readings belong to the distinct region of man's responsibility, as scripture does to divine grace. The problem of the true critic is to use all means, external and internal, to recover what was originally written. What is called "higher criticism" is essentially spurious, either denying God as the author or impudently pretending to speak for Him, if they go not so far. Even Christians are in danger of heeding what these enemies of the written word assume, when it is said that it nowhere claims divine authority. Nor is it only inferential evidence that is given throughout the Bible in general, as well as the conclusive proof of the reverence to all then written shown by our Lord, the Lord of all. It is dogmatic truth, that God's inspiration is claimed for every scripture, not merely for all given before the apostle Paul wrote his last epistle, but for that part which remained to be written. For nothing less is the force of 2 Timothy 3:16 : "Every scripture [is] inspired of God and profitable" etc. Had the existing body been meant, the article would have been requisite, as in verse 14 which speaks only of the O.T. Its absence was no less correct for accrediting with the same source and character all that God might be pleased to vouchsafe till the canon was complete.

Indeed the apostle had at an earlier date made in substance the same claim in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16. Where the Hebrew oracles stopped, the N.T. revealed all that is for God's glory and goodness to communicate (1 Corinthians 2:9-12): "Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those Spirit-taught, communicating spirituals by spirituals," or, if we supply the gap, "spiritual [things] by spiritual [words]." The words were as positively of the Holy Spirit as the thoughts. Such is the essential property of scripture. Thus all was of the Spirit of God, the revelation, the communication, and also the reception. Rationalism denies God in them all, attributing them to man's spirit, which he may elevate in effect to that of God, being in darkness and walking in darkness, and knowing not whither he goes, because darkness blinded his eyes.

Translation again, like interpretation, as well as editing the text from the varying witnesses, belongs to the responsible use of scripture, and is quite distinct from the fact of its divine

inspiration. No doubt the conviction that God inspired every scripture would act powerfully on the spirit of every believer who undertook a work so serious, and is intended to make him feel his dependence on God in the use of all diligence and every means duly to attain the end in view. But inspiration means, as one of those employed in it says, that men spoke from God, moved (or, borne along) by the Holy Spirit. Hence scripture is not of man's wit or will, but of God, as no one more clearly than our Lord ever shows, and so of final and divine authority. Hence too the danger and evil for any one to give, whatever the cause of failure, his own mind and not God's in editing, translating, or interpreting. What God communicated is able to make one wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. "Is it not written?" if truly applied is absolutely conclusive in His judgment Who will judge living and dead. "And the scripture cannot be broken."

How immense too is the privilege! In its later portion it is the revelation of God, not merely from God, but of Himself, and of God speaking to us in a Son, not the First-born merely but the Only-begotten, the revelation of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. O the grace too of His Son deigning to become man, that we might have what is absolute made relative to us in the tender affections of very man, yet of One who was and is God as His Father. Hence the total change for us in looking at things, seen or unseen, according to God, where the greatest are brought down to our hearts, and the least we learn to be near to God's love: nothing too great for us, nothing too little for God, as said another departed from his labours to be with Christ. Christ alone, Christ fully, accounts for both; and scripture is the true treasure-house as well as standard of it all, as the Spirit was sent forth from heaven to make it good in us in every way. No tradition could avail for such a stupendous task. "But the Comforter (or rather, Advocate), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things which I said to you" (John 14:26). Nor is this all. The Spirit would reveal also Christ's glory on high. "But when the Advocate is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness concerning me: and ye too bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). More still of the deepest interest appears in John 16:12-15 : "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when he is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself, but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: on this account I said that he receiveth of mine and shall announce it to you." The permanent result of His presence and inspiration is, one may say, the New Testament, that inestimable and final gift of God in its kind. But the character of the inspiration in the N.T. becomes the higher and the more intimate in consequence. Every spiritual man must have felt this, in comparing the Psalms, which express the heart of the O.T. saints, with the N.T. Epistles, which breathe of the indwelling Spirit animating the Christian end the church. But they are alike God's word: there is no difference as to divine authority.

Chapter 60

05.01. Gospel Words

Gospel Words By

William Kelly

1 - 12 Series

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05.03. Gospel Words - First Series.

Gospel Words - First Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

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12 The Saviour of the world 1."If thou knewest the gift of God." John 4:10.

Gospel Words, 1st Series. No. 1.

(B.T. Vol. 18, p. 346. Gospel No. 1: 1.) The woman of Samaria knew it not, nor did the Jews a whit more; nor does the natural man in Christendom. It is wholly beyond the heart and mind till renewed from above. The heathen could not but regard their deities as the projected image of themselves, of like passions and lusts, envious of man's complete happiness. Had men known them to be as they really are, demons availing themselves of man's guilty conscience to set themselves up as gods and turn away their votaries from the true God, they would have understood that demons could only reflect the hatred and malice of the devil.

God is love, as well as light. In Him is no darkness at all; but being love He sent His Son to shine in this world darkened as it is through sin. Nor is this all the love He shows, but rather the beginning of what is infinitely superior to every difficulty and want. God is not demanding but giving, and only this, as regards eternal life and redemption. Both are His gift in Christ. Thus only, must He be known by the sinner, not as a receiver but as the Giver. It would be beneath His majesty to take any other place; it denies His nature, falsifies the truth, and leaves no room for love. This was not at all manifested under the law. There man is prominent. "Thou shalt not do this," "Thou shalt do that." Man was by it required to do his duty to God and man, in order to prove that, being fallen, he could not; and so force him, if he bad a conscience as to his own state and faith in God's word, to look to another, the Messiah, as all the saints did from Adam downwards. But the law, as it made nothing perfect, so it fell in with the natural thought of man that all depended on him, on the obedience he should render to God. As law, it excluded grace; and therefore those who saw nothing beyond the law stood on their own merits, not on the coming Messiah. All taught of God whether under the law or before rested their hopes on Christ, not on themselves. Therefore man as he is may admit the reasonableness of the law, as he doubts not his own competency to fulfil it; but, grace he hates and understands not. The gospel flows from God's love in Christ to the world. It is not a call for man to love God, but the revelation that "God so loved the world." The Samaritans were only heathen who adopted somewhat of Jewish elements and were darker still than the Jews. But the True Light was that which, coming into the world, sheds its light on "every man," not on Israel only, but on any, be they the vilest. This is the moral glory of Christ, as also of the gospel, God's testimony concerning Him and His work. The woman who came and found the

Lord sitting at the well was just the one to prove the virtues of grace. In truth He was there to find her as she was, and to bless her according to the riches of grace for ever. It was not the time when women came to draw water. She was alone, and might well in her circumstances shun the society of others. She had ardently sought happiness in the flesh and had not found it. She could not now but feel herself degraded, despised, and wretched. But here was One yet more alone in the world He had made; with a heart toward all to bless them, but the loneliest Stranger through man's selfishness. But grace sought her. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." He sought her wholly ignorant of Him, He perfectly knowing her, as He knew and knows all men. Bent on giving her "living water," He asks a drink, as one wearied with the journey; for indeed though true God He was not less really man. She was astonished that a Jew would so humble himself. Ah! had she known that He was the Lord of glory; but this was as unknown to her as to the princes of this age, who crucified Him. No doubt He was athirst, but He sought an avenue to her heart and would not work a miracle for Himself. He would give the best gift, and have her learn that every good giving and every perfect gift comes down from above from the Father of lights. Are not you as dull and dark as she of Samaria? Do you really know "the gift of God" any more than she did when the Lord accosted her? Do you believe in Him as a giver, and not an exactor? He is giving eternal life in Christ to every needy soul that hears the Shepherd's voice, as the Samaritan did. It is therefore without money and without price. It is wholly independent of the demerits it finds. Who could be more depraved than this sinful woman? God in the gospel is a giver of His best. What more blessed than eternal life? What more necessary to enjoy God and please Him, to serve and to worship Him here and in heaven? This is Christianity. There may be and there is much more; but less than this is not Christianity. Beware lest you rest on some external sign, which your unbelief exalts into an idol to your extreme peril, perhaps to your utter ruin. Eternal life is inseparable from faith in Christ. "He that believeth hath" that life, and none else. Therefore is it of faith, that it might be according to grace, as every eternal blessing is. For God will not give up His love and glory as a Giver. When you have received life in Christ, He loves to accept your little offerings and to graciously put honour on that which lacks it. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations," said the blessed Lord to His feeble disciples. Why! to every other eye it was He Who deigned to continue with them, to sustain and uphold them in all pitiful love: else had they too gone back and walked no more with Him.

Yes! Jesus our Lord alone vindicated and set ,out in attractive brightness the grand essential truth, so new to mankind in all states and ages, "the gift of God" — the truth that every soul needs to face and learn for itself, — that God is the Giver and will be nothing else to sinful man. Our pride likes it not: rich or poor, high or low, we want to earn of Him, and are unwilling to be debtors to nothing but mercy in Christ. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? "is the feeling of the heart now, as truly as of Naaman the Syrian. May you, if yet unblest, give up "Behold, I thought," and, believing in Christ, be enabled to say, "Behold, now I know."

2 Who it is that saith to thee "AND WHO IT IS THAT SAITH TO THEE, GIVE ME TO DRINK." John 4:10.

Gospel Words, 1st Series. No. 2.

It is not only that God reveals Himself now as a Giver, but a Giver of what the sinner needs for earth and heaven, for time and eternity; and He reveals Himself in His Son. The glad tidings He sends are concerning His Son; but His Son became man on behalf of man, His Son Jesus Christ a propitiation for our sins, that there might be a perfectly righteous ground for God to justify the believer, however evil and guilty he might have been before. And so the Lord Jesus, the lowliest of men could not disguise the all-importance of His person when speaking to the woman of Samaria. She wondered that a Jew would condescend to ask a favour of a Samaritan. She was at an immeasurable distance from suspecting that in the humble Jew the Creator was before her eyes; and this too that you or any other might "hear and live." But so it was, and so it must be, if God was to be glorified in the salvation of sinners. Of this she had as yet not the remotest conception, any more than the natural mind in Israel, or even in Christendom. The truth no doubt is confessed in the ordinary creeds; but people in general assent without heart or conscience. They repeat what their forefathers repeated; they believe what the church believes. So the Jews believed in Jesus when they saw the signs He wrought in Jerusalem at the first passover of which the fourth Gospel speaks (John 2:1-25); they believed on evidences as much as, or more than, the mass of the christened in our land or any other. But it is written that "Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man." He knew that man in his best estate is altogether vanity, for all is said when he is pronounced a sinner, as all are. Now Jesus, God Himself, cannot trust sinful man. The real question is, will sinful man trust Jesus? Man is best — indeed is only aright — trusting God by believing in Jesus, in Jesus come, not merely to work signs but to save sinners at all cost to Himself, a sacrifice to God for them.

Therefore does the Lord present to the Samaritan this great truth, without a miracle, and far beyond miracles. "If thou knewest . . Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink." This she was as far as possible from knowing, any more than the grace of God. But He was there to make known the truth; and He is Himself the truth, and became man that it might come in divine love to man. Could there be asked a better proof that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" than the one here afforded to her, and through her to any needy, guilty, soul on earth? For as creation throughout has divine design, and not a single thing happens day by day without our Father, so is scripture written with divine adaptation to every soul that reads or hears, that they may know what God is to a sinner, which can only be known perfectly in Jesus, the image of the invisible God.

Oh! have you weighed these words for your own soul? If you despise them now, learn from His lips that he who rejects Him and receives not His sayings "hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). You know that you are a sinner, utterly unfit to sit down with Jesus in the presence of God. Where then must your portion be if you reject the Saviour Son of God? Whose sayings are comparable to His for light and love, for God and man? Very likely you think yourself far better than the poor Samaritan He was addressing, in order to reveal God and win her to God, that she might not perish but have everlasting life. You will scarcely say that you are so much worse that His grace to her has no voice for your soul. She was at that moment living out of all moral relationship, indifferent to God’s known will. If grace did not produce what it can never find in a single sinner, it would indeed be all over with every one of us. If we are all guilty and lost, as scripture declares, it is in vain and unwise comparing ourselves among ourselves. We need a Saviour, and we find the only adequate Saviour in Him Who, as the

Jews with murderous hatred said, made Himself equal with God (for He was God); Who became flesh — man; Whom, absolutely free of sin, God made sin on the cross that we might become God's righteousness in Him. And Him, in this mystery of His person, we believe in and confess, to have the blessing. "If thou knewest . . . Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink." If thou knewest that He, the Eternal no less than the Father Who sent Him, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, coming in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death — yea, even the death of the cross. All this the Samaritan could not yet know; but He was on the way to death, come to do God's will. For without the offering of Christ sacrificially His will was not done and no soul could be saved. His asking of such a one as the Samaritan was no small, no obscure, sample of that humiliation which culminated in His cross. Hence the bearing of His words to her, "If thou knewest . . . Who it is (there is the glory of His person) that saith to thee, Give me to drink" (there is the grace of His humiliation, as far as could be then). On Him thus revealing God, her soul, in due time learning the wonderful wisdom of His ways, rested that day. How is it with you who have heard more of His glory and of His grace than she then could? May you believe, as she believed. If you despise Him and refuse His words, you must see Him on the great white throne of eternal judgment and prove God's truth in your perdition.

WK.

3 Living water "THOU WOULDEST HAVE ASKED OF HIM, AND HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN THEE LIVING WATER." John 4:10 (B.T. Vol. 18, p. 375. Gospel No. 1: 3.) The Lord proceeds to lead on the woman and inspire confidence in her heart; and the Holy Spirit records it for others who were to hear His words when written: for they surely are spirit and life, words of life eternal. As yet she was spiritually dull and dark. She saw not the True Light, she believed not yet on Him in Whom is life, the light of men — guilty but favoured men. Had she known God as the Giver (not exactor, as all hearts naturally conceive), had she believed in the glory of Him Who had humbled Himself to save (of which she had a sample in His asking of her a drink of water), she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her living water. For the blessing of the grace of life to a needy lost sinner (and so it is with every child of man) is no question of self-effort or even self-sacrifice, of a charm or a rite, but of faith in the Son of God to Whom the word of God boars witness. On the one hand, "what is born of the flesh is flesh," and sinful man, Jew, Greek, Samaritan is dead before God. On the other hand, life comes solely to us in the Light of life, it is in Jesus the Lord. Hence said He (John 5:24), "he that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." The Lord therefore, Himself the quickening Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:1-58), said not a word to her of baptism; nor did the disciples any more than the Lord baptise her in fact. Whatever the importance of baptism, to impart life is never attributed to it once in all scripture. "He that believeth," says the Lord (John 6:47), hath life eternal;" and so in substance often, and never otherwise. "I thank God," says the apostle Paul, "that I baptised none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I baptised (or, that ye were baptised) unto mine own name. . . . For Christ sent me not to baptise but to preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:14-17). "In Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). So James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:23-25, and 1 John 5:1. The divine testimony is uniform and full, clear and conclusive. But the word was not yet mixed with faith in the Samaritan's soul. Else self-judgment had been produced, and such a sense of sin in herself, and of goodness

(if not yet salvation) in Him, as would have drawn her to the Son of God in earnest. To be saved the individual soul must meet God now, and meet Him about its sins: otherwise it cannot evade Him in the person of the Son of man, the Judge of quick and dead, on the great white throne. Then it is too late. Judgment is irreparable and everlasting perdition. To hear Christ's word, to believe God Who sent Him, is to have life, eternal life. This was exactly what the sinner needed, but had not yet. If His word had penetrated, she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her living water. But it will be asked, What of the church? what of the sacraments? Now it is a notable fact that in the Gospel of John, where eternal life is pre-eminently set out, not a word is said of either. There is always harmony in divine truth. The church, baptism, and the Lord's supper, are fully treated in the apostle Paul's Epistles, to say nothing of the inspired history in the Acts. But nowhere does scripture connect eternal life with the church any more than with the public Christian institutions. As everything is ordered aright in scripture, so are souls inexcusable who fall into so grievous an error as to stake life eternal on church or sacraments. It is contact with Christ by faith, it is His word applied by the Spirit, that gives life in the Son of God. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.

Faith therefore is always individual, even if a thousand believed at the same instant out of a multitude listening to the word of God. The church does not preach, but a servant of Christ or as here the Lord Himself; and when the soul accepts it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God, it effectually works in such as believe. Its earliest effect is deep anxiety before God and calling on the Lord. "Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

"By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

Ephesians 2:1-22. Such is the blessed standing and assurance of the Christian in due time. Nor is it otherwise now than it has ever been, though far greater light and privileges be now enjoyed. "For therein [i.e., faith] the elders had witness borne to them," or obtained a good report, as the A.V. says. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. There was not, there certainly cannot be, another Saviour; and by God's word and Spirit He was always received. Righteousness, as the apostle proves, was reckoned to Abraham himself in uncircumcision. He was circumcised afterwards, as a seal in the flesh. He believed God long before; and this was reckoned to him for righteousness. It is the same now in principle, when souls are baptised, not circumcised.

Salvation like faith is individual. From first to last one must come to God believingly, for without faith it is impossible to please Him; with genuine faith ever is genuine repentance. We judge and condemn ourselves when we truly believe Him, and trust His grace in giving His Son. "Already are ye clean because of the word I have spoken to you." John 15:1-27. We are born of water and of the Spirit. The truth thus sanctifies; which a ceremony never can, nor a body, were it even the church, however important and of immense moment in other ways. "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned," i.e. damned, even if baptised by Peter or Paul. In believing God's word the soul hears and answers the call of God. All the blessing may not be at once; but the Lord is confided in and the heart goes out to Him Who came to die for us, for our sins. "Thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." And in truth it is not only life in believing, but the Holy Ghost subsequent on it, that peace and joy might be full, and God's love be shed abroad in the heart. The gift of the Holy Spirit is more than life, however blessed life may be. It is the Spirit of

adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. It is the Spirit not of fear or bondage: but of power and love and soberness.

Dear reader, have you got this blessing? or do you still lack it, like the Samaritan at first?

4 A Well of water "IN HIM A WELL OF WATER" John 4:14.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 9-10. Gospel No. 1: 4.) To the unrenewed mind there is nothing so foreign as grace. God's grace to a sinner seems to a moral man making light of sin; and therefore the higher his idea of divine holiness, and the greater his reverence, the less is it credible. The sinner himself regards it as too good to be true. Only when we stand convicted in our own consciences before God, revealed as He is in Jesus, do we believe it; and only as we walk by faith, are we enabled to use His grace without abusing it. Nothing so needful to the sinner, nothing so blessed to the saint, as grace unless it be the God of grace in Christ, the source and fulness and display of it all in the Only-begotten. Here the woman of Samaria was at first bewildered, though struck and attracted by the wondrous Man that brought God so near her in compassionate love to meet her sin, misery, and want. She answers the expression of infinite grace with the difficulties she considers insuperable. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: whence then hast thou this living water?" Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" (John 4:11-12) It was but natural thought and natural religion; wholly inadequate for man's case, now that he was sinful and an outcast from God; and how much less adequate for God, dishonoured and disobeyed, unknown and disliked, because He must judge sins? What then must become of the sinner? How can he save himself?

Jesus spoke of another well incomparably deeper, of which as yet she had no comprehension. Jesus had yea, — was — everything to draw with; Jesus has and gives the living water. He is the Son of the Father, and entitled to give the believer eternal life, and, more than that, the Holy Spirit as the power of enjoying it in fellowship with the Father and the Son; and all this on earth now, in spite of what we naturally are, by virtue of His redemption. He is both the life eternal and the propitiation for our sins. He had the living water as the Son; He could and would give it to the poorest sinner that believes the gospel as the Saviour of the world, fruit of His sufferings unto death of the cross, and of His resurrection.

"Greater than our father Jacob"! ay, immeasurably greater than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; than Moses, Aaron, and Samuel; than Noah, Daniel, and Job; than all the saintly men and women that ever were; than Michael and all angels and principalities, to say nothing of powers. For He is God, the eternal Word, the Only-begotten of the Father. He is therefore divinely competent as He is absolutely reliable. And He is full of grace and truth — the very thing that lost man has not and can find nowhere else. Could the law, truly of God as it was, save the guilty? It could only condemn; and to this. an awakened soul sorrowfully but humbly and thoroughly submits. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. Is not this grace, the saving grace of God? But no one receives it who doubts the full glory of Christ's person. For indeed there is otherwise no sufficient basis before God for sinful man. No mere man could dispense the living water. The Samaritan saw Jesus wearied with the journey, sitting just as He was at the fountain; and she heard Him to her surprise ask of her to drink, though then she judged Him but a Jew, though she could not but feel increasingly as He spoke how extraordinary He was. Come of woman indeed He was to save lost man, come under law to redeem those under law,

that either and both might receive sonship as a gift of God’s grace, and not this only but the Spirit of God’s Son sent out into their hearts, crying Abba, Father. This could only be because Jesus is the Son of God, as no other is or could be, though by grace every believer is truly child and by adoption son of God.

Hence, that the faith should be of divine source and character, the necessity of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 John 5:1; 1 John 5:5). As yet, the Samaritan was in the dark, though moved and drawn by His gracious ways and words; and so she understood not His words no less plain than marvellous. God’s grace was no more believed than Christ’s person, and thus the blessing was to her inscrutable. Yet to her unbelieving and unintelligent question the Lord replies with what, when she did believe, would prove a truth full of comfort to man as of goodness from God. "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water which I shall give him shall become in him a well [or, fountain] of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:13-14). The Lord thus explains more clearly than ever how the living water is the great supernatural gift man needs. The water of an earthly spring, however good, like every natural boon, lasts but for the moment. It quenches thirst, only to recur soon and constantly, as is the nature of all things seen and temporal. The soul, immortal as it is, needs more to satisfy, as God delights in giving when He is looked to in felt want. But here the Lord vouchsafes what satisfies the believer and God Himself, what forms a blessed and permanent and intimate relationship with the Son and the Father. It is not only eternal life, as in John 3:1-36, but the Spirit of adoption given, and therefore said to become in him, the believer, a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. Not only are creature things no longer an object of desire, but a fountain of divine refreshment is within through the indwelling Spirit, Who ever leads the believer to worship by His own power, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh. It is not holy longings only as of old, but present possession and enjoyment by virtue of Christ come and redemption. It is inexhaustible and leads the soul to the sources on high. My reader, have you thus found rest and everlasting joy in the Son of God? The Holy Spirit is given, now that His atoning blood is accepted for the believer, to glorify Him. It is as free as air, but only to faith in Christ. "Whosoever"! Forsake not your own mercies; despise not God’s grace. Receive Christ, believing on His name: and all is yours for ever. For God Who calls is faithful.

5 Go call thy husband "GO, CALL THY HUSBAND." John 4:16-18.

Gospel Words. Series 1, No. 5.

It is the way of grace to speak and act in a love beyond creature thought to one that deserves only blame. This had the Lord Jesus shown thus far to the Samaritan. In every way He is the image of the invisible God. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Nevertheless grace alone suffices not; for man is fallen, evil, and hostile to God without knowing it aright if at all. Now his ruin morally must be known if he is to be saved and blessed. He must therefore know himself as well as God, and himself in God’s presence as God sees him. How can this be? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And He is "full" of grace and truth. Grace and truth came by Him; and both shine as none can deny, through His person and words on the Samaritan. She felt already in a measure His grace; but truth enters through the conscience in order that both

grace and truth should be really known in the soul. Therefore, when the woman betrays by her dark request in John 4:15 ("Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw") that she was still outside the marvellous light of God, "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband and come hither." It seems abrupt and at first sight strange. It was the direct path to her conscience and divinely wise. For grace cannot accomplish its purpose, God's purpose of love, till man is brought to see and own the truth of his own state. Then only can one appreciate the truth of what God is in the holy mercy that saves the unholy through Christ our Lord; and righteously too, for sin must be judged as it deserves. The woman was still walking like the rest of the world in a vain show. From this the Lord delivers her. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." "I have no husband," she answers quickly. "Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly" (John 4:18). How overwhelming, yet how gracious! Not a reproach in His mouth, but He Who knew all men drew from her, by a word of His, the confession of her actual state of sin and shame, and set before her such a sketch of her life as testified to her conscience, that in her case at least all things were naked and laid bare to His eyes with Whom she had to do. Her answer proves that His words had entered her conscience, and that her soul fell under them. There was no effort to parry, no attempt to excuse, no seeking to hide or escape from His presence. On the contrary, she stood there a convicted sinner and owned, not merely that He spoke truly, but that she perceived Him to be "a prophet" (John 4:19). It was the word of God living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. She was manifest in His sight, but by the grace now applied, however humbled to the dust, content to own what she really was and to receive from Him as from God's mouth. For His is not man's word, but, as it is truly, God's word, which also works in every soul that believes.

Thus divine light must act on the soul now, in order that for it all things may be real before God. Hence where His word enters, discovering a life of sin and self, yet in full grace on God's part, the soul bows to God in confession. There is moral reality truly begun, however little developed in detail. How wondrous is God's intervention in Christ, as worthy of Him as suitable and cleansing to the sinner! It is the washing of water by the word, as says the apostle, speaking of Christ's love to the church all the way through. And this the woman here proves. So it ever is. The message of God to sinners (and all are such), when by grace received, deals with the conscience and not merely with the affections. Repentance ensues no less than faith, repentance by God's word judging all within, and faith in receiving God's word and God's gift from without. This now is fully revealed in Christ; and He is life, " Christ our life." For the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining, and in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and consequently the seal of the Spirit. For it is of God that the soul, repentant and believing, should know grace and truth, beyond even what the Samaritan could then bear. Nor does any falsehood more dishonour the gospel than the dim religious light or rather darkness, which would plunge souls and even believing souls in uncertainty, and belie the God of all grace as if He begrudged the blessing to the contrite spirit.

Listen not, dear reader, to those enemies of the cross of Christ, who are so blinded as to teach that our Lord practised reserve about His own precious work. It was He that announced, even before His Galilean ministry, that the Son of man must be lifted up (that is, on the cross) that

whosoever believeth on Him may have eternal life; and that God so loved the world, the sinful, guilty, Christ-rejecting world, as to give His Only-begotten that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life. It was He, that in its course and in the presence of incredulous and blaspheming scribes, would have a most crowded company to know that the Son of man hath power, yea rightful title, on earth to forgive sins — a title assuredly not less since He died and rose, and has all authority given Him in heaven and on earth, saying to His servants, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation. It was He Who even before this lovingly rebuked the aspiring or murmuring twelve, who were in danger from vain-glory, with the words, "The Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." That Satan would stick at nothing to cloak from needy souls such words of grace is as certain as that the Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost, among other ends worthy of God, to empower those that preach the gospel unto all the nations, beginning from the city wherein our Lord was crucified.

It is thus that the soul meets God, not in truth only but in grace; it is in His Son, Jesus Christ. "This is the true God and eternal life." It is after the sin, but before the judgment, that the dead may hear and live — believing, have eternal life and come not into judgment, but have passed from death into life. Less than this is not the gospel of God — is not Christianity — as the Holy Spirit has revealed it.

W.K.

6 Worship of the Father

John 4:20-22.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 41-42. Gospel No. 1: 6.) When the conscience is awakened, the need and the duty of Worship are felt. So we see of old in Naaman when cured of leprosy by the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 5:27). Yet the difficulty is great for souls, as men differ in nothing more, and too often plead this patent fact to excuse themselves from all concern. Not so does the Samaritan now at least. He Who had told her the truth and brought her conscience before God could surely solve the dilemma. Directly therefore after owning Him as a prophet, she presents the case. Divine authority must clear up what was contested so stoutly. And she is the more bold to ask after the wondrous persevering grace she had experienced.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship, Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:20-22). A venerable antiquity has a strong hold on human feeling, and especially in religion. Even a Samaritan could go back a long way and boast of succession. "Our fathers . . . in this mountain." It was a serious thing virtually to condemn their race and ancestors! It is more serious still to leave God out of a question which He has the right to answer. The Samaritans after all never had been a great nation. Yet what great nation ever had God so nigh to them as Israel had their covenant God Jehovah whensoever they called on Him? But did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as Israel heard, and live? They alone were His chosen nation, as Jehovah is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath: there is none else.

Therefore the Lord Jesus could not but allow the plea for Jerusalem as against "this mountain" of Samaria. The Samaritans worshipped that which they did not know. The Jews were used to worship that which they knew; and this on a firm foundation, because "salvation is of the Jews." Theirs are the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the service, and the promises; theirs the "Fathers" in the best sense; and of them as concerning the flesh is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen. He as the woman's seed, as David's and David's Lord, Son of God (Psalms 2:1-12) and Immanuel, had been evermore the One to Whom Israel looked and on whom faith rested; and this Himself here vindicated.

"Salvation is of the Jews"; in that line only is the promised Seed in Whom dead and risen shall all the nation be blessed. For if the promise be to the Jews, pre-eminently to their Messiah, never was it for them alone, but that the grace of God might bless faith wherever it wrought, and so in particular where need was greatest and man could least boast. So did the Lord now deal with the woman, guiding her to boast only in the Father, the only true God, far from the vain confidence of man; and assuredly Samaria had nothing better than others. The truth comes not by succession. Natural descent is no guarantee, any more than human priests or sacred places, still less scribes and lawyers. Jerusalem was proving itself as far from the Father as Gerizim; for His Son was "rejected by men," and by none so bitterly as by the Jews. This gives occasion to the richest display of grace in the gospel; and the Saviour announces it more fully than ever before, not to Nicodemus who heard much but to her of Samaria who heard far more. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father." That hour is now come. When the crucified Lord died, the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. This solemn act on God's part ratified the Saviour's sentence. The place of worship is changed from earth to heaven. The earthly people refused, even to the death of the cross, the Lord of all the earth. But He is no less the Lord of heaven; and on high God has highly exalted Him Whom not man only but His own people chiefly cast out, and thus proved their own evil and ruin to the uttermost. This is just the moment for God to prove His own good; for through that very death of Christ propitiation was made for sins. Thereon the Holy Spirit was sent down to proclaim God's glad tidings to guilty sinners; so that the vilest may be forgiven by the faith of Christ and His blood, yea become thereby sons of God, free and called to worship the Father. Even the babes or little children of God's family know the Father (1 John 2:13), and are capable of worshipping Him, not as Jehovah now, but as Father. Nor is any other worship now acceptable. For God is thus fully revealed: the Only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. The partial measure of Judaism has passed away, no less than Samaritan pretension or any other. Grace and truth came through Jesus; and the testimony of the Holy Spirit is to Him as the sole way to the Father. My fellow-sinners, renounce self, renounce man; for all sinned, all are lost, and are seen to be so when the true light shines as it does now, as truly as in the day of judgment. This, however true, would be the saddest news, were it all. But the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. If we believe in Him, our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake. For this is He that came by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because He is the truth. The Son of God is the Son of Man Who came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Say not that you are too bad for Jesus to receive and bless, and bring you to God. You are indeed too bad for anyone but Jesus, Who has assured us that "him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Fear not then to cast your soul on His grace just as you are. Beware of Satan and his ministers who would persuade you to make yourself more worthy before you believe on His name: there is no surer way to put Him oft and lose your own soul for ever. Undoubtedly your sins apart from Jesus deserve perdition; but Christ and His death have infinitely glorified God as to sin, so that the door of salvation is open to you or any other that believes in Him. Then and not till then will you worship the Father. There is nothing higher in heaven; yet you on earth begin that worship, which is of heaven and will never end.

7 The Father seeking THE FATHER SEEKING WORSHIPPERS. John 4:23.

(B.T. Vol. 18, p. 314-5. Gospel No. 1: 7.) This chapter shows God’s grace and truth in dealing with a sinner by Jesus His Son; and the sinner not convicted only, but brought to worship the Father in the relationship of a child, to worship God according to His nature as a saint. It is the revelation in short of Christianity; and this the more impressively, because the one thus blessed on the spot was just before a wretched guilty woman of Samaria, saved to worship Him Who is God and Father in spirit and in truth.

Doubtless men ought to worship, as they ought to obey and love God. But their state unfits them: they are sinners, in their sins, and alienated from Him. As they are, to take the place of worship and of obeying the law is to deny their ruin. For it is too late to talk of your duty when you are all wrong and lost, as His word declares, in order to bring men to repentance. Again, it is worse than vain, "in the hour that now is," to pretend to worship our God and Father unless we are genuine worshippers. The apostle adds, that the worshippers, having been once purged, or cleansed, have no more conscience of sins (Hebrews 10:2). Adam, now that he had conscience of his sin, hastened to hide from God when he heard His voice in the garden. So would all unpurged worshippers, if they heard His voice today. It is no question of sincerity, but of salvation; cleansing by the blood of Jesus is absolutely requisite. Impossible to worship Him in spirit and in truth, till we know Him by faith as revealed by and in His Son; and we never know Him thus till convicted of what we have done and are by His word as the Samaritan was. Nor are any so guilty as those who seem so near in Christendom. Christening or a catechism does not purge the conscience. The servant who knew his lord’s will, and made not ready nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes (the heathen), shall be beaten with few. God is not mocked: evil unjudged and unremoved cannot escape His judgment; and none are so far from Him really as those that hear the gospel and despise it, unless it be those who profess the Lord’s name hypocritically, or such as from a bad conscience become apostates from Christian profession. For there is grace enough in Christ to meet and save the vilest, as this chapter proves. Hear Him, "wearied with His journey," sitting at the well, and asking a drink of the sinful woman, to win her heart to God’s love, to awaken a just sense of her state, to give her faith in Himself, and in fact to make her a true worshipper. And the Father, as He told her, is seeking such: wondrous truth! not they seeking Him, but He them. Sinners, convicted and believing, are made true worshippers. They contribute nothing but their sins. Grace does and gives all that is of price. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all take part. The sinner has but to abhor his sins and submit to be blessed by God’s grace. No wonder, that the result is immense, as the work is; but it is of faith that it may be according to grace, that God in all things may be glorified through

Jesus Christ, Whose is the glory and the dominion unto the ages of the ages, Amen. And this is "the hour that now is." Have you yet listened to the Saviour Son of God, as did the Samaritan? Then you too are a true worshipper, bound to worship God in spirit and truth, not formally like a Jew, nor of course falsely like a Samaritan. Yea, if a simple-hearted believer, you are entitled to adore Him evermore as Father; for you are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Grace does not find in any sinful man what pleases God; it creates and confers all that pleases Him, when it has brought us to confess that in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good thing. Naturally I am a man, a wretched man that needs a deliverer; and this is none other than the Lord Jesus, Who went down below man's sin and God's judgment that we might be set free in His righteousness, yet all in pure and sovereign grace. For grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our. Lord. But have you owned your sins, your life of sin, as the Samaritan did when convicted by the word of Jesus? Or will you hide your sin like Adam and set yourself as far as you can from God? Oh the infatuation! Do you not know that you must be made manifest another day before Christ? For He is the appointed Judge. What will it be with you then? Assuredly everlasting perdition, unless you have all out with Him now and here. But repenting, and believing God's love in Him, you become the true worshipper that the Father is seeking. So the Samaritan became that very day: why should not you today? Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. The mountain of Samaria can bring you no blessing, nor can Jerusalem, or those that follow in the wake of either, remove your curse: none but Jesus can avail, Who became on the cross a curse for all under curse. But He is all-sufficient; He is the Giver of the living water. The water that He gives the needy one that asks of Him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life. Such are the true worshippers that the Father seeks; and they only then worship God in spirit and in truth.

"To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace but as of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." It is God reckoning righteousness apart from works; yet it is the only principle that produces good works as its fruit. Oh let not the pride of unbelief blind you to your truly lost estate; but may you turn to God as you are, a poor lost sinner, and find in the grace of Christ all you want!

Then and thus, met with the free-giving of God, and sealed of His Spirit, as one resting solely on Christ and His finished work, your heart will go out in praise and adoration. This is to be a true worshipper; and such is the Father seeking to the praise of His Son, Whose things the Holy Spirit takes and declares to us who believe. As the Son glorified the Father, so does the Father glorify the Son on high; and the Spirit glorifies Him here below and bears witness of Him. Are you a witness of Jesus, God's Son, the Saviour of the world — ay, of a poor unworthy Samaritan? Or are you, alas! a witness of yourself or of other men? Such are not those to be saved. The saved are true worshippers.

8 Worship in spirit and truth

John 4:24.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 57-58. Gospel No. 1-8.)

God never accepted in His worship the efforts of man or the imitations of self-will. But He gave a system of beautiful and instructive forms to Israel, who had His law till Christ came to Whom they

all pointed, and, Who superseded all by a fulfilment which more than accomplished all. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, can never, with the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, perfect those that approach. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having been once purged, have no longer conscience of sins?

Totally different is the standing of the christian through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Who came to do perfectly the will of God. "He taketh away the first (i.e. Levitical offering) that He may establish the second (i.e. God's will), by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:9-10.) Yea more; "for by one offering He hath perfected for ever (uninterruptedly) them that are sanctified" or set apart to God (Hebrews 10:14). Our Gospel here views Christian worship from another point of the highest importance, the need and blessing of eternal life in Christ and of the consequent gift of the Spirit that dwells henceforth in the believer. The Epistle views him as in himself at a distance from God, needing propitiation, and his conscience to be purified from dead works to serve religiously (or worship) the living God. Both blessings attach to faith. They are the portion of the believer only. For Christ is his life; and his sins are forgiven for His Name's sake; and the Holy Spirit seals him as having believed the glad tidings of his salvation.

Thus pardoned, furnished, and blessed by grace, the Christian draws nigh to God, instead of standing far off like a Jew; he is exhorted to approach with boldness, as may well be, since it is "unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:1-16), to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. There alone is a Great Priest over the house of God. All others are human pretenders over their own society, even if they have ambition enough to claim the whole of Christendom, or all the world. In this respect an apostle or a prophet takes common ground with all the faithful; for the blood of Christ is equally efficacious for all that believe. It perfects them each and all before God, and this here and now; so that all various efficacy of that blood is excluded, whatever the different positions in the church the sovereign will of God may assign as He does (1 Corinthians 12:28), and whatever the differing place in glory, as we know from Matthew 25:14-22, Luke 19:15-19, 1 Corinthians 3:8, and elsewhere. But the inspired word to all brethren is, Let us approach " with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an' evil conscience and, our body washed with pure water." And what is worship but thanksgiving and praise? Thanksgiving for what God has done in Christ and gives freely to us who believe; praise for what we know by His word and Spirit He is, not only to us, but in Himself, His majesty, holiness, truth, goodness, mercy, love, and delight in us, the eternal self-existing One, now revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Dear reader, do you know the only true God? Do you know the Father? From 1 John 2:13 we learn that the little children, the babes of God's family, know the Father. But Only he that confesses the Son has the Father also. God is no party to His Son's dishonour. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Faith is the operation of the Holy Spirit by the word. But to worship we need, besides, the gift of the Spirit, which is received when we rest on Christ's redemption; as in the O.T. oil was put where the blood (not merely the water) had been. Indeed as we see in Leviticus 8:1-36, though Aaron alone had the oil without blood (Leviticus 8:12), Aaron's sons as well as he were sprinkled with the oil and the blood after the blood sprinkling (Leviticus 8:23-24). Is

it so with you? Are you resting by faith on the sacrifice of Christ? Then you are anointed also; you are sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption — the redemption of the body, as you already have in Christ redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of your offences.

See then that you worship the Father in spirit and truth. We have in the N.T. the clear impression how the believers worshipped since redemption. No doubt there were at first the effects of their old religious associations. But the fresh grace and mighty truth of a risen and exalted Saviour led them out surely if slowly. And the Lord's Supper became by His institution the central symbol and ever recurring observance every Lord's day at least. Nor did the now sent and ever abiding Spirit fail to work in the assembly, not only in teaching, and exhorting and edifying but in singing, blessing, and giving thanks. Flesh might deceive and intrude; but the holy responsibility of all was to worship in spirit and truth-to worship the Father in that near and blessed relationship, as the Son revealed Him and the Spirit gives us to enjoy, to worship God in that holy nature and majesty Whose perfect love has cast out our fear; for He has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him.

It is not enough to be "true worshippers," blessed though this is. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in. spirit and truth." How sad for the true worshippers to swamp themselves with notorious men of the world, and in acts and words suited to a mixed multitude! This He called not for nor accepts. It is not worship in spirit and truth which our Lord declares "must" be.

It is a necessity of His nature, and of theirs too, seeing that believers are become partakers of it in His grace (compare James 1:18, 2 Peter 1:4, 1 John 3:9). If true worshippers, look to it that your worship be, according to His will, "in spirit and truth," not in forms or falsehood, but as we have been taught by the Lord]Himself and His, inspired servants. Since the Son of God is come and has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true, formal and false worship is hateful to Him and a shame for "true worshippers" who have the Spirit and know the truth, and are, called to worship consistently.

9 I that speak unto thee am He

John 4:26.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 72-73. Gospel No. 1: 9.)

Now that the conscience of the Samaritan was reached and in exercise before God, the grace of the Saviour was not in vain for her heart. She had listened to words that brought home to her unmistakeably the love of God, whereof His Son was at once the witness and the fulness. One thing more she needed, which He was waiting to grant, the knowledge of Himself come, the Father's sent One, without which there is no Christianity. He is "all," as He is "in all" that are His; but He is also for any, as the gospel announces, and the woman here discovers. She felt that the flood of light which the Lord shed on the worship that was at hand, was too much for her apprehension, and accordingly says to Him, "I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when He is come, He will tell [declare] us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He." The Lord had declared the Father's name, little as she took it in; He had also confessed and denied not but confessed, that He Himself was the Christ. And we have His word for it, whatever the difficulty and the darkness unbelief pours over all, that this is life eternal, that they

may know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He sent. For such knowledge is of the Holy Spirit, and, unlike all other knowledge, is inseparable from life. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." Grace had opened her heart, the truth had searched her soul; and the Lord laid hold of the confession she made (however feebly) of a coming Messiah, to declare Himself the satisfying object of trust. It was far from being His highest title; it was not the everlasting glory of His person; it was what He became as man on earth the promised One, and what He, rejected of men, is now also made on high. For His death that seemed to disappoint all hopes was essential if only to efface our guilt, and His resurrection restored (and more) what death took away. Thus He graciously met her, in that recognition of what He truly was, to her unspeakable comfort and rest.

Faith always meets Christ. He is the great divine discovery to the soul. All must meet Him on the throne one day; but this will be everlasting ruin to such as do not meet Him now. For them it will be judgment. Now it is the grace of God which gives and forgives. The unbeliever refuses Him now and comes into judgment then. To meet Him now by faith is life and salvation, as the Samaritan proved. Thousands saw and heard Him while on earth; but where no faith was, there was no life. It was when the woman believed that she received the blessing. And this blessing is no less offered to all that believe on Him without seeing or hearing. Indeed there is emphatic blessing as He told Thomas, for those who have not seen and have believed. The Holy Spirit has recorded the tale for your soul, dear reader, that you too may believe, and be saved if you are not already. To you the word of salvation is sent; for Jesus is still a Saviour, not yet a Judge. By and by He will be Judge and not Saviour. Never are the two functions mixed. Nor does the believer, as He assures us, come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. His work fails no more than His person; and he that believes has eternal life. The unbeliever will hear Him pronounce all, but too late. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:1-18.) "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:1-29). He is the truth: rely on Him. The unworthiness of the Samaritan up to that very day did not hinder His race nor her blessing Why should you doubt His willingness to receive and help you just as you are? For the blessing depends entirely on Him and His sacrifice. To receive it through Him, confessing your guilt and need, is to submit to the righteousness of God; to prefer your own efforts and sacrifices is going about to establish your own righteousness, as the unbelieving Jews did. Those who are indifferent to their sins, God’s warning, and Christ’s salvation, defy judgment and despise mercy. Alas! they assuredly must meet the due reward of their deeds and unbelief. For God is not mocked; and those that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Hear then His words in faith. He pleads with your soul. "I that speak unto thee am He." And He is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever. Doubt yourself; for indeed you have the gravest reason. Believe on Him; for God’s word bears the fullest witness, that as He declares all, so He endured all to save the foulest sinner and His worst enemy, if they repent and believe the gospel. His was all the worth, His all the suffering, His all the grace. Give Him then all the glory, as He willingly gives you all the blessing. This is God’s truth, God’s love, and God’s way. It is His gospel, His glad tidings, sent that you may believe. He does not begrudge you life and salvation in Christ; He delights in blessing; and this too, most rich and needed blessing. But He warns too. "If the word

spoken by angels (i.e. the law) was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? " Thus judgment at the close vindicates the God Whose saving love in His Son is set at nought. The sanction is as solemn, as the blessing is full and plain, immediate and everlasting. The message meanwhile bespeaks God for its author; He is the God of all grace. But it is grace reigning through righteousness, for Christ suffered for sins, Just for unjust. Not otherwise could the defiled and guilty be brought to God. Our ransom is not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with Christ's precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. And faith honours both Christ and the God Who gave Him, as unbelief adds rebellion and contempt of God to our other sins which are many and deep. No doubt you deserve nothing from God but judgment, which, without faith in Christ, is perdition. But Christ deserves, and has secured by His work, that every believer should be saved. If this does not gratify man's pride, it suits God's love and glory, in which the believer finds his everlasting blessedness.

10 The Woman then left her waterpot

John 4:28.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 86-7. Gospel No. 1: 10.)

Blessed effects follow faith when it is the work of God's Spirit as here. "He that believeth hath everlasting life;" and life from God does not fail to show itself in ways pleasing to Him if not to man. A faith of mere tradition, or founded on evidences, is powerless. The conscience being untouched, in no case is it before God; nor is He trusted for everlasting life.

Little acts as well as matters of great moment disclose the work of God in a believer. The Holy Spirit notices both in the Samaritan woman. In the opening of the interview her pre-occupation with present things was evident. When the Lord seized the figure of living water in contrast with that before her, we see her total insensibility. She was unable to rise above earthly wants and desires. Only when her conscience was reached, did God and His word deal with her soul, however amazed and attracted she might be by the grace of Christ. Even when her life was suddenly laid bare by the wondrous stranger, so as to convince her that everything was known to Him divinely, she has no wish to escape into the darkness in which she had heretofore lived; she desires light in what most nearly touches the right state of the soul with God. She is assured that He could and would guide her aright in the worship of God, where men differ most and so keenly. She had to learn of a new worship superseding Jerusalem no less than her vain traditional mountain — the worship of the Father. This He, the Son, was alone competent to announce; as also the Holy Spirit is the needed power to enable the worshipper, even the true worshipper, to render it suitably to God's nature as well as His relationship as Father. But the work in her soul was not complete till He stood revealed in her spirit as Messiah come, the Declarer of all things to us: so she expected and confessed, and yet how much more the reality and fulness! At this point, the most solemn and blessed for every soul that knows it, when God reveals Himself in Christ to the needy and guilty but now the sinner repentant, came His disciples marvelling that He was speaking with a woman. For even they still shared the Jewish pride which despised the sex. How much greater their astonishment, had they known what she was, and what were His communications of infinite grace! "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

It was the simple effect of divine truth acting on her heart, now that her conscience was before God. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose, or matter, under heaven, a time to seek, and a time to lose. So she rightly felt the all-importance of the moment, not for herself only but for others. Her ordinary duty could well wait. It was nothing to her now to avoid the concourse of women at the well, for she clearly had been alone there. What were censorious tongues now? She had heard the Shepherd's voice. Had He not called her, knowing all she was and had done? She left her waterpot therefore. To know Him was the great business. Another time was equally good for the waterpot. But here was the Messiah, the Christ; and if He deigned in His compassionate love to make Himself known to her, convicted as she was, surely no sinner need despair. Without a command, as the fruit of His grace, she leaves aside what was earthly and perishing, she seeks to spread the blessed news, which filled her soul and made her forget herself and every consideration but of Christ and His goodness to such as she had been. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation," just expressed her new-born feelings, the activity of that life she had in Christ. And so it is with souls born of God, who learn from Christ that the Father seeketh such to worship Him. As yet she was ignorant of dogma, but by grace She had received Christ, the despised Messiah, and the more despised because He was and is infinitely more, the Son of God, the Only begotten, full of grace and truth. Little she knew of "Him ; but she believed in Him as the Promised One, the destroyer of Satan, the Redeemer, not merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel, but given for a light to the Gentiles, that He might be God's salvation unto the end of the earth. The Samaritan woman had already proved that His divine knowledge of her sins did not in the least hinder the outflow of divine grace to her soul. Grace had used truth to search her and put her in her true place, that she might be fully blessed of God and able to draw near in adoration as a true worshipper. Nor is there anything so humbling as the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ When the prodigal came to himself, he made up his mind to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Had he adequately judged himself, he could not have asked even this; he must have felt his unworthiness (so far as he was concerned) of any place whatever. But when his father ran and fell on his neck and kissed him in his rags, he owned his sin and unworthiness; but not a word of being made an hireling. It was, he now learned, no question of himself, but of the Father's love. So is it with our God and Father. He acts in His own love and for His own glory. And Christ alone has made it possible righteously by His propitiation; as He alone is the truth, the way, and the life, revealing Him as Father and God, that we may know the true God Whom we adore. The woman in the energy of faith, not only leaves her waterpot for a more fitting season, but in her own way shows the effect of the truth that the Father is seeking true worshippers, as she also knew that grace can and does make poor sinners such. So it was with her. Now the positive power of the truth discloses itself. She seeks others, any, in the faith of His grace. "She saith to the men (that is, of the city), Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And she was right, truly guided, where human learning and genius have utterly failed and prove their possessors to be but blind guides who only lead and fall into the ditch. She was right and testified of, and in, the grace that blessed her. For Christ is man, yet as truly God, the only Man Who ever thus told all to the sinner, the only bearer of his sins on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness. It is a suspicious faith that does not subordinate earthly claims to Christ, and that burns not to make Him known to the lost.

11 We have heard Him ourselves.

John 4:42.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 104-105. Gospel No. 1: 11.)

There is no salvation without the revelation of God to the soul, and this is in Christ His Son. The warrant is the word of God, and now the written word (or scripture) on which rests all the authority of what is preached or spoken. This the Holy Spirit in quickening power carries borne to the soul, not only convicting the conscience but winning the heart to God through faith in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

God graciously employs, not an angel, but a sinner born anew to convey the truth to others, as we see herein Samaria. "And out of that city many of the Samaritans believed on Him because of the word of the woman testifying, He told me all things that I did." It was a true work of God, and in the ordinary way of grace through the word dealing with the conscience. There was no miracle, any more than persuasive words of human wisdom, but demonstration of the Spirit, that their faith might stand in God's power. And the Lord Jesus acted in that grace which the apostle only learnt in their measure years afterward when propitiation was made and the Spirit was sent down. For when the Samaritans came to Him, they besought Him to abide with them, and He abode there two days. "And many more believed because of His word, and said to the woman. No longer because of thy speaking do we believe; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

It was the simple and blessed fact for these Samaritans, the beautiful foreshadowing of the true and unchangeable ground of faith for all that should hear and believe the gospel when the Lord would not be personally on earth. Any one and any thing may arrest souls by revealed truth; a man, a woman, a child; a sermon, a conversation, a book or a tract. But whatever the means, the soul believes God; and without believing God there is no true faith, no divine authority and grace over heart and conscience.

Hence the Samaritans, struck by the converted woman's testimony, justly bore witness to the word of the Lord Himself. Hearing Him, they knew and believed the love that God has to us. Having received His testimony, they set to their seal that God is true. And as they thus believed God in the full revelation of Himself in Christ, we may surely say of them what scripture attests of Abraham when he believed God in a far less measure of light, that it was counted to them for righteousness. For living faith ever brings the soul before God, where it has His light whereby to judge itself. But God revealed in Man, and that Man His only-begotten Son, brings His love near to the heart in a reality beyond all thought, and rises above all sinfulness, proved (as we can add) in His death, that we might possess known remission of sins through His blood, and thus the conscience purged from dead works to serve a living God.

It is a, universal truth, in short, that the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice, and that they follow Him, for they know His voice. What these Samaritans enjoyed as a literal fact is no less true of all who believe the gospel. And Christ came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly; or, as His servant wrote, died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live to themselves but to Him that for them died and was raised. Thus all things are of God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave us the service of reconciliation, the spirit of which is plain for the Samaritan woman; as the contrary of it appears in such as place themselves

or other men between God and the soul, denying His grace and intercepting His right. The Lord Jesus was just the One to do the work of God; for as on one side He was God, so on the other He was Man, in one person, come here below to declare God and reveal the Father, to bear the sins in His own body on the tree and thus enable the believer to draw near to God without fear and assured of His perfect love. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" said the psalmist prophetically (Psalms 40:1-17) of Jesus. More than a thousand years after inspired David, wrote one equally inspired to expound him, "by the which will we have been (and are) sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:1-39.).

Christ alone reveals God as light and love. By Him alone mercy and truth are met to-ether; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. All other systems, all adversaries of Him, are but thieves and robbers whom the sheep hear not. But His word is as divine as His work. As one of them said, Thou hast words of eternal life; as He said Himself, The words I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. When He went away on high, the Holy Ghost was sent down to abide for ever with those that believe, to glorify the Son that glorified God the Father, and to guide into all the truth. So that no excuse for unbelief is valid on the score that Jesus is gone. It is expedient for you, said the Lord, that I go away: for if I go not away, the

Comforter (Advocate) will not come unto you but if I go, 1 will send Him unto you. Thus the Spirit ever fully takes of the things of Jesus and declares them to us, teaches all things, besides bringing to remembrance all that He had said, bears witness of Christ far beyond what the apostles saw or heard though with Him from the beginning. For the Spirit was sent forth from heaven where Christ is now exalted, as He had indeed many things to say to them, which they could not hear till He was glorified.

How blessed then that, when we hear the apostles' words, it is still Christ speaking in them! If any believe not, it is because they are not of His sheep, the test of whom is that they hear His voice. But He adds "I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

12 The Saviour of the world

John 4:41-42.

Gospel Words Series 1, No. 12. The Samaritans besought the Son of God to abide with them, and there He did abide two days (John 4:40). What confidence on their part! what grace on His! Others more favoured, who despised them, besought Him with one consent to depart from them (Luke 8:37). Who else are recorded as ever preferring such a request for His presence? But those who asked received a blessing both now and evermore, as faith in Him ever does. "And many more believed because of His own word, and said to the woman, No longer because of thy speaking do we believe, for we have heard ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Truly a noble and most suited confession! No Jew did or could then have uttered it. It was God choosing the foolish things of the world that He might put to shame the wise, it was God choosing the weak things of the world that He might put to shame the things that are strong; and the ignoble of the world and the despised things God chose, the things that are not, that He might bring to

nought the things that are; so that no flesh should boast before God.

It was an anticipation worthy of His personal dignity, which faith saw and testified, as grace created and sanctioned it. The Son of God is recognised in the fullest sphere of divine mercy. It is the more striking because He had maintained the place God had given the Jews as compared with Samaritan pretension. As surely as He was the Messiah, so salvation is of the Jews. But the Jews, blinder than their blind whose eyes He so often opened, were rejecting Him though trusting their own thoughts and indulging their own will. And the rejected Messiah, about to taste its bitterness to the uttermost, was displaying grace and truth open to any needy soul, and pressing home the reality of that need, that He might bless according to the love of the Father. His own word deepened the conviction which the woman's testimony had awakened, and the faith of the many that believed expressed itself in the confession, "This is indeed the Saviour of the world." Was it not all worthy of God and His Son? The sin of His ancient people, in despising the grace of the Messiah because He did not come in power and glory to exalt their nation and confound their foes, only gave occasion to more grace. So the Samaritans believed without a miracle, and entered into the blessing all the more deeply. They take their own place: not a word of rivalry with the Jew. They were sinners: Jesus is the Saviour. They were of the world. But "this is indeed the Saviour of the world." God saves not because we deserve but because He, Jesus, does; and we believe on Him. As long as the Jew was under probation, this could not be manifested. But one of the peculiarities of the Gospel of John (and each has its special design, not merely from the writer's style, but from the particular purpose of the inspiring Holy Spirit) is that the Jews received not Christ, as we learn, from the very first. Hence a larger and deeper scope of blessing begins to shine through the clouds, even before the Lord's public testimony and right through it. This chapter is an unmistakable witness. And is it all nothing to you, dear readers? Is not this, and more than this, expressly written that "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through (in) His name"? John 20:31. Is it in vain that the Holy Spirit has perpetuated for you the grace that reached the many Samaritans? Or are you disposed to follow the proud and stiff-necked Jews in nullifying as to yourselves the counsel of God? If so, beware of perishing, as they did.

Beyond doubt, as all scripture declares, whatever be the grace of God, you forfeit it by unbelief. It is of faith that it might be according to grace. It is here you have sinned, and now you must be saved; and there is no means other than believing on Jesus. You in Christendom have heard more than either the Jews who refused, or the Samaritans who believed. And whoever you are, whatever you may have been, their testimony is for you, for anyone: "This is indeed the Saviour of the world." Such is the spirit of the gospel that went forth in due time to all the creation, as the Lord came expressly to call not righteous men, but sinners "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5). Were it otherwise, no sinful man could be justified. Whereas, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is the distinctive blessedness that God loves with no motive in the object loved, but because He is love. Hence says the apostle, "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And as the Samaritans at the beginning were divinely led to own the Saviour of the world, so the apostle John in his First Epistle, avowedly written for the dangers and evils of the last time, repeats the testimony when unfolding the love of

God superior to all changes. "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). Yes, but how am I to receive certainty for my own soul? "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). It is the Spirit of God anticipating conscientious difficulty and satisfying the just desire of assurance from above in one who might otherwise be overwhelmed with the sense of sin. One cannot too much judge one's self, provided that along with it there is no distrust of grace. The person and the work of Christ account for salvation and the highest privileges to him that believes, were he chief of sinners. God puts all honour on the name of His Son, whether in blessing the believer or in punishing the unbeliever by-and-by. To believe God's testimony is the first of duties, and Christ is the object of that testimony. So, when the trembling jailer at Philippi fell down before Paul and Silas he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The way is simple, the warrant sure, the salvation rich and full. The call of God is to believe on His Son, the Lord Jesus, the result is salvation for all that believe, the house no less than its head. Hence it is His commandment that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ: loving one another follows, as He gave us commandment. But it is in vain to urge love, holiness, or anything else till we believe on Him.

W. K.

05.04. Gospel Words - Second Series.

Gospel Words - Second Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 Justified by faith 2 Peace with God 3 This grace wherein we stand 4 Hope of the glory of God 5 We glory in tribulations also 6 The love of God 7 Christ died for the ungodly 8 God's own love 9 Justified by His blood 10 Reconciled to God 11 We shall be saved 12 We also joy in God 1. Justified by faith

Romans 5:1.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 134-135. Gospel No. 2: 1.)

"How should a man be just with God?" Solemn question! to which man can give no satisfactory answer. If righteousness rule, love is annulled; if love govern, righteousness is swamped. Man can devise no way which does not sacrifice the one to the other. The anxious soul is thus left a prey to fear, apt to drown his doubts in religious efforts if not in the pleasures of sin for a season. Self is unjudged, and conscience unpurged; God unknown. Christ a mere make-weight or help and an impossible example. In such a state (and nothing is more common even in Christendom), the very gospel is turned into a law more galling than that of Moses; and some souls sink into indifference or despair, whilst others clothe themselves with the rags of their own righteousness, to find out too late that they are naked in God's sight.

Christ, Christ's redemption, alone meets the dilemma, alone puts in their true places God and man, guilt and judgment, peace and holiness. Without Him all for the sinner is a hopeless chaos of contradiction. By Christ's death, as God is glorified, so remission of sins is proclaimed to man: mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed. But man, hitherto living to himself and without God, even if an observer Of forms and duties, is summoned to believe the gospel, not merely that there is grace and truth in Christ, but to believe on Him and His work for his own soul before God. This necessarily involves repentance toward God, as indeed is often expressly insisted on (Matthew 21:32, Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30; Acts 20:21). The word of faith, which we preach, says the apostle, is "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). His words in Romans 4:23-25 set the truth in the clearest light. "Now it was not written for his (Abraham's) sake that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead, Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith," etc.

None need ask language more precise, none can desire more authoritative. It is scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16); and scripture is the word of God, whatever the human instrument, communicated by the Holy Spirit for permanent use, written not for their sakes only to whom it was originally given, but

for us also. Being God’s word, it binds the conscience of every man whom it reaches: his abuse of it, his refusal to heed it, will but aggravate his condemnation. Cavilling will not blot out his sins nor rescue him from the wrath to come. Faith is the reception of God’s word, and now pre-eminently of His message to every man, the gospel of His grace. We are called to believe that God raised Jesus our Lord from among the dead — Jesus expressly declared to be given up for our offences and raised for our justification or justifying. The efficacious work was entirely on God’s part. We had contributed alas! our trespasses: He gave up His Son Who suffered for them, Just for unjust, and raised Him from the dead, the sure proof that the sacrifice was wrought and accepted for those that believe. Do you ask further demonstration? Romans 8:34 adds, "Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." His resurrection and glory on high are the answer, not only to His person but to His work, glorifying God as to sin and suffering for our sins. God is righteous in thus raising and glorifying Him. But His righteousness avails much more, and Justifies him that believes in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

Here is the blessed ground of the gospel. Fallen and guilty, man has no righteousness for God (Romans 1:1-32; Romans 2:1-29). But God justifies freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Who bore the judgment of our sins on the cross, and now risen declares the believer free. Hence it is "by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." It is open "to all," but for this very reason far worse off with God is he who rejects Christ and the gospel of God. He who believes on Him is justified, yea is made God’s righteousness in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). He is justified by faith. There is no other way. It is not a process going on, but a fact accomplished and made known by that surest of testimonies-God’s word. For He loves that we should know what Christ has done for us, and what He can afford to give in consequence. If we believe in Him, He would not have us doubtful, or burdened, but enjoying the inestimable favour of being justified in His sight. It is the fundamental blessing, anticipated in the Psalm (Psalms 32:1-11), accomplished in Christ, and proclaimed in the gospel.

It is "upon all them that believe." The weak believer as well as the strong, may rest on the Saviour, Whom God set forth a propitiatory, or mercy seat, by faith in His blood. And why was the blood sprinkled seven times before it, if not to furnish the fullest confidence to every soul that believes? The veil is now rent; all is manifest, not only your sins in the light of the cross, but the blood upon the mercy seat, the witness of atonement for ever accepted. For God has before Him, not your sins, but the blood that cleanses from every sin.

More than that, it was to declare God’s righteousness; and this doubly. It was first to vindicate in the pretermission or passing over of the foregone sins in the forbearance of God. How else could He have dealt as He did with such as Abel, Enoch, and Noah, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with crowds of others named and unnamed of old? But it is also to show His righteousness in the present time when He sends the glad tidings to all the world, to bear fruit and grow in all that bear and know the grace of God in truth. For it is no longer His ancient people under the law, but the gospel sent to all; no longer man’s righteousness claimed, to convict of sin and powerlessness and ruin, but God’s righteousness in Christ’s death, that Himself might be just and justifier of him that has faith in Jesus.

Therefore, as the apostle triumphantly challenges in Romans 8:33, "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" Christ Jesus by His suffering work alone accounts for it. For our sins

afforded righteous ground against us; but Christ bore them in His body on the tree, as His resurrection proves them to be altogether and righteously gone. It is God's righteousness, as the Epistle to the Romans lays down, not only to raise Him from the dead, but to justify all who believe in Him. His righteousness goes far beyond, even to heavenly glory for Christ and those that are His. But here the Holy Spirit urges the foundation alike for God and for the soul through faith. May it be your portion, dear reader, through sovereign grace!

2 Peace with God

Romans 5:1.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 151-152. Gospel No. 2: 2.) The sinner is at war with God Whose judgment he cannot but dread. He is guilty and knows it, but the effort for him to forget it always is vain, still more so to hide it from God. Even conscience recalls the sins long committed, just when the remembrance is most painful and overwhelming. Nor does the Holy Spirit fail to apply the word of God where there is an ear to hear, All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light. This aggravates the darkness, and makes evident the unbeliever's total unfitness for God's presence. For indeed His glory is the standard; and how far sinful man comes short! But the Lord Jesus is a perfect Saviour, and the only one. And as He came from God, so is He gone to God. He came down in love; He is gone up in righteousness, and between the two He could and did say, "I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:32, For He made peace through the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:20. For whom did He make peace, if not for those who deeply need it? And as God sent His Son for this end, His heart welcomes the troubled penitent that looks to Him for it. Yea, God anticipates poor doubting man, and sets him at ease by gracious tidings which He now sends everywhere, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. Of old God told His ancient people, "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that, seeketh after God. They have all turned aside; they are together becomes unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is, under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are, in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." So the apostle quoted from Psalms 53:1-6 and others, and from Isaiah 59:1-21. Is it not as true of you in Christendom? Are you not as bankrupt in righteousness, in spiritual intelligence, in any real care even about God? Nay, it is true of all that they have swerved, and together been unprofitable in His sight, and not even one practising good. Nor is there a member of man's body untainted by corruption or violence. What then but destruction and misery in such ways, and peace's way unknown? Ah! how true that no fear of God is before men's eyes. But why perish in your sins? Why persist .in guilty wretchedness, when God is calling to you, and calling you to Himself? The apostle in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 declares that God was in Christ reconciled, not worthy men, nor His ancient people but the "world" to Himself; nay, more, not reckoning unto them their trespasses. May you believe it! He represents himself and others labouring in the gospel as ambassadors on behalf of Christ. For the counsel of peace is between Them both, Who would win you from the enemy and sin and its judgment, that you might have peace with God. We beseech you, says he, Be reconciled to God. Him Who knew no sin, Christ, He made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. There is no barrier on God's part, and He declares that in the cross of Christ He has made, full provision for you, spite of all your evil. If you bow as a sinner and call on

the name of the Lord, God assures you that Christ took your place in divine judgment of sin there to give you His place in righteousness and glory.

Thus the ground of peace, for the soul that is troubled before God, is Christ the propitiation for sins (1 John 2:2). Him therefore has God forth a propitiatory or mercy seat through faith in His blood (Romans 3:25). You might, as you are, justly dread His judgment seat. But divine grace has interposed, after the sins, and before the judgment. Oh, trifle with neither! Unbelief will not save but destroy you. Hear His word and believe Him now. "Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:1-18.) For all that believe Christ bore the sins in His own body on the tree; and you may draw near in faith to God's own presence, for the veil is rent, and the blood. is upon the mercy seat and before it. And why was the blood sprinkled seven times before it (Leviticus 16:1-34), if not to give complete assurance to him that thus and now approaches God in the true sanctuary? No wonder that you, believing God's testimony concerning His Son, are entitled to peace, to peace with Him now and evermore, Undoubtedly your sins were many and great, yourself unworthy and sinful. But the Son of Man, it is written, came to seek and save that which is lost. Salvation is therefore yours if on the warrant of God's word you believe on Him. It is all well if your soul has been deeply concerned as you weighed your evil life in God's sight. But no such exercises can ever give you peace; any more than the harrowing of a field can itself yield a harvest. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can avail for you. But if we believe God's estimate of His blood as in Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25 points us to His resurrection as God's proof of our justification. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification comes out of faith, not out of works of law. The soul is justified on that principle, and on none other. But having been thus justified, we know that the burden of guilt is rolled away by a divine work brought home to us, and "we have peace with God." It is through Christ alone meritoriously, but it cannot be ours save by faith. Believing, we have peace with God. So Christ, with His death in view, left peace as His legacy to His own (John 14:27); and as He promised, so He performed (John 20:19; John 20:21), on the resurrection day saying, "Peace be unto you." He repeated it, both for their own souls, and for His work as His envoys to others. Without peace resting on God's word we cannot enjoy our real relationship as children of God, nor can we draw near to worship the Father in spirit and truth; the conscience is unpurged, and the affections have no due exercise, To have peace with God is the normal privilege of a Christian.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 46.)

Peace with God is a state of mind in the unclouded consciousness of what God is (but necessarily according to His nature) to us according to the value of Christ's work, and in Him.

There is another order of peace from the conformity itself to this nature — a subjective peace. "The mind of the Spirit is life and peace."

3 This grace wherein we stand

Romans 5:2.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 168-169. Gospel No. 2: 3.)

Faith then receives God's testimony to Christ and His work. He Who believes on Him is justified. My sins are no obstacle. It was for sins and for sinners that Jesus died; and they are blotted out

and forgiven to him that believes the gospel. At God's call doubt no longer, but believe His word. This is not only to turn to Him from self and sin and the creature in every form, but to honour God Whom You have slighted hitherto, believing His love and submitting to His righteousness. Not that faith is an object: Christ is what God presents to the needy and guilty soul, Confess Him as God reveals Him; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no different name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved. That divine Saviour cannot fail; and it is because you have utterly failed in yourself that you need Him, Him only, to save you. For as God the Father sent Him to be Saviour, so does the Holy Spirit bear witness to Him alone. Cast away every doubt and fear; only believe. But justification, wondrous boon as it is for a sinner is far from all that God gives through our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle adds, "Through Whom also we have* access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." How many souls, after really believing on Him, take the ground of law in their newborn relationship with God! And what is the result? Dissatisfaction and uneasiness, doubt and fear not without torment. Self-judgment is thoroughly right; but in such a case it is apt to be as superficial as the faith, even supposing both to be of God's Spirit. Neither can be deep, unless the soul rest by faith on God's estimate of Christ's blood and of its own guilt and abject need: when one does, the conscience is purged, the heart confides in God, and self-judgment proceeds habitually and unreservedly as we walk in the light.

*We "have" peace is simply possessing as a present thing; we "have" access is the continuance of what is past, and so is "we stand."

Christ by His work entitles the believer to a constant approach and standing in the favour of God. This is part, and a most important part, of the salvation which the gospel proclaims. When justified, we are not placed, as the Jews were by their own choice (Exodus 19:1-25), under law; we have the well-known, near, and real access to God which is proper to the Christian (Ephesians 2:18, Ephesians 3:12). Before the redemption that is in Christ, it was not enjoyed, nor could it be given; and when Christ comes to reign over the earth, it will no longer be the portion of those here below. It is a privilege peculiar to the gospel of sovereign grace; and he who now believes since Pentecost has it and ought to enjoy it.

Only consider how immense the blessing is to him that believes, whatever the license that the hypocrite takes to his own destruction. It is not only that righteousness is reckoned to you, but that you have got and so possess as a settled thing access by faith into this favour in which we stand: not a blot left on you, not a cloud hanging or rising over you, but divine favour without stint, change, or end. Christ and Christ's accomplished work alone account for it; as thus only was it rendered possible to faith. For it is not simply the love of God. He loves the angels, He loves His creatures. The gospel is the glad tidings of His grace for all, not Israel merely, but all men indiscriminately, that appeared when Christ died, rose, and went to heaven; grace rising over sins, and where sin abounded, over-exceeding grace reigning through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. This grace of God in the Saviour, not law, is what meets us as our assured portion in our approach to God. Nor indeed can there be true approach to God on any other ground than one of perfect favour in Christ. Grace and truth came to pass through Jesus Christ. It was not so before; it is the fact now. The law was given through Moses: grace and truth came into being for man here below through Christ, the only-begotten Son, Who alone could make either good, Who made both good to God's glory. The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin. More than that, we are through Him made welcome to the presence of God, we have

boldness. Weigh the word which the Holy Ghost gives (Hebrews 10:19); weigh well the word, ye timid believers, for your souls' joy and blessing Weigh it solemnly, ye who believe in superstition and tradition and human reasoning, not in the gospel of the grace of God; weigh it and tremble for your dishonour of God's will, and of Christ's work, and of the Holy Spirit's witness.

For, if we believe in Christ, God's word tells us that we have boldness for the entrance into the Holies by the blood of Jesus, which fresh and living way He dedicated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh. Without this it would indeed be madness and presumption. But now that He is come and has found everlasting redemption, the presumption is on their side who deny it against those who believe in Him; and, if believing in Him they deny it, what folly as well as presumption

Only God can tell us infallibly what He has done for us and given to us in His Son; and He it is Who tells us beyond a doubt that, as believers in Him we have obtained, and do possess, access into this grace wherein we stand. For it is not like the characteristic blessing of Israel contingent on the obedience of the law. The gospel is founded on redemption in Christ as the great fact beyond all others save His person Who achieved it. And justification is a fact attested by God's word and Spirit to him that believes; and so is the access we have into this favour wherein we stand. They rest on Christ and His redemption, and they are ours as believing in Him. Nor do they pass away, like Jewish privileges; they abide like Christ. But may not the believer become careless and sin grievously? Alas! it is too true; yet God does not change nor forsake His child (as other scriptures declare), but chastises him faithfully, and, if need be, even to the death of the body. See 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, Hebrews 12:1-29, etc., 1 John 5:1-21. Nevertheless, as these very scriptures show, He does not change from His grace even when He thus deals in His moral government. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." The Christian's failure brings out the loss not of relationship but of his enjoyment of communion; and Christ's advocacy works to restore his soul by self-judgment before God. For as the Christian, once darkness but now light in the Lord, walks in the light as God is in the light, so he comes under the dealing of God as a Father judging day by day, that he may walk according to the light. But he received and has access to God. "He that followeth Me," says our Lord, "shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life."

4 Hope of the glory of God

Romans 5:2.

Gospel Words. 2nd Series No. 4.

Here is another privilege of faith, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. To the natural man this may seem beyond all measure. But God, Who has given His own Son, does not bless by halves. It could not be so, nor ought it to be; for Christ now is the title of him who believes. One's own name is merged in that of the Son of God. He is the first to own his sinfulness and his ruin without Christ; but now that he has received Christ, he has the title to become a child of God. He is justified by faith. He has access to God ever open; and he stands in His perpetual favour. And now he learns from God's word that, if he look onward into the everlasting future, he may and ought to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. This hope beyond all doubt is an immense thing to boast. But is it not a well-founded boast, if it rest upon Christ and Christ's work by faith? Nevertheless it is as simple as it is sure. It is no question of man's desert, but of Christ's; and Christ will not leave His own

separate from Himself in heaven. He has already entered glory, and He will have those that are His own in the same glory as Himself. "The glory which Thou hast given me, I have given them" (John 17:22). Therefore it is that in Revelation 21:10-11, the holy Jerusalem, the symbol of the glorified church, is seen "having the glory of God" in the day that is coming. But we are also called to rejoice in the assured hope of the glory of God even now. It is now that we want its power in our souls. It strengthens us against the false and vain hopes of the world. There are few greater snares than human honour and praise ; for they destroy faith. "How can ye believe," said our Lord, "who receive glory one of another, and seek not the glory which is from God alone?" John 5:44. So in John 12:42-43, we are told that, although from among the rulers many believed on Him, yet on account of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God. When Adam was in Paradise, the glory of God was not set before him as a hope. He was placed in a garden of delights, where all was very good. He had a test of dependence and obedience. He was forbidden to eat of the tree of knowing good and evil, whilst free to eat of every other tree in the garden. Under this tenure he was to keep his first estate; but he fell, and all was changed. He became an outcast from Paradise, subject to death, and after death to judgment: as scripture elsewhere declares, both appointed to men, neither to man in original innocence. But even then grace interfered and held out another. man in prospect, the Second man — the last Adam. From that day all permanent blessing from God is by faith, the faith of Christ; and till He came, it was altogether in hope, nor could it be otherwise. But now the Son of God is come and salvation is a fact; a reality to faith before the day of glory when it will be manifested to every eye. Hence it is written that all sinned, and do come short of the glory of God. Mankind are on a footing quite different from Adam. They are born in a state of sin, and they add their own sins. They are out of the first estate of man, being exiles from Paradise. The goodly garden is not their portion, and of the glory of God they come short. There was no abiding in pristine innocence: can men stand before the glory of God? This is the only alternative now: to be lost as men are in unbelief, living and dying in their sins; or, believing in Christ, to be saved and to exult in hope of the glory of God.

Only Christ, only the gospel of God, can save any by faith. Hence the believer is now called by glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3), by God’s own glory and by virtue. It is the love of God in Christ which breaks down the proud heart ("by grace ye are saved"). But the glory of God in the future has the most powerful influence in the midst of present snares. Therefore has God revealed it as our hope through Christ and with Christ, to lift the soul above all existing attractions and depressions. He has called us by His own glory, and the virtue or moral courage that refuses the gratification of self, which is opposed to the will of God. We are therefore said to be sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ no, less than to the sprinkling of His blood. 1 Peter 1:2.

How blessed then is the believer’s portion! Though he had been in God’s sight without righteousness of his own, positively unrighteous, he is now justified by faith. Such is the righteousness of God, Who gave His Son, and gave Him to die, that he might be not only forgiven but justified. He has therefore peace with God. He is humbled to the dust when he looks back on himself; but Christ is his peace; and it was made by the blood of His cross. Nor this only; he can approach God in perfect favour as his present standing, and he can boast in the hope of the glory of God for his unending future.

How strong the contrast with man as he is naturally, even if highly moral, benevolent, and religious after the flesh! For such men are either self-satisfied, because insensible to God as He is and to themselves as they are, easily compounding with Him for what they deem a little and inevitable sin; or they are in gloom and terror when they think of God as their Judge, and strive to earn mercy or a mitigated sentence by hard labour and penance beforehand. The true God is unknown, because the word of Christ is not believed, and the soul has never learnt from the Spirit's teaching His value for the sacrifice of Christ. So precious is it in His sight that it procures peace for all that is past, favour for the present, and a place in the glory of God for all that is to come.

W. K.

5 We glory in tribulations also

Romans 5:3-5.

Gospel Words. 2nd Series, No. 5. No wonder that the apostle was not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes (Romans 1:16). Justified by faith we have peace with God; we received and have access by faith into this grace wherein we were placed and stand; and we boast in hope of the glory of God. This expressly covers, with blessing unmistakably divine and wholly undeserved by us, the entire past, present, and future, for every believer. Can the Spirit add more? This is just what the text before us does. God in Christ alone accounts for it all; and His love, through Him Who died and rose again, finds its joy in blessing us to His own glory. He delights in blessing man, and can afford to bless him righteously and according to all His heart through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

How are you treating such a God and such a Saviour? Does His goodness lead you to repentance? or according to your hardness and impenitent heart are you treasuring up to yourself wrath in a day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgment? After the sin of man, yea when it rose up to its climax against His Son sent and come in love, God has answered this crowning sin by His own grace, so far exceeding, that, instead of judging all the guilty world which crucified Jesus, He is reconciling every one that believes, howbeit hitherto His evident and proved enemy, by the death of His Son. And why not you? Is it a small thing in your eyes, that though He declares you "lost" in yourself, He is willing to save you by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8)? Oh! hear the word of reconciliation; for so He calls the gospel (in contrast with the law, however holy, just, and good in itself, which must condemn the ungodly). He has commanded His ambassadors for Christ even to beseech, Be reconciled to God. Man cannot himself become meet for His presence in light; but God made Christ Who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become God's righteousness. Neglect no more so great salvation. Beware in that case lest the worse befall you. The Holy Spirit never uttered, never wrote, a word to sanction doubt, but to produce faith in God land His Christ. Let no one glory in men. For all things are yours (if you believe), whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's (1 Corinthians 3:22-23).

It is therefore not only in His counsels going on to glory through redemption that He blesses and we boast, but in His ways through this wilderness world. Sometimes the believer is at his wit's end: difficulties so thicken. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groanings unutterable; and He that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind

of the Spirit, because He intercedes for saints according to God. But we do know that, to those who love God, all things work together for good. So in our text the apostle, after saying that "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God," adds "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also," and explains clearly how it is: "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that was given to us." It is the path of trial into which we are ushered when we are no longer slaves in Egypt, God's judgment being staid by the blood of the Lamb. Are we then to murmur because, while Christ is on high, we see not yet all things subjected to Him? He is crowned with glory; but Satan is still the god and prince of the world, and hence the enmity to all who have faith, and the greater in proportion to their fidelity. In Romans 5:3-5 the true way of God is briefly traced in the discipline of the soul, full of profit for all exercised thereby. It all supposes and follows our justification by faith. There maybe, as there was of old, a shirking of God's will; but He knows how to deal with His children when refractory; and as of old, so now He chastens whom He loves, and scourges every son whom He receives. Nor is discipline the only end of God. He tries us, as He did Abraham ; and blessed is the man that endures temptation, for after being proved he shall receive the crown of life which He promised to those that love Him. So the apostle Peter says, that ye greatly rejoice in the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, though now for a little while, if need be, put to grief by various temptations, that the trying of your faith, more precious than gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But in our text the apostle dwells on the present fruit for the soul. "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (or endurance) etc. This is hindered if we question our justification and so our peace be unsettled. But starting on our pilgrim journey with assurance of faith, we interpret the tribulations by the light of redemption, and confide in Him Who justifies the ungodly man (Romans 4:5), having raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Our acceptance of tribulation at His hand works out endurance or patience on our part.

Again, "patience [works out] experience." It is not yet the experience of what is within, which is formally and fully discussed in a later part of this Epistle from Romans 5:12-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 inclusively. Here endurance works out what God is along the road; which is missed just so far as we allow impatience. And this "experience" works out "hope." In quietness of spirit and the proof of what God is towards us, let the world and present trials oppose as they may, we learn to have our, eyes habitually above. Hence it is that the hope of the glory of God which was accepted as a truth becomes more influential, consolatory, and cheering practically. Nor does it whatever its heavenly brightness, put us to shame, for the blessed reason, that the love of God has been and is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. No greater power of enjoying Himself than this, we may boldly say, could our gracious God give to the believer. Our blessed Lord, in the days of His. flesh, had the Spirit given Him, and so without blood. The Holy One of God, He needed no, sacrifice as He had no sin. The Spirit of God descending and abiding on Him was the sign and witness of His personal perfectness as He walked here below. Him, the Son of man, God the Father sealed. We receive the Holy Spirit because in Christ we have redemption; as, in the type of the O.T., the oil followed the blood on the sons of Aaron, already washed in the water, the high priest alone being anointed without blood (Leviticus 8:12); afterward, he and they together (Leviticus 8:23-24, Leviticus 8:30). This was a beautiful shadow, though of course not the very image. Christ is the truth. If the love of God, spite

of our imperfect condition, has been thus shed abroad in our hearts in virtue of redemption, what surprise can there be that, when risen or changed it the coming of Christ, we should share with Him God's eternal glory? Even this hope does not make us ashamed because of His love pervading the heart.

W. K.

6 The love of God

Romans 5:5.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 215-216. Gospel No. 2-6.)

"The love of God"; wondrous truth! When one knows in any true measure what He is, and what we are, how much more wonderful! Here it assuredly means not our love to Him, but His to us. Had He not justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Was it not by faith, apart from works of law, and so open to Gentile no less than Jew?

It is noticeable that here first in this Epistle is there mention of God's love, and of the Spirit given to the, believer, the power of enjoying that love. Assuredly this is not the manner of man, yet just as it should be. In the early chapters the apostle urges man's guilt and ruin because of his manifest evil. It is no longer a question; scripture has decided it. Every Jew was ready to admit that the condition of the Gentiles, philosophers like the rest, was desperate; but rejoins the apostle, what about your own state? If thou art named a Jew and restest on law and makest thy boast in God, and yet in fact dost transgress in this or that sort of ways, God's name is blasphemed on this very account among the heathen. Hence, as the law condemned, so the psalms and the prophets openly testify against Israel. For when the law says that there is not even one righteous, it speaks to those under the law; it is definitely and expressly therefore to the Jew; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world be under judgment to God. But the cross of Christ, the full and flagrant proof of the world's inexcusable wickedness in unbelief, of the Jew yet more guilty than the Gentile, laid the basis by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God for a new kind of righteousness. This is God's righteousness, in contrast with man's which the law demanded but never could get from the fallen. Christ came, Jesus Christ the Righteous. "When ye have lifted up the Son of man," said Himself to the Jews, "then ye shall know that I am He, and do nothing of Myself, but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me; He hath not left Me alone, for I do always the things that are pleasing to Him . . . Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" But would He be made sin for us? Would God make Him, Who knew no sin, responsible for sin, to bear its consequences as truly as if He were guilty? This is what was done, not on man's part but on God's for man, in giving His Son to die as propitiation for our sins. And this is love, not that we loved Him, which we ought to have done but did not, but that He loved us, and proved it in the death of His Son, the sacrifice for sinners, a, sacrifice open to all, available for any, efficacious once and evermore for those that believe. God is just in justifying him that has faith in Jesus. No doubt God is love, as He is light; and this appears throughout His dealings with man originally and when fallen, as well as in His ways with the chosen people, though they were under His moral government Who could by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. Still was He a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in

mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Nor had He left Himself without witness before the heathen in that He did good, and gave from heaven rains and fruitful. seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness; neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, as the apostle preached to the Athenians, seeing He Himself giveth to all life and breath and all things; or, as our Lord taught, maketh His sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust. But how immeasurably more is God known in His Son! There and then only did He reveal Himself as He is, far beyond His governmental dealings with a fleshly people controlled by His law, which, avowedly, made nothing perfect. Yet His full revelation in Christ brought out the utter evil of man, beyond doubt save to the blind; and the very rejection of Christ, which closed the proper probation of man by the proof of his inexcusable guilt (John 15:22-25), in the, cross became under God the ground and display of sovereign grace, which saves the most rebellious, the darkest, and the vilest through faith in His Son. Truly it is God's righteousness, not man's; for it only came forth in all its fulness when favoured man was indisputably the enemy of God, not merely failing in his duty altogether and in every way, but hating Him when He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Alas! to proud self-sufficient man grace is more repulsive than law, because it makes nothing of his own righteousness (yea, denies it), everything of God's; and Christ is all, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Thereby should no flesh glory in His presence; but he that glorieth, as it is written, let him glory in the Lord. Was it not a great love wherewith God loved?

Here it is God's love not merely demonstrated to sinners as such, in the gift and death of Christ, but enjoyed and meant to be enjoyed to the full by the believer. Hence it is given as the reason which explains in general why we glory in tribulations, and in particular why hope even of God's glory does not put us to shame meanwhile. Assuredly it would if we measured its brightness with any degree of our love as we journey on. But God's love! All, this wholly differs. It is as perfect and unvarying as unmerited on our part, being simply and solely according to His complacency in Christ our Lord. Hence it is said to have been, and is, abidingly shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. If the gift was a transient and complete act, the result is permanent. The Holy Spirit, the divine witness of Christ and of His redemption, the power of enjoying God's love, was (as our Lord assured the disciples) to be in them and abide with them for ever.

Further, that love is said to be shed abroad, or poured out, in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. Our affections are pervaded by His love, which is secured in power by the presence of His Spirit in us. And He is thus shown to be given to those who rest by faith on the Lord Jesus, the remission of their sins. being by His blood. But the great unfolding of His action on individuals is only added in Romans 8:1-39, after the experience of indwelling sin and of law, as well as our place in Christ, have been distinctly set out.

Now have you, dear reader, the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you receive God's testimony to His Son? Christ declares that he that does has eternal life (John 5:1-47); as the apostle preached that every believer is justified from all things (Acts 13:1-52). You are called on to believe this too, for your own soul. When you bow in simple faith, God's love fills your heart, not before nor otherwise. The love of Him Who gave. His only-begotten Son, no less than of Him Who gave Himself for us, causes us to overflow within; and no wonder, for it is by the Holy Spirit given to us, alike springing up into everlasting life in worship,

and streaming forth in witness to parched and perishing souls by the way.

Till one thus rests on Him Who for us died and rose, and on God's love Who sent Him, there may be spiritual desires, there may be an awakened conscience and piety Godward, there maybe earnestness about man, blind and lost in his sins. But the gospel is God's answer in Christ to these desires of pious anxiety; it gives purification to the conscience, satisfaction to the heart, with rest in the glory of God as the assured prospect; so that we may boldly say grace, God Himself, could vouchsafe no more. His love accordingly is shed abroad in our hearts; and this could only be through the Holy Spirit given to us; not through new birth simply, but also the gift of the Spirit, when and because we are children of God. For the Spirit thus given is the seal of redemption, the power of liberty, the witness of sonship, and the earnest of the inheritance; and He never was thus given to believers till the atoning work was done. Compare 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 4:6, Ephesians 1:13-14.

7 Christ died for the ungodly

Romans 5:6.

Gospel Words. 2nd Series, No. 7. When the love of God shed abroad in the heart is a question, men habitually look into themselves for an answer. But they can find no satisfaction from within; and it is well that they do not, for the Holy Spirit will never help a soul to find rest in himself or his affections. There is no real rest for conscience or for heart in one's own internal state. Call it trusting to the Spirit of God, it will not deceive Him or even an upright soul. For to stand good against every strain and challenge, rest must be on the ground of perfection; and the only work that perfects the sinner in God's sight is the sacrifice of Christ. The Holy Spirit accordingly bears witness to Christ and His work on the cross (Hebrews 10:1-39), as the only satisfactory answer to the sense of need He awakens in the soul, whatever the testimony He may afterwards bear with our spirits as believers (Romans 8:16).

Therefore it is that the apostle immediately turns in our verse to the proof of God's love on our behalf, entirely outside ourselves, in the death of Christ. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Here indeed is a righteous resting-place for one ever so guilty, burdened, and exercised before God. His love provided it. The sinner contributed nothing to it save his sins. Divine goodness rose above all human evil, and all Satan's malice. One, and but One, was capable of the infinite enterprise; One Who from the beginning, when there was no creature, was with God, and was God; One Who in due time came from God, and was sent in His love as a propitiation for our sins. Love in the Father, love in the Son, — divine love — undertook a work beyond all thought of man or angel till God revealed it And Christ was just the One to give it effect to the glory of God the Father (without which nothing had been right), to the efficacious justifying of the most defiled who bows to God and believes on Jesus. For He was God's only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, His delight evermore, expressly so when He deigned to become man on earth, for the accomplishment of that most worthy and gracious purpose, and for the glories which should follow His sufferings. For as He could meet the Father on co-equal ground, so He had come down to man in the deepest reality, Son of man as the first Adam was not: born of woman, born under law, made sin on the cross, that the vindication of God might be as absolute as the righteousness of God which justifies the believer and flows out to meet every sinner.

Such is the Saviour God has sent; such is the standing proof of His love when the soul is sorely tried, and needs a clear, sure, and irrefragable object. It is not a promise, but an accomplished fact, and a fact of immeasurable and unending value, with which nothing can compare in time past or future, on earth or in heaven. And it was "in due time." God had tried man innocent; and a brief space sufficed — man fell. God bore with man an outcast, left to himself though not without a blessed and blessing revelation ; and man became so corrupt and violent that He sent a deluge to take all away, save a few in the ark who began the world as it is. And then He gave promises to Abraham, and to his seed ; after that, His law to Israel, who forsook Him for false gods "till there was no remedy." "He had yet one (as the parable says), a beloved son; he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son." Him they crucified and slew. It is the measure of the world's sin: not transgression only, or idolatry, but the ignominious rejection of God's Son.

Yet that worst sin of man met the love of God which rose above all his enmity, making Christ on the cross a propitiation for sins; as He sent the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel, the glad tidings of His grace, to the whole creation. Is not this love worthy of God and of His Son? Is not this the love which alone can, alone ought to, reassure your troubled spirit? Was it not exactly in due time that Christ died for ungodly persons? If you know that you are so, make this your plea — that Christ died for ungodly ones. Be assured that God, Who honours His word above all His name, will accept it and you in the name of Jesus. Do you plead your powerlessness? God has anticipated this also in His grace, as you may see for yourself in this very verse. "When we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly." Were you making efforts first to reform yourself and to please Him, the Holy Spirit would in no way help, save to convince you of utter weakness and sinfulness. In such a condition He treats such efforts as self-righteous and Satan's substitute for genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him only look as you are, and because you are both weak and ungodly: He can and will save every one that calls on His name.

It is a denial of grace and truth to allege that you are not trusting to yourself but to the Holy Spirit working in you what is good and acceptable to God. Till you have given up yourself as both ungodly and without strength, till you give up unwittingly seeking to establish your own righteousness and are subject to the righteousness of God, the real work of the Holy Spirit is to overwhelm you with such a sense of your sins as compels you to look only to Christ and His redemption. Without knowing it, you are striving to be a saint in order to win, not to say deserve, the remission of sins; and the blood of Jesus would come in, thus as the reward and crown of your efforts. But the Holy Spirit never lends Himself to such a disguise of your true condition; He lays bare to your own soul that you are powerless and ungodly, but also that Christ died for such. This alone maintains God's grace and man's sinfulness. For souls in your condition He is a witness to Christ's blood-shedding; by which received in faith there is remission, without which there is none. Practical holiness follows, and does not precede, faith in the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. When you rest on Christ and His death, the Holy Spirit works as a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind; yea, He joins His help to our weakness, but in no way till we abandon self, and we rest, where God rests for us, in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

W.K.

8 God's own love

Romans 5:7-8.

Gospel Words. 2nd Series, No. 8.

Yes, it is not more wondrous than true that, while we were yet without strength, Christ died for ungodly persons. Such are fallen men. Jew or Gentile made no difference as to man's nature. The law gave no power; religious form is not godliness. And because man is what he became through sin, in due time Christ died for us, powerless and ungodly persons. This was beyond all creature love.

Man needs a motive to draw out his love to its object. He sees grounds, perhaps mistaken, for his affection; otherwise he does not love. And so the apostle writes, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Possibly the one known as the generous benefactor might embolden a man drawn by it, even to die on his behalf. For goodness is rare and moves the heart mightily. But God is sovereign in His love to guilty man. Far from aught congenial, there is every thing in him suited to repel God. Fallen man is corrupt or violent, proud or vain, self-seeking or independent, the sad contrast of Him Who is not more light than love. Yet "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Such love is peculiar to Him. He loves from His own nature with no motive in the object. He loves notwithstanding the utmost unworthiness. He loves where no goodness is, nor yet rectitude, where men are sinners and nothing else, where there is only misery and guilt; yea, He commends His own love to such as were still far from Him and opposed to Him, giving the highest and most solid proof of it, in that Christ died for us who were in that evil case.

Thus God and man now stand face to face as they really are. The time of probation is over: man after full trial is lost. It is not merely that in every way and degree he has proved disobedient to God. Last of all he rejected and crucified the Lord of glory. In the person of the Son he cast God out of the world — God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. The proof of it is the death of Christ at man's hand. But the love of God was signally shown in sending Christ, not as Judge but as Reconciler; so it is, still more deeply and conspicuously, in making His death a sacrifice to blot out the sinner's guilt. "Christ died for us." None but God was capable of such love. Only He could rise perfectly above all the evil of the world. All this was ever before Him. Throughout all His dealings with man, with Israel in particular though never exclusively, God had intimated His mercy, and faith always received it. This gave meaning to pledges and offerings from the first. This was associated even with His acts in judging the world by a deluge or in destroying the firstborn of Egypt; there was divine love in exempting Noah's family in the one case, Israel's sons in the other. In the Levitical economy, whatever the judgment under which transgressors fell, nothing was clearer than the bright shadows of atonement in a variety of form, which found no answer worthy of God, no cleansing of the conscience from sins or dead works, till "Christ died for us." God is glorified thereby in any case; if we believe not, He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. The gospel makes all now as clear as even God can, consistently with His love and glory, till the judgment. Then it will be proved that not lack of light from God was at fault, but man's will who loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil. But now before the judgment, God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It is Christ's death which efficaciously and for ever atones for guilt. It. is by Christ's death that enemies are reconciled to God. All is yours if you believe on Him; all is lost if you turn from Him.

How could it be otherwise if Jesus be the Word made flesh, the Son Whom God sent in His love, Whom Jews and Gentiles slew (proving what they were), Whom (thus slain God in yet fuller love made a sacrifice for sin? It is righteous with God to justify you as a believer in Jesus (Romans 3:26). Surely it is not unjust to judge you for all your sins, if you aggravate. them all by spurning the Saviour God has given in His infinite love.

I implore you, my reader, if you have never thus submitted to the righteousness of God in saving you, to search honestly what hinders you. It is certainly not on God's part; for the apostle declares that God is as it were beseeching you in the Sent One. Will you slight His call longer? How blessed, in life or death, to have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Vain for us to think of making it. He made it through the blood of His cross: so says the scripture. What a proof of God's love no less than Christ's! If you refuse to accept it, who is to blame but yourself? It is the preference of sin and Satan to God and His Son. It is contempt of Christ's sufferings and blood, as it is unbelief of God's word and His own love.

Undoubtedly God looks for a holy walk in His children, He looks for the fruit of light in all goodness and righteousness and truth. But He looks for nothing of the kind till you are justified by faith: to ask such fruit from you in your unbelief would deny Himself, His truth, and His grace. Man deceives by vain words, if he says that one who believes but walks wickedly "hath inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ." Such faith can save none. It is beneath that of the demons, who at least tremble (James 2:1-26). But the faith which comes to God through Christ as a guilty sinner, and yet rests on His work for the purification of sins through Christ's death, is of His Spirit, and works by love and receives its end, soul-salvation (1 Peter 1:1-25). It is by faith in Christ Jesus that all or any are God's sons (Galatians 3:1-29). Now we must be. in the relationship of sons before we can really walk as such. Till we are God's sons, we simply deceive ourselves by pretending to a walk which pertains only to faith. The relationship is of grace on His part, and so to us of faith, not for man's desert, but in spite of all demerit. Our duties, as His sons, begin when we are sons and know it: otherwise they are hindered through questions and fears. His own love in Christ answers every question and casts out fear.

W. K.

9 Justified by His blood

Romans 5:9.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 265-266. Gospel No. 2: 9.) That there is none just, no not one, the apostle had proved from the Psalms (Romans 3:20). Those under law are, no less than those without law, all under sin. There is no difference in this: all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Such is the condition of mankind, and authoritatively so declared. As being then guilty, of themselves none can enter heaven, none escape hell.

Therefore did God, after revealing at the beginning the coming destroyer of the enemy, at length send His Son, Who so glorified Him in obedience unto death for sin, that God can righteously send the good news of remission of sins, and life in His name, to every soul that bows in faith. Thus does He justify freely or gratuitously as far as man is concerned, by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The grace of God is the motive or proximate cause for justifying the unjust; and this is what is meant in such scriptures as speak of justifying any by the grace of

God (Romans 3:24, Titus 3:7). In His pure, spontaneous, unmerited favour it originated. We ware not only not just but ungodly, even if moral or religious after a fashion "we were yet sinners." But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There only was the efficacious sacrifice for the defiled; there the ransom most precious to God. This lays the ground for a new kind of righteousness — for God's righteousness in justifying him who, having no righteousness for God, believes in Jesus at the call of God. It was righteous in God to raise from the dead Jesus Whom unrighteous man crucified; it was righteous to set Him at His own right hand in heaven (John 16:10). But, further, it is His righteousness to justify the ungodly one, not in working for it, but in believing on Him as the God of grace in Christ (Romans 4:1-25). For to him that works for it the reward is not reckoned for righteousness. For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; and this, not more that the glory may be to God, than that the blessing may be sure to the soul that believes. For, as the Lord Himself taught us in the parables, it is the joy of God to save the lost (Luke 15:1-32). By His grace the believer is justified.

Hence we are also said to be justified by (or out of) faith (Romans 5:1). The Jew, and indeed the natural man, is apt to think that justification must be out of works. But clearly if a soul could be justified by works, Christ died in vain; and the grace of God would be made void. Hence the gospel is preached to us expressly as lost and powerless; and Jesus our Lord was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised again for our justification. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." There is no other principle or way for a sinner; and sinners we have all been, enemies in mind by wicked works, utterly unfit for the presence of God. Therefore did Christ suffer for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God; Who can meet us, as we are, on the ground of that atoning death, and justify us by the faith of Jesus. By Him, as the apostle at Antioch of Pisidia, preached to souls who had never heard such good news before — by Him "every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). But there is a further connection in our text. We are said to be "justified by His blood." Here it is the apostle's design to express the power or virtue of that which has justified the believer; and he declares it unequivocally to be the blood of Christ. There is no room for mistake. Where the apostle speaks of the efficacious basis for that immense change of relationship, which is called "justification," he says it, is by or in His blood, Thus only does God account the believer righteous. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin." So it was, not with blood of goats and calves, He entered once for all into the sanctuary, having obtained eternal redemption. It is a work done and accepted by God, outside the believer, yet for him and in full view of his sins, which Jesus bore in His own body on the tree, — bore away unto a land not inhabited, never more to be. The believer once purged has no more conscience of sins. When awakened by the quickening voice of Christ in the word, his sins lay overwhelmingly on his conscience, and he judged himself in repentance before God. But now by faith he rests on the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; he rests on God's estimate of that blood as proclaimed in the gospel; he believes that God has found. a ransom; and he himself has, what Scripture calls, no more conscience of sins. My reader, turn not away, because you think such news too good to be true. Too good to come from man, undoubtedly; but what can be too good for the God Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son? — gave Him, that whosoever believeth should not perish but have eternal life. God feels, speaks, acts, worthily of Himself in justifying the ungodly. His grace prompted the wondrous work on behalf of sinners; faith is the empty hand, which receives the boon; and the blood of Jesus is the mighty sacrifice, by which you have your

sins blotted out and yourself brought nigh to the living God as your Father. Forget not that despisers shall perish.

10 Reconciled to God

Romans 5:10.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 283-284. Gospel No. 2: 10.)

Reconciliation with God is a rich result of the gospel. It is equally simple and sure. In the nature of things God alone can be the unerring judge of it. He accordingly bears witness to it as a spiritual fact due to the death of Christ, and true of every believer. The guilt and the enmity were entirely in us, as we were naturally. In His love God intervened on our behalf when we lay in our sins, evil, helpless, hopeless. He intervened in His Son Who died for us that we might be justified in virtue of His blood; for He sent Him as propitiation for our sins. No other way could glorify Him or justify us. Here only is love conciliated with justice; but it is God's love and God's righteousness, for in us, ungodly and sinners, was neither. Therefore it is for His glory, and according to His grace, and hence not of works but of faith, that no flesh should glory, but "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." So speak both O. and N. Testaments.

What can be plainer than the testimony of scripture? "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by (or, through) the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). The Holy Spirit presents the efficacy of Christ's death unambiguously, that the believer may give to the winds his fears and treat his doubts as of the enemy. God's love is the source of the blessedness; Christ's death guarantees it as not only of grace but righteous. Only so is God just and justifying him that has faith in Jesus. Thus is the alienation met holily. Divine love laid the sins on the head of the sole adequate Victim; on Him, not on the sinner, was our evil judged unsparingly by God; and the glad tidings of that mighty work He sent far and wide, that through Christ's name everyone that believeth on Him should receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

Only with remission there is far more. As we read here, the believer is "reconciled to GOD." Not that God was alienated; for He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son. But He abhorred, and cannot but judge, sin. Therefore must the Son of man be lifted up. "Christ died for us," that we, not our sins, might be spared; that our sins, not ourselves, might be put away from before God; that we might be reconciled to God, and expiation be made for our sins. Christ has effected both for every believer; yea, He has wrought a work of such God-glorifying and infinite value, that God can righteously send a message of reconciliation into all the world and to all the creation. And on what a wondrous basis! Him Who knew no sin Be made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Undoubtedly, when a soul repents and believes the gospel, there is a marked moral change. Faith knows God and Him Whom He sent as never before, and by the Holy Spirit cries, Abba Father; while repentance means a real self-judgment in the sight of God. But reconciliation goes farther, and is the establishing of a new, near, and known relationship of favour with God according to the purposes of His grace and through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Now that Christ is come and the will of God done, all that raised a barrier and provoked flesh is gone by our death with Christ; and we are His Who is risen, that we may bear fruit unto God, and serve in newness of

spirit, not in oldness of letter. When Christ appears and the revelation of the sons of God takes place, the creation (which, as the apostle tells us, is now groaning together and travailing in pain together) shall be delivered. It is now in the bondage of corruption as it shared the consequences of Adam's fall, its head. But the Second man. as He now delivers those who believe in Him, will by-and-by deliver creation also into the liberty of the glory we shall then have. Before He comes in power and glory, it is ours, to enjoy already, as creation cannot, the liberty of grace. In that day God will reconcile to Himself through Christ all things (having made peace by the blood of His cross), whether the things on earth or the things in the heavens. But it is all-important to know that, whatever we may once have been in the sad and wicked past, God has now reconciled us in the body of Christ's flesh through death (Colossians 1:21-22). Impossible to do more for our souls now than He has already. done in Christ, always supposing that we believe in Him and continue in the faith grounded and settled. Do you believe now, dear reader? Is it your peaceful, settled, assurance from day to day, that you are thus "reconciled to God"? It could be the portion of none without the perfect and accepted work of Christ; whereby, as Hebrews 10:10 tells us, we have been sanctified once for all. Nay more, by that one offering He has perfected for ever (i.e. without a break) the sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). It is God Who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). It is therefore as complete as is due to His person and His work. Believing that God is thus good to you now in His Son has a powerful effect on the inner man, its affections and its mind, as well as the outer ways and words, the whole life. But reconciliation is God's work in setting us who believe in our right relationship to Him, sins forgiven, ourselves justified and standing in His favour as His beloved children. Without Christ's death for us it was impossible for sinful man to be thus blessed. But if by grace I believe on Him, all is mine, as God's word declares. If then your soul rests on Him, on God's testimony to Him and His work, be assured that you are reconciled to God. What God reveals, we receive without doubt in Christ's name.

11 We shall be saved

Romans 5:9-10.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 297-298. Gospel No. 2: 11.)

Salvation is a great word and a great thing, especially in its force as interpreted by Christ. Israel often knew deliverances of divine mercy, saviours not a few; but they were national, for time and this world. Even then faith looked for things better and more enduring through the Messiah that was coming. So much the more were souls astonished that, when He came, He did not restore the kingdom to Israel nor destroy their enemies; for He was Himself rejected by men, in particular by the Jews, far more than His herald John the Baptist had been. But thus was God's counsel accomplished, His love displayed, and His word magnified; thus was man and Israel proved to be altogether guilty and lost; but no less was room left for sovereign grace, and divine righteousness, and everlasting salvation. All met in the cross of Christ, where the worst evil of the creature rose up against the perfect goodness of God, Who laid the burden of sin on His Son, the suffering Son of man, a sacrifice for sins, a propitiatory through faith in His blood for showing forth God's righteousness. And now, Christ being raised for the believer's justification, he is assured of salvation,

If sins set to any man's account by God must ensure judgment, never did one stand forth as a sufferer to the utmost like the Saviour. He was man, born of woman, as truly as any, not so the first

Adam who was created, not born. He, the Son, was God as truly as the Father, or the Holy Spirit. He was the Holy One of God; which Adam was not, even untainted and fresh from God's hand, innocent and upright, but never said to be holy, though he had no sin then in his nature when tempted. Christ was in all things tempted like as we are, sin excepted. Such was the One, God and man, the absolutely obedient One, Who undertook to suffer and die, Just for unjust: the only, the adequate, the perfect sufferer for sins, that He might bring those who believe to God (1 Peter 3:1-22). But God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. What could be a grander demonstration of the sacrifice accepted, of sirs effaced?

Yet you are not justified by His blood, unless you believe the testimony God brings in the gospel; nay, you are worse than heathen; you add to all your other sins contempt of God's grace, and of Christ's atoning death, and of the Holy Spirit, the present and divine though unseen Witness. If the word of the law spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how shall those escape who either reject so great salvation when presented, or neglect it by a heartless profession of the Lord's name? Do you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead? Then fear not to rest on the inspired assurance; "thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). He that spared not but gave up His own Son for us all, when we were ungodly and enemies, is worthy of all trust, as His word is of all acceptation. To rest on it is "obedience of faith," the root of all the practical obedience that follows. The soul that receives His testimony sets to his seal that God is true. Why should you fear that He' in Whom you believe for the remission of your sins will abandon you afterwards? No doubt, you are weak; but what is Christ? Is He a little Saviour? is He not our great God and Saviour (Titus 2:13)?

Listen to the apostle authorised of God to reason with you. "Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:9-10). Such is the salvation here guaranteed by God. No doubt it is for believers only, but it is for every believer, and not one should doubt it. If you at His Word cast your soul on Christ and His work, God declares the blessing is yours all through. Doubts of Christ and of His salvation come not from God's Spirit, but from the enemy who hates you and Christ yet more. The express aim of the passage is to strengthen your confidence and chase fear away. The love of God in Christ has already met your need when desperate. That love which sought you when an enemy and made you a friend, yea God's child, by faith in Christ Jesus, is still real and active on your behalf. Distrust not His love, nor His word.

It is quite right for the believer to exercise himself, to have a conscience in every thing void of offence toward God and men. Nor can anything happen to him sadder than sin, far more serious in a believer than in another man. Assuredly it calls for self-judgment and humiliation before God in proportion to the offence and the offender. But God provides for the failures and the trials of the way by Christ's advocacy and priesthood, as also in the action of His Spirit and word. Impossible that grace, unless abused, should clash with the righteous government of God, for the Father judges according to the work of each (John 15:1-27, 1 Peter 1:17). Indeed this constant vigilance takes effect on His children, because they know themselves redeemed with Christ's precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. It is their new responsibility (for as men, on their old responsibility, they were lost) to walk as children of obedience, not fashioning themselves

according to the former lusts in their ignorance; but, as He that called them is holy, they too should be holy in all manner of conduct. In our scripture, however, the apostle would establish souls in the saying grace of God before dealing with the walk; and therefore he instructs those who believe to rest assured from their justification that they shall he saved. That unbelievers should make a principle of doubting is but natural. It is deplorable that any believer should be so dull and negligent of the word before us, if there were no other, or as if all others were not consistent. Of all men, the Christian should be wholly subject to God's word. And here we have a two-fold witness, either of them divinely strong, both conclusive, that believers shall be saved. It would be strange indeed, if after we were justified by Christ's blood, we should not be saved from that wrath which is to fall on all impiety and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness. Not so: the apostle affirms that much more we shall be saved through Christ; and he adds that, if when enemies we were reconciled to God through His Son's death, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by His life. He was crucified of weakness; He lives of God's power. Each is to God's glory, each fraught with blessing. If that depth be so efficacious, what security in this height? Even as Himself said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." The believer is called to walk accordingly. His standing is wholly because of what grace has wrought in Christ, and given him freely and fully and abidingly, He is responsible to walk by faith as thus blessed of God, coming under discipline if he fail, but cheered from the start with God's assurance of salvation according to the virtue of Christ's death and in the power of His life.

12 We also joy in God

Romans 5:11.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 312-313. Gospel No. 2: 12.) The grace of God here shines at its brightest, as far as this Epistle goes; and we who believe are meant to enjoy all to the full. Never is this possible, never understood, till we are convinced by divine teaching that all our blessing is in Christ and His redemption. Justified by faith of Him and His work, we have peace with God. This strengthens us to judge ourselves and abhor our sins far more deeply than when, first convinced of our guilt, we cried to God and cast our souls on the sacrifice of Christ. Solid peace with God no soul has till he believes on Him that raised up from the dead Jesus our Lord, Who was delivered for our offences and was raised up for our justification.

Faith is reckoned to the believer now for righteousness, not only as to Abraham of old but more blessedly still. For, as the apostle shows, he believed in hope of what God would do; the Christian believes what God has done for him in Christ. Abraham confided in promise; we under the gospel have accomplishment. The work of God's grace for the remission of our sins and purging our consciences is once and for ever done. It cannot be annulled nor can it be added to. There are resources of grace to meet other wants; but, receiving Him who died for us and rose again, we received the reconciliation.* We know that the love of God was toward us, when we were yet sinners. Then it was that Christ died for us, not when we had a little strength and became godly. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for ungodly persons.

* This is the true force of what the A. V. here calls "the atonement," which is the right word, not "reconciliation," in Hebrews 2:17.

Such is the unerring word of God: what glad tidings for men! How wicked to despise His message! How blessed to believe! For sin wronged His love and His truth; and Christ vindicated both, while He suffered once for sins that He might bring us to God; and faith receives the boon on God's word to the salvation of the soul. He who so began carries on accordingly. By Christ also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, instead of being alarmed and shrinking back to perdition. Nor is this all. We rejoice or boast in tribulations also. This is the promise to the Christian, instead of the earthly prosperity pledged to the Jew if faithful. But grace turns tribulations to the Christian's present good, by breaking his will, and teaching him what the God is that has found him and that he has found. For tribulation works out patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope ; and hope does not make ashamed; because the love of God is then better known, being abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that is given to us. His love thus spent on us at all cost to Christ and to Himself, when we were unloveable to any but God, certainly cannot be less when we have repentance toward Him and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. His love- is the assurance to our faith, that, being now justified by Christ's blood, we shall be saved from wrath through the Saviour. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved in virtue of His life.

There is even more than this most comforting assurance as to the future. "And not only so, but we also joy (or boast, the same word as in Romans 5:2-3) in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (or rather "reconciliation," referring to Romans 5:10). It is not now the love of God, but the God of love; and He is our boast, in no way our dread as once. We can glory in Himself, not merely in what He has given us in Christ or will give us in the day when all will be according to His power and goodness. For as we have now received the reconciliation, His perfect love casts out fear, and we know what He is to us in Christ; yea, the very sorrows of the way lead us to know His love better, as well as His word which is thus verified to us not only in our Saviour but in every day's experience. For the Holy Spirit does not fail here below while Christ is on high.

Indeed, this is life eternal, that the Christian should know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent. And he knows Him to be love as well as light, Christ's Father and our Father, Christ's God and our God. Receiving Christ, we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully. From such crooked ways there was no real deliverance apart from Christ; but now that the Son of God has come, the Deliverer from the coming wrath, He has also given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. We love, because He first loved us; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. And it was manifested toward us in this, that God sent His only-begotten Son that we might live through Him, yea more, that He might die for us, a propitiation for our sins. But it is impossible so to know God and His love without boasting in Him. The heart is cleared of its idols; the living and true God is served. But there is much more than this. For the heart is led up, by the truth of Christ and the love of God displayed toward us in His work, from the blessing to the Blesser, Who sets us in perfect and unchanging favour. His very chastening thenceforth is the effect and proof of His love to His children, as we read in Hebrews 12:1-29. Hence do we boast in God, even now in this world, as the fruit of "the reconciliation." So in order to it our Lord taught us

in the parable that the father deemed it well to make merry and rejoice because the lost prodigal was found; not the sinner only to be saved, but the God Who saved him. Can we but glory in Himself then? We are thereby made true worshippers and worship Him in spirit and truth. Thus do we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we now received the reconciliation.

05.05. Gospel Words - Third Series.

Gospel Words - Third Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 God created

2 God said

3 Adam

4 The two Trees

5 Woman

6 The Tempter

7 Eve Tempted 8 The Fall of Man

9 Naked 10 Where art thou?

11 Convicted 12 The woman’s Seed

1 God created

Genesis 1:1-31 Gospel Words, 3rd Series. No 1.

He Who "in the beginning" created the universe is also the source of spiritual life, of a divine nature as in 2 Peter 1:1-21. Every creature above or beneath is the fruit of His will and power, He sovereign and good, they dependent and subject responsibly if not in fact, for self-will, sin, entered both heaven and earth. As of old, so now, all blessing is in the Son, in Whom life was and is. The Spirit of God took His part then as He does today according to the scriptures. From above is every good giving and every perfect gift, from Him with Whom can be no variation nor shadow of turning. Hence, as sin completed brings forth death, He was pleased to bring forth believers by word of truth that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. There is for a fallen creature no holiness possible, no walk acceptable to God, save through faith in virtue of life above the creature; and this is now set in the clearest light of God’s word. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God, the life he hath not." Our Lord here below had presented the matter so fully that mistake is inexcusable. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24, R. V.). This is grace, which the sinner needs to save him, the believer knows it in Christ. But, even as to nature, how the Bible opens as becomes a revelation from God! There is no discussion, no reasoning to prove the being of God, no unfolding of His attributes. He acts in power, and speaks with authority, as the true God. He is good, does good, and pronounces on good, as One that has pleasure in it. If from the world’s creation His invisible things, His everlasting power and divinity, are clearly seen, being apprehended through the things

that are made, how much more does revelation make known? Science is here blank ignorance, it knows not and never can know anything of origins. Its field is the investigation of phenomena, and it rises by generalisation to the fixed laws which govern what exists in nature. No doubt it may advance, to a fuller degree and a more exact distribution, by a better knowledge. But from the beginning there was a reality in God's creation to be investigated; and man, whatever his hostile will to hide and lose himself in second causes, cannot escape the conviction that there must be a first cause, God the Creator. He it is Who made known His ways to Moses, His doings to the sons of Israel. He it is Who later revealed Himself in Jesus, His Son, His Only-begotten, in Whom is life eternal for the believer, without Whom abides the wrath of God for him that disbelieves. To reject the grace of God in Christ is to remain in unremoved guilt and death, with a fearful expectation of judgment to come.

Only the fool has said in his heart, No God; he is fool morally and in the worst sense. Reasoning, if sound, may argue that so this or that must be; revelation says that so it is. Nothing is so simple, satisfactory, and deep as the truth. This alone in grace meets man's ignorance and his need: the truth answers both, now and for ever. Believers are entitled to say, We know, and this on God's testimony, as sure as it is clear, forming the consciousness of the new man by God's Spirit.

God, and God only, has self-being. He is the "I am," and so speaks of Himself. He is the Most High, the Almighty, and the Eternal, and thus made His name known in due time; and He alone can rightly say "I will." So said the Son when incarnate here below; which could not be, if He were not one with the Father, as truly God, and therefore as competent by the sacrifice of Himself to save righteously as to create.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Here we are not told of all the beings created at the first, for elsewhere we read of the angels of His might. Nor have we particulars first of the states, and then of the denizens, of the earth, before man was created under the new conditions of the six days followed by the sabbath. Previously we have two revealed facts: creative energy originating the universe (Genesis 1:1); a subsequent state of utter confusion, into which (not the heavens, but) the earth was thrown (Genesis 1:2), before that reconstitution which made it the suited sphere for the moral dealings of God with mankind, and the display of His own grace in Christ. Then Adam's transgression wrought ruin to himself, the race, and the earth; but God will have His eventual triumph over evil power, as well as weakness, through His own Son, the Word made flesh. For He was the perfect pattern of obedience, in life and death the overcomer of Satan, the accomplisher of redemption already by His blood, about to come again to effect redemption by power, not only for those that are His for heaven and earth, but for all the creation itself, enthralled even yet by reason of the first man's fall, to be delivered for glory by the Second. The Holy Spirit will not restore all, whatever His blessed work in that day, it is an honour reserved for Him Who suffered on the cross: Jesus is Heir of all things.

God thought fit to make and try man, and, as the needed measure with the fallen race, to wash away his corruption and violence in the waters of the deluge. Here He called out Abram and his seed to a land they shall yet truly and for ever enjoy. Here He tested Israel by the law, and gave them priests, prophets, and kings till there was no remedy. Here, as sin had entered by the first man, He sent His Son, a man Christ Jesus, to vanquish in every way the enemy of God and man, and to deliver by His death and resurrection such of Satan's victims as believe. Here therefore was

displayed God’s moral glory in the humiliation, obedience, and cross of the Son of Man. Here consequently shall His glory be manifested, in Christ and all that are His above and below, to the blessing of the universe, when Jehovah reigns and the earth rejoices, set free from thraldom to Satan and his blinded instruments. No doubt the glory above is higher than what the earth shall enjoy, and those who suffered with Christ on earth shall be glorified with Him on high.

See then, my reader, that as you have heard the word of truth, you believe it; for it is the gospel of salvation to all that receive the Saviour on God’s word. If he that disregarded Moses’ law died without mercy on the word of two or three witnesses of how much worse punishment shall he be judged worthy that trod underfoot the Son and counted the blood of the covenant a common thing?

2 God said

Genesis 1:1-31.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 346-348. Gospel No. 3: 2.)

Great as creation is, God’s word embraces far more and deeper things. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." It is therefore worthy of all acceptation, whatever He may say and whatever the theme. Thereby is revealed the truth by Him Who knows it perfectly. In Hebrews 11:3 we read, "By faith we understand that the worlds, have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear" (R.V.) Evolution is an hypothesis which leaves out God and denies creation. It is a mere effort of imagination to account for the universe, and an effort that set., aside that definite and universally observed fact which underlies all natural science, the permanence of species.. So the ancients, in the West as well as the East, suggested cosmogonies no less fanciful. But the word of God is now scripture, which alone lets us hear what is worthy of God and satisfactory to man. "He spake, and it was; He commanded, and it stood fast." Details are only revealed when man was about to be created. For scripture is a moral book; and God’s good pleasure is in men. Hence, when the "days" begin, how often we read in Genesis 1:1-31 "God said."

Alas! sin soon followed. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Romans 5:12). As man thus universally failed in uprightness and fell under death, it became thenceforth, if he were not to be abandoned to ruin and despair, a question of divine righteousness and of life superior to death. And no sooner did God appear in judgment of the evil than He spoke of the Saviour, the Second Man, the woman’s Seed; Who, Himself bruised, should bruise the serpent’s head. This was what "God said" to meet the fallen. And faith received it. So we learn in Abel; so the elders had witness borne to them. They believed God’s word; they looked for a deliverer from sin and Satan. It was plain that He Who had authority had power. They in their way saw, as He saw fully, that every thing He had made was very good. They heard that Adam and Eve had violated the LORD God’s commandment. But they also learnt that, if they listened to the evil tempter and transgressed, He did not leave them to perish, even though, in consequence of their sin, "He drove out the man." The Saviour did not come yet, nor for ages afterwards; but the word of God about Him was given at once. "The LORD God said," even when pronouncing sentence on the serpent, that the mysterious Seed of the woman should crush the evil power which had misled man to sin and death. Man never thought of such a consummation, still less could he accomplish it. Nay, his proud unbelief refuses the

blessing when accomplished, brought to his door, and proclaimed in his ears. It is of God's grace, the work of His righteousness, and revealed by His word; but man, being guilty, distrusts His good and holy benefactor, dreads in a measure His judgment, yet believes not His mercy in a Saviour, still less that (through His death for sin) it is God's righteousness unto all, and upon all them that believe. Even those who claimed to be God's people and were not idolaters, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

Faith alone and always received the blessing; and faith is of hearing, and hearing by the word of God. From the beginning it was so, and so it is still. The word of faith is what the apostle preached. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:1-21.) So ever since the fall every believer looked for the One that was coming, the woman's Seed. They did not know much of Him. It was not yet said that He was to be called Jesus, nor that God would raise Him from the dead. But they heard from God that He, the Seed of the Woman, should bruise the Serpent's head: a work altogether beyond man as such. In due time God Who said thus much said more; but the little He said from the first, faith received; and those who believed were blessed. God in the blood of Jesus showed His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God. Thus was His grace in all past ages vindicated by the same death of Christ, which is the ground of the gospel now sent to every creature under heaven. Those who received what God said, be it less or more, of the coining Saviour got the everlasting profit all through, even as Abel had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God testifying on the ground of His gifts. By faith he offered unto God a sacrifice according to His mind. He believed in the bruised Seed of the woman, and brought to Jehovah a sacrifice on which death passed; whereas Cain never rose above the reasoning of nature or the resource of his own wretched self

Even so is it with the mass now. They trust in themselves or in men like themselves. They confide in human things and sayings. They venerate shadows and shows. They believe in ordinances. They are puffed up by sights and sounds, by ceremonies, processions, and the like. But they hear not Christ's words and believe not Him that sent Christ. They count it presumption for any to have everlasting life, delusion that a believer comes not into judgment, and mystical madness that he has passed out of death into life. The believer trusts God in Christ for eternal life. Self and its works, the church and its ordinances, are the refuge of the fearful and unbelieving, not God's love nor Christ's work as revealed by the Spirit in His word. There is neither repentance nor faith. Whatever good works, or the church, may be for the faithful, it is a snare for the sinner to trust them for salvation.

Development is as false to God's word, as evolution is to His creation. They are the extremes of superstition and of scepticism, alike frigid zones where life and light are unknown. The truth is inseparable from the Son of God; it was manifested in Him, Christ Jesus, a Man; and no lie is of the truth, no matter how long or widely held. Hence we are begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which liveth and abideth (1 Peter 1:23); and by the same word we grow unto salvation. For if we receive the end of our faith, salvation of souls, we are guarded by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, when our bodies will be saved as our souls now are.

Hence we are told (James 1:18) that God of His own will begat us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruit of His creatures. By-and-by new heavens and a new earth will display the glory of Him Who is the Father of lights, from Whom every good giving and every perfect gift come down. Believers are now a sort of first-fruit of it, the product and witness of His grace. His will working by His word is the source of the everlasting boon; as our will issues in lust, sin, and death. But the word cleanses too, as the Lord told His disciples (John 15:1-27) that they were already clean because of the word which He spoke to them. Of this water is the well-known symbol, and the Spirit makes it living. Hence the Lord in John 3:1-36 explains new birth to be born of water and the Spirit. It is receiving Christ's testimony; and he that has received it has set to his seal that God is true: the blessed reversal of Satan's success at the beginning, when distrust of God entered the heart. Thus is the heart purified by faith (Acts 15:9).

Assuredly this is not all. For Jesus, the Son of God, came by water and blood: both flowed from His pierced side; and he who believes receives the virtue of both. Purification is by His death, and expiation too; as it is the Holy Spirit Who bears witness in the word of God. Sins are judged and confessed, alike hated and forsaken; the blood of Christ that cleanseth from every sin, and not the guilt of the believer, is before God. Faith rests on the perfect and efficacious death of the Saviour. And he that believes the word of God, His witness, has peace with God and eternal life in His Son.

3 Adam Gospel Words, 3rd Series. No. 3. In Romans 5:14 Adam is said to be a figure or type of Him that was to come. Such he is strikingly and, as with Aaron in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in contrast even more than resemblance.

Made in God's image, after His likeness, Adam had from God, dominion over bird of the heavens, and fish of the sea, over cattle, over all the earth, and over every living thing that moveth upon it. He, the only one of all here below, became living soul by Jehovah Elohim (the LORD God) breathing into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Therefore was his soul alone immortal; and his spirit, instead of going downward to the earth like a beast's, went upward to God that gave it (Ecclesiastes 3:21, Ecclesiastes 12:7). Therefore shall each one give account of himself to God, and all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done through the body according to what he did, whether good or bad (Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10). For Adam, not only responsible as he could not but be, soon became an object of judgment. Surrounded by every natural good, he was subjected to the simplest and least irksome of divine commands — to abstain from the fruit of a single tree, the test of his obedience. This he violated at the first temptation of the enemy, following his wife into evil instead of guiding her in good. Hence, as disobedient, he was driven out of Paradise under sentence of death, and when thus fallen became father of the race. But the good, holy, and righteous LORD God sought Adam the very day he sinned, drew the guilty pair from their hiding-place, and, after bringing home their guilt respectively, in His judgment of the serpent revealed the triumph of His grace in the woman's Seed, the Second Man, and Last Adam (Genesis 3:15). And how blessed the contrast of Him Who was thus set forth from that early day, the one Object of faith and hope! For the Son of God is come and hath given us who believe understanding, that we may know Him that is true. Old Testament, no less than New, bears witness to His glory and His humiliation, His pouring out His soul unto death and His exaltation at God's right hand, as eventually and visibly over (not Israel only but) all peoples, nations, and languages, yea, all creation.

Meanwhile, as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned, so the grace of Christ brought in transcendent blessing, presented unto all men in the gracious appeal of the gospel, and taking effect "upon all that believe" (Romans 3:1-31). For as through one offence the bearing was unto all men for condemnation, so through one righteousness the bearing is unto all men for justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of One shall the many he constituted righteous (Romans 5:12-19), Even the incredulous Jew could not consistently resist the truth of the gospel, if he held to the authority of the law. For he could not deny that Adam's trespass involved the race in sin and condemnation. Was it not then worthy of God to bring in for the race a still better, richer, and more enduring good through the one Man, His own Son? And as the blessing is of God's grace unto all, so it is by faith and is preached to all, instead of depending on the law given to Israel. The gospel is universal in its appeal, yet takes effect only in those that believe, but equally in all believers be they Gentiles or Jews.

Adam, innocent, stood only on his obedience; but, swayed by his wife who was deceived by the tempter, he too disobeyed. He sought to be as God, knowing good and evil, and fell. Christ, on the contrary, Who was God, came in flesh to glorify God and save sinners, carrying out His obedience, as Adam his disobedience, unto death. And this He did perfectly and suffering to the utmost in the difficulties and ruin which man's sin had made, as Adam fell tried in the least degree with all circumstances in his favour. Wherefore also God highly exalted Christ, and sends out the glad tidings to all creation. And thus did Christ vindicate God's love, while Adam acted upon Satan's lie which defamed it, as if He kept back a little thing which would do His creatures great good. For that little thing, the forbidden fruit of the tree, Adam gave up God; Who so loved the world as to give His best, His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

Further, if Adam believed the enemy that gainsaid God's warning of death, Christ went down under the death of the cross, and (what was infinitely more) under the judgment of our iniquities, which Jehovah laid on His holy head as a sacrifice (Isaiah 53:1-12). Thus was God's truth vindicated in a way worthy of Himself and of His Son. That He is light was thereby proved; that He is love, no less; both beyond dispute in the gift of His Son to die for the guilty according to His word. All the cost was God's, all the suffering was His Son's: when Man, on behalf of men, with all the value of a divine Person and, for those that believe, its infinite transferable efficacy with God. And thus as Adam only became a father when fallen, Jesus stands risen from the dead, after having once suffered for sins, Just for unjust, the life-giving Spirit. He comes, as He said Himself, that His disciples might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. It is the life of Him Who bore their sins in His own body on the tree; it is now the life of Him risen when the debt was paid, and the judgment borne. Thus the believer has eternal life, and comes not into judgment, but has passed as his settled state from death into life. Is it thus with you, whoever you may be, as you read these lines? If you hear His word and believe Him Who sent His Son Jesus, you are entitled to this as the portion which God's grace is now giving to the believer in His name. Beware of the tempter, a liar and murderer from the beginning. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And the Holy Spirit is now bearing witness to Him. The church is responsibly, and ought to be, the pillar and basement of the truth; the Jew is not, nor still less the philosopher; but that assembly of a

living God which owes its being and blessing to His grace, and is bound to confess Him Lord and Saviour. "Hear Him." Moses cannot save, nor Elijah; Jesus only. Believing in Jesus is of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father who sent Him " (John 5:23). "Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father, he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also" (1 John 2:23). For indeed Jesus is the Good Shepherd that laid down His life for the sheep, and this in a way beyond all creature thought, after suffering all that man could do unrighteously in His faithfulness to God, suffering atoningly, He alone, from God in His love to lost man.

"Be it known unto you therefore, [men-] brethren, that through Him is preached unto you remission of sins. And in virtue of Him, everyone that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though one declare it unto you" (Acts 13:38-41).

4 The two Trees

Genesis 2:9.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 375-376. Gospel No. 3: 4.)

Scarce any fact of paradise seems less understood than that recorded in the latter half of Genesis 2:9, none supposed to be more distinctly an early myth. Yet were these two trees, singled out from the rest, a positive fact suited to that day of primeval innocence, and to no other; but embodying divine principles of the deepest and most enduring value for all time; and this without applying force to either, or indulging in imagination of any kind, but in subjection to the indications of the inspired record itself. And the truth conveyed intimately concerns every soul of man. The first thing to note is that "the tree of life" in the midst of the garden was absolutely distinct from that "of knowledge of good and evil." To eat of the latter was forbidden on pain of certain death (Genesis 2:17). Only when the man did eat of the prohibited tree, the LORD God took care that be should not take also of the tree of life (Genesis 3:22), It would have been the perpetuated life of sinful man: a calamity, and violation of all order, not a blessing. Apart from that transgression, the tree of life was open to him, and expressly outside the tree of knowledge.

Clearly then the first tree points out the channel of life for man unfallen, the provision of God for Adam in paradise freely given and quite independently of the second tree: so true is this that man forfeited his title to partake of the one tree when he ate of the other. Man was responsible not to eat of the tree of knowledge; if he abstained, he was free to eat of the tree of life. When guilty and fallen, he was debarred, and driven out, with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

Now the constant effort of man, especially of religious man, is as it were to identify the two trees; that is, to suspend life on the fulfilment of responsibility: a notion which flies in the face of the facts, when man was innocent, and still more manifestly false, when man was a sinner, and expressly excluded from the tree of life. The original relationship was lost through transgression. The only natural religion that ever had or could have reality had ceased to be. All henceforth turned on what God is to man in saving mercy. Man in the most favourable circumstances had wholly failed toward God. Sin morally compelled God to be a judge. Love, divine grace, made Him a Saviour.

Even so it was to lie only in and through His Son, His deigning to become man, and His going down into death and judgment for the guilty. The Father hath sent the Son as Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14); the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). But consider the intermediate dealings of God before the Advent. The Epistle to the Galatians lays great stress on the promises as given, a covenant previously confirmed by God, 430 years before the law. They, too, were thereby so arranged that the one could not annul, still less be confounded with, the other. Now the promises answered to the tree of life, as the law to the tree of knowing good and evil. The promises were the unconditional and pledged grace of God, designedly long before, and absolutely distinct from, the law, which expressed His righteous demand from man on the ground of his responsibility. If Israel, if any, pretended to stand on that ground before God, the ten words were His terms. Such terms can only be a ministry of death and condemnation to sinful creatures, as Israel were, as all mankind are. The fatal mistake then as always is to seek life by meeting man's responsibility. Israel took that ground and failed utterly, as all sinners must who go the same path. Scripture records the failure in the O.T. and explains it in the N.T., that men now may profit by that solemn lesson of old and betake themselves only to God's grace in Christ. For Christ alone has solved the problem; and this by accepting the full responsibility of man and bearing the consequences of sin and our sins in death, yea, death of the cross; so that, after glorifying God perfectly, He is risen from the dead, a life-giving Spirit to all believers. Thus there is no condemnation to those that are in Him, in Whom the two trees are thus brought into blessed harmony for our salvation unto God's glory. As responsible men, we are ungodly and powerless, as the apostle asserts beyond dispute. So the Lord treats even the Jews as "lost," which closes the question of that responsibility. What more presumptuous in our sinful state of fallen nature than to seek life by pretending to fulfil our duty as men? Even to innocent man, as Genesis 2:1-25 teaches, life and responsibility were set expressly and altogether apart. But as Christ gives life freely to believers in His name, so is He propitiation by His death for their sins. For both were absolutely needed, if we were to be made meet for sharing the portion of the saints in light; and both are now given of God through faith to every believer, who has eternal life in the Son and through His blood redemption, the forgiveness of our offences. Not that a new responsibility is lacking, but it is the responsibility of a child of God. So Himself said "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19); and previously that He gives His sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall snatch them out of His hand (John 10:28), yea the Father's hand also securing them (John 10:29). Can any assurance be conceived plainer or stronger?

Thus in Christ alone, by His sacrifice and the sovereign gift of life, we have the principle of two trees, and this in fulness of blessing for all that believe; whereas the unbeliever, despising the word, and as self-confident as he is weak and sinful, repeats the error of Adam and Israel to his ruin. As Christians we have the treasure of Christ in our earthen vessel; and are responsible to be always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus, the new nature, may be manifested in our body.

5 Woman

Genesis 2:1-25.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 14-15. Gospel No. 3: 5.)

Alienated as fallen man is from God, nothing is so strange to him as the truth. And no wonder. It brings the true God before him, and reminds him of his departure from God. He is under Satan's lie, and naturally opposes the truth, which he is inclined to treat at best as myth, philosophic or religious. But it is by the word of God's revealed truth, that the Father of lights brought of His own will any forth, that they should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. His word is truth; and of that word Christ is the great personal object of faith, Who puts every soul that hears the gospel to the test. To this end is He born, and to this end is come into the world, that He should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears His voice, and follows Him Who gives the believer eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John 5:12). If a man recognised his ruin and guilt before God, how would he not from his heart receive the Saviour!

But, owning neither his own need nor God's grace in Christ, he stumbles at the word, being disobedient, and judges scripture, instead of being judged by it, as all believers are. Such an one sets Genesis 2:1-25 against Genesis 1:1-31, because through incredulity he sees God in neither, and is unwilling to learn the truth in each and in both, alike necessary to give us a complete view.

Beyond controversy Genesis 1:26-28 presents in noble terms the creation of man, the chief of his works here below. Here only did He call Himself into council; as man only He proposed to make in His image after His likeness, assigning dominion over the rest of earth's living creatures. But whatever may be the expression of singular dignity, it is simply mankind's place in creation, notably distinguished, and indisputably the highest, but yet the highest of earthly creatures, "male and female" like the rest of animated nature. It is therefore God, Elohim the Creator simply, of Whom we here read. It could not with propriety be otherwise.

Genesis 2:1-25 regards the scene from the point of moral relationship which brings in the name of Him Who governs on earth as revealed to Israel nationally, and so, in the O.T. as a whole, Jehovah, but Jehovah here carefully identified with the Creator, Jehovah Elohim, the LORD God. For there is none other. It is ignorance to account for the different names of God here or elsewhere, and any difference of words, style, etc., by imagining distinct writers, when all is demonstrably due to change of standpoint, and the simple but profound and exquisite accuracy of thought and language in Holy Writ. It is no rival account by another hand, but the same writer guided by the inspiring Spirit to set out man's moral position; the garden of Eden as the scene of his care, and, in the midst of abundance, the prohibition laid on him under penalty of death; the subject beasts, and birds, brought to him and named by him as their, lord; finally a helpmate, in contrast with every other formation, taken out of himself in the wise goodness of Him with Whom we have to do.

All is consistent with the presentation of relationship, beginning with Jehovah Elohim (the LORD God) in Genesis 2:4, not Creator only but Moral Governor. Hence here, not in Genesis 1:1-31, is the garden of delight planted by the LORD God, the testing place of man's obedience. Here only in the midst of the garden we hear of the two trees: one the sovereign gift of life naturally; the other of responsibility. Here only are we told of man formed of the dust of the ground on one hand, and on the other by the LORD God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Adam was thus "son of God" (Luke 3:38), a living soul, not as other creatures by creative power only, but he only by Jehovah Elohim breathing into his nostrils. Nor is the effect lost for the race; for, as Paul quotes to

the Athenians, we too are His offspring, as no other earthly creatures are. Therefore is the soul immortal for good or for ill; if saved, it is for ever with Christ; if lost, for everlasting punishment, because He is refused and men die in their sins. Such was man's relationship to Jehovah Elohim; and the test of obedience here therefore follows. In pointed contrast with the relationship to him of every animal of the field and every bird of the heavens, to which their master gave names by divine authority, no helpmate appeared, till Jehovah Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on the man. Then He took one of his ribs, and built it into a woman, and brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22). And the man, notwithstanding his deep sleep, recognised her at once as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. "This shall be called Woman (or She-man), because she was taken out of man." It is the strongest possible statement of her peculiar relationship to himself, and as perfectly suiting Genesis 2:1-25 as it would have been out of place in Genesis 1:1-31. How sad that men of learning, professed theologians, should be so dull to discern the mind of God in scripture, so ready to plunge into the dark after any Will-o-the-wisp of rationalism to their own loss and the injury of all who follow them! The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, tersely sums up the truth of the case as having God's authority: "For man is not of woman, but woman of man; for neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." Those who venture to dispute the fact must one day learn what it is to give God the lie. It is the ground of the sanctity of marriage, one woman for one man: such was the order from the beginning of Him Who made her, as He did, of man, and so to be one flesh, alas! too soon forgotten by men generally and even by Israel. But there it was indelibly written to instruct the faithful and shame the rebellious. And is it nothing for souls that the same apostle in Ephesians 5:25-33 refers to this oracle of God? Yes, the first man Adam foreshadows the Second man and last Adam, on Whom fell a deeper sleep, that a heavenly Eve might be formed, even the church for which Christ in His love cave Himself, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. No doubt this mystery is great, but it is no less true and blessed. It is infinite grace, and only possible through the death of Christ, by which a poor sinner is reconciled through faith to God.

Oh, despise not the living and abiding word! Despise not the grace of God which sends you His glad tidings in Christ and in His blood which cleanseth from all sin! It is for you, that, believing on the name of the Son of God, "ye may know that ye have eternal life."

6 The Tempter

Genesis 3:1.

Gospel Words, 3rd Series. No. 6.

It is to be noticed that, when the enemy assails our first parents, he is left in mysterious obscurity. Yet no believer, no serious mind, can doubt, that under the form of a serpent, Satan was at work to deceive and destroy, whatever the misused ingenuity of unbelief may reason to confuse the unwary and credulous. To the first book of the O. T. the last book of the N. T. answers here as elsewhere with singular force, and identifies him from first to last as "the old serpent, that is called Devil (slanderer) and Satan" (the adversary), Revelation 12:9, Revelation 20:2. Nor are we left to this symbolic prophecy alone; for the apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 11:3, had given no uncertain sound about this evil one long before. If the serpent lured man into his lie against God, grace revealed the woman's Seed, bruised indeed yet bruising the head of the enemy, the Deliverer not

only of all that believe but of all creation also (Romans 8:1-39). The Second man will surely triumph.

Along with the restless seduction of man into sin, Satan is shown us in the ancient book of Job and with striking clearness, as the accuser of the saint, in the presence of Jehovah (Job 1:9-10; Job 2:4-5), with permitted power to afflict and within certain limits even to destroy the body, though not Job's life. But the issue for God and those that are His by faith is in every case his defeat eventually, in no case apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus. For there is found the personal antagonism. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). He may thwart God in each object and plan of His, he may traduce the believer, and for a while seem ever so successful; but he is doomed, as also all who trust him against God and His Anointed, to utter defeat and everlasting ruin.

Under the legal system, as God was hidden, so was the enemy. David first brought out into relief the type of His kingdom; and there we first hear of Satan (1 Chronicles 21:1). Numbering the people in the pride of a national ruler was abandoning dependence on Jehovah and a denial of his own early faith; and the chastening was seventy thousand men of Israel mowed down by pestilence. In Psalms 109:1-31 we see Judas, the leader of the Christ-rejecting Jews against Jesus. Nor was it only a wicked man set over him, but Satan standing at his right hand: the plain prediction of the traitor's deed under the devil's instigation, as the psalm that follows is of Jehovah's exalting the Holy One to sit at His right hand till the word is given to judge. It is the same opposition, seemingly carrying its evil way, but only accomplishing the good counsels of God in honour of His Son.

Zechariah 3:1-10 has no other voice, though speaking of Messiah's people. Did not their guilt and defilement give title to Satan against the high priest who represented them? Unquestionably and irremediably, had not Messiah been stricken for the transgressions of the people, and bruised for their iniquities. Righteously therefore can Jehovah that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke Satan, and say, Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Righteously can He cause the iniquity to pass from their representative and clothe him with rich apparel, and set a fair mitre on his head. In the N.T. the Tempter confronts the Son of God, and in ways more consummately subtle and complete to draw Him out of dependence on God. The last three-fold effort is recorded for our instruction and thanksgiving: the natural, the worldly, the religious temptations utterly foiled by Him Who stands obediently in the truth, as Satan did not because there is no truth in him. The strong one, however fully armed, here found One stronger, Who overcame him, and took his panoply and divided his spoils. But again he appeared as the prince of the world; and as he could not mislead the Messiah out of the path of subjection, he drew the world, the Jews most of all guilty, to kill Him in it: yet this was his own suicidal guilt, as Christ's death was the glorifying of God about sin, and the reconciliation of all that believe, and indeed of all creation, save of course those that reject Him. But the N.T. is no less clear that the devil and his angels, till judgment is executed, are incessant in their efforts to corrupt and destroy, to accuse the saints and to deceive the whole habitable earth. He works through the world and the flesh; but his own special field is through falsehood, and his direct enmity is against the grace, truth, and glory of His destined Conqueror. Hence the demons whom he commands trembled before the Lord Jesus in terror of His casting them into the abyss, or bottomless pit, where Satan is to be bound when Christ comes in His kingdom. Till then Satan acts as a devouring lion or a beguiler in a serpent-like craftiness, fashioning himself into an angel

of light or kindling the fires of persecution, where he fails with his lies. Fallen angels there are already consigned to everlasting bonds under gloom for judgment of the great day. These so audaciously broke through God's order before the deluge that He has imprisoned them ever since; and they ought not to be confounded with those that are still allowed for a season to tempt mankind, and have access to the heavenly places as well as the earth till judgment befalls them. For their leader is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience; as our wrestling if Christians is declared to be against the principalities, against the powers against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heaven, lies (or heavenly places). And this conflict will never cease while the church is on earth. But Revelation 12:1-17 tells us that they are to be cast out of the heaven, at a day still future, with new and marked consequences for a short time on earth, before the binding in the abyss for a thousand years, followed soon after by casting them into the lake of fire.

O my fellow sinner, heed the voice of the Son of God, that you may receive the remission of your sins and eternal life. He died for sins, and has authority now and on earth to give you remission. In Him was life, and He gives life, His own eternal life, to every one that believes. There is no other way; for He is the way, the truth, and the life. You are a son of disobedience, and by nature a child of wrath. Be not deceived longer by Satan, who cheats into thinking yourself strong and free, whereas you are without strength and his slave already. Christ only can save you; and He is as able as He is willing; and God has His pleasure in it, for He loves the Son and pities you. Satan can easily and will surely keep you to be his companion in punishment, as now his servant in sin. Whosoever believeth on Christ shall not be ashamed.

7 Eve Tempted

Genesis 3:1-5.

Gospel Words, 3rd Series. No. 7. The subtlety of the enemy displays itself throughout. The weaker vessel is deceived, being drawn away by plausible appearances. How like our life! What a light is thrown on facts of every day, with their bitter results through unbelief and impenitence! For God is forgotten, and objects in the scene that now is take His place. Such is Satan's aim till the soul be betrayed into open ungodliness and despair, which hardens an act into a habit away from God.

Here, as the beginning of moral evil on earth, the Holy Spirit relates the fact, in its detail of instruction for every child of Adam, with the grand yet deep simplicity of these early books of inspiration.

"And he said, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Genesis 3:1) "It was but a question of what God had said. But where this is allowed, He is dishonoured, and a breach is made in the line of defence for the enemy to enter. To doubt God's word is the beginning of the worst evil, it is to sit in judgment on Himself; whereas He only can and ought to judge, and this He does now by His word, as indeed the Lord says will be at the last day. How presumptuous then for man to judge Him!" A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father where is mine honour? and if I be a master where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:6). Under the seeming modesty of a query Satan was undermining the prime duty of a creature! And what did he seek in particular thereby? To insinuate a doubt of His goodness. What! May you not eat of all the trees? Is it possible that you are forbidden any? How can God love you

and withhold a single good thing from you? Surely there must be some mistake. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Is it so?

It is written, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Eve on the contrary listened and parleyed. The mischief was begun. As the serpent had substituted the more distant and abstract "God" of creation for the Creator in moral relationship with man (Jehovah God), she fell into the trap, and discussed the question raised only to excite desire for what he had prohibited. A rebel himself, he maliciously likes to thwart the Highest and have companions in his sin and misery. Yielding to him, instead of turning away at once, Eve drops notice of the relationship Jehovah had deigned to establish, and becomes a prey while she continues her converse. "And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:2-3). Had she held fast the sense of her responsibility to obey, she would have resented the question, rather than answered it. And her answer lets us see that the evil intent of Satan did not fail of its effect. She adds to the prohibition, and takes from the penalty. Jehovah had not said a word about touching the forbidden fruit, but had in the most assured terms threatened death in the day of eating it. Exaggeration of truth is no more the truth than diminution of it; either enfeebles, and both are Satan’s work. By the truth we are sanctified; and His word is truth. But knowledge is not truth received in the love of it from God. Eve well knew and could tell the tempter the liberty given as to all other fruit, and the penalty for partaking of the one forbidden tree. Yet she ventured to hear what the serpent had to say when there was already the proof that he was by his question impugning divine goodness. Did not He delight in their happiness? From Whom came their most bountiful provision? Was she cherishing dependence on Him, or confidence in Him? How worthless is knowledge which issues not in grateful praise and simple-hearted obedience! Still more, if it leave one free to distrust Him! Alas! unbelief has grown apace since Eve.

Emboldened by his crafty success the enemy advances. "And the serpent said to the woman, Ye will not surely die; but God knoweth that, in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes will be opened and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5). It is no longer insinuation against His good will, but open assault on His truth. And it is the same lie which beguiles mankind ever since. Death is hidden diligently from men’s eyes; and when it cannot be, its import is explained away. People are willingly ignorant, and are earnest only to enjoy the present. Let us eat and drink, and tomorrow go here or there and get gain. Ah! ye know not what will be on the morrow; but certain it is, now that man is fallen, it is appointed to men once to die and after this judgment. But men lend a ready ear to him who deceived Eve, and, though unable to deny, believe it not: else that dark shadow would paralyse their pursuits and poison their pleasures. For the sting of death is sin, of which all are guilty; and into judgment for all their sins must come those who believe not in the Lord Jesus for remission.

Further, the serpent held out as a bribe the good of evil. In eating the forbidden fruit, your eyes will be opened, and ye will be as God, knowing good and evil. God is jealous; I am your friend. He would keep you ignorant and in leading strings. Take my advice: be independent and know for yourselves as He does. As he veiled the doom of transgression, so did he set off the bribe in glowing colours; and as Eve stayed to listen, she was tainted with his pestilent breath. She received the lying foe as her best friend when his slander of the living and true God entered her heart. Open sin and ruin followed without delay. The remedy is not in man, but from God in Christ

for him, yea, for the most guilty if he repent and believe the gospel. Nor did the law work out deliverance, but on the contrary wrath. The Lord Jesus is the only Deliverer, as indeed this very Genesis 3:1-24 foreshows. He vindicated God and vanquished Satan in every respect in which the first man failed. His coming, the gift of Him displayed God's immense love to the world, His death for sin was the irrefragable proof of God's truth no less than of His love; and His personal glory, yet becoming a man to be made sin for us, told out God's majesty as well as His love and truth. O what a contrast with those who, being only human, sought to be as God, and, coveting independence, became Satan's slaves! But thanks be to God Who through Him dead and risen gives the victory to us, even to all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is His voice that speaks from heaven, as of old He warned on earth. See that ye refuse not Him that speaks. For our God, whatever His love, is also a consuming fire.

8 The Fall of Man

Genesis 3:6.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 56-57. Gospel No. 3: 8.) The woman then was beguiled, quite beguiled as we are told in 1 Timothy 2:14, and so became involved in transgression; but what of man? Of him we hear not a word in the colloquy of the serpent and Eve. The same N.T. authority assures us that he was not deceived: with his eyes open, he transgressed, swayed by his affection for his wife. It was deliberate disobedience on his part, not here thoughtlessness, or deceived as the weaker vessel by a mightier and subtle rebel; for both and their posterity it was ruin and death, to man irreparable.

Let us then weigh the simple words in which God brings the solemn fact before us. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).

Eve by continuing to hear the tempter's words more and more lost the authority of God's word, which at first she knew clearly and felt to be paramount. But as she listened to one whose object was to draw her away from God and ensnare her into transgression, she became by degrees less sensitive as to God's honour and Satan's crafty malice. Was it so that after all God did not love man perfectly but reserved good from him? Perhaps too they might take this fruit, fair and excellent as it looked like other fruits in Paradise, without a blow so dreadful as death. God would not surely be so stern about so small a matter, He that gave them all else! And was it not strange that they (related so nearly to Himself, His offspring, Whose breath was their life-breath, made in His image, after His likeness) should be refused the knowledge of good and evil, to become so far like Himself-was it worthy of Him? Alas! Eve, when tempted was at length drawn away by lust, by the desire to have what God forbad, and was enticed. She used her eyes against the word, and saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes. Emboldened thus she reflected that the tree was desirable to make wise; and so the lust, having conceived, bears sin, as the sin, when fully completed, brings forth death. Compare James 1:11; James 1:15; 1 John 2:16. The woman had weakly fallen; but the stronger vessel, the man! He well knew the prohibition of the LORD God; he had the fatal yielding of Eve to warn him, if this could be needed; yet he dared to follow her into evil, from which he should have sought to shield her and confirm her soul in allegiance to God; and he too rebelled at her solicitation. All was lost in the fallen head of creation.

What dishonour to God! what malignant joy to the enemy! what a root of evil to man! "By one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned" (Romans 5:12, R.V.). The ruin was complete. Distrust of God's love, unbelief of His truth, slight of His glory in seizing it, introduced open self-will and transgression. And so it has been since with ever increasing corruption. For Adam was head of the human race and involved his posterity in his own evil. He became a father only after he was a sinner.

It was not so with those who in a higher sphere rebelled against God without a tempter. They each and all departed from God, though they excel in strength. They therefore are left to suffer the due reward of their deeds. But man, in his weakness and exposure to the subtle foe, is the object of God's richest mercy, and gives occasion for the display of His glory in nature and character, in His ways and counsels, as no other creature does or could enjoy; but this positively and perfectly in Christ alone, the Second Man.

Thus it comes out in His headship to the praise of God's grace. For if through the disobedience of the one man the many (or Adam's family) were constituted sinners, so also shall the many (or Christ's family) be constituted righteous. The head according to God determines the condition of the family. We belonged to the one naturally; we belong to the other by grace through faith. No Jew could deny that so in fact the headship of sin and sorrow was with the human race: how could he question that the headship of blessing was just and worthy of God? If Adam sunk his family into that sad estate, why should not Christ raise those who believe into the good portion which He deserves? But it is not only that the gospel is thus indicated: no otherwise can the sinner be saved consistently with God and His word. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." If this was true beyond question of Israel, is it not quite as manifestly of men in general? How blessed then that God has given His Son to be a man, a Saviour, a new head for all that believe! This as a whole scripture testifies from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. Salvation is in Another, not in the guilty; it is in Christ. And salvation is in no other; for neither is there any other, or a different, name under heaven that is given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Christ glorified God in death as a sacrifice for sin, so as to atone for all that believe in Him; as Adam by his transgression dishonoured God and brought death on himself and his race. It was when Christ carried obedience to the death of the cross, that He, risen from the dead, was proclaimed the new head: God was glorified in Him as to our disobedience and its consequences, and not only in His unbroken life of obedience. He from the highest glory took the lowest place of a slave, and endured the most ignominious death, that of the cross. O what a contrast with the man of dust who sought to be as God and disobeyed unto death! As the work of Christ was morally glorious in the highest degree, so is it efficacious and unfailing for all that believe, even though ruined in Adam and adding their own sins. But where sin abounded, grace far exceeded; that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

9 Naked

Genesis 3:7.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 74-76. Gospel No. 3: 9.)

Here was the immediate effect of sin in our first parents:- "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons," or girdles. There was the sense of shame as well of guilt, and they sought to hide it from themselves and from each other.

It is all in vain. Conscience was at work, but not before God or toward Him: else had they cried to Him in self-judgment and sorrowful confession of the evil they had done. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in thy sight," said the penitent king. Yet it might be said that his iniquity was grievous wrong to a devoted servant and his wife, hitherto blameless. Adulterous seduction of the woman! Planned death for the man! What could be worse offences against one's neighbour? But the contrite heart, even in such a case, justly feels that, whatever the crime before man, sin is against God so as to eclipse all else.

Unabashed innocence was gone. Adam and Eve, once guilty, felt the shame of sin; and their first effort was to cover their persons as they could. They knew that they were naked, when they had disobeyed God. But fig leaves cannot cover sin; and they knew this too, when they heard the voice of the LORD God the same day. For sin is against Him, and His voice when heard awakens terror in the guilty.

How good for such (and we all are, or have been, such) to know David's "instruction" in Psalms 32:1-11. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." What a blessing when God covers sin by Christ's sacrifice! Without this all else is vain. For, being sinners, we must come as sinners before God, Who refuses any other approach to Him in the first place. How perverse is unbelief! Men strive to come as saints, which they are not, and refuse to come as sinners, which they are and nothing else. Why do they thus evade the truth to their own hurt as well as God's dishonour? Because they have no confidence in His grace., But His grace brings salvation, for it is possible only through Another. Heaven is through Christ alone, and consequently it is by faith. For faith receives the testimony or witness God has borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this that God gives the believer eternal life, and this life is in His Son. So absolutely true is this, that it is added: "he that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:10-12. The work of Christ, as the fruit of God's grace, takes guile from the spirit. His blood purges the conscience. The useless apron or girdle, the filthy garment, is taken away; "the best robe" is put on. Shame gives place to uprightness, and perfect love casts out fear. Such are the riches of God's grace to him who believes in Christ. The pretension to work for pardon, peace, cleansing, or life, denies the guilt and ruin of the sinner. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5). The ungodly, the sinner, deserves judgment, which is perdition, by his works; but the gospel is sent to him as a lost one, that believing he may be justified and saved. What grace! Yet is it God's righteousness, Who gives the believer what Christ's work deserves; and thus only in the cross of Christ, where man's evil came out to the uttermost, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

See to it then that you rest on Christ only according to God's word. Without Him faith were as vain, as baptism, to say nothing of works. Else when clothed, as the apostle says (2 Corinthians 5:3),

you will be found naked. For all must rise, unjust as well as just. And the clothing of the resurrection body will not hide but disclose the real condition. Christ alone meets the nakedness of the sinner; He washes, cleanses, and clothes for the eye of God. Without Christ, even when clothed, you will be found naked: a paradox in natural things; a certain truth spiritually. For in that day there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known.

10 Where art thou?

Genesis 3:8-9.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 91-92. Gospel No. 3: 10.) The word of God is truth, where and when ever written, be the matter in hand what it may. How solemn when He, from Whom no appeal can be, is personally addressing man! So it was here when man had just fallen. "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where [art] thou?" (Genesis 3:8-9).

Man was gone from God; and it was now manifest and undeniable. Even before Jehovah Elohim called Adam and Eve into His presence, the fall was working its evil consequences. They were ashamed for the first time, and they sought to hide their shame from themselves and from one another. When they heard the voice of the LORD God, terror was added exceedingly, yet in vain; for how can man escape if summoned there?

Before the fall, how delightful was His gracious presence, Who planted the garden in Eden, and therein put the man He had formed! And out of the ground made Jehovah Elohim to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, besides the two trees in the midst of the garden, the silent witnesses of truth beyond all the others. A river too for watering the garden was not wanting, which after that parted and became four beads. Into this garden then did the LORD God put the man to dress and keep it. More than this He brought every animal of the field and every fowl of the heavens to the man, to see what he would call them; and whatever man called each became its name, But more than all this (the sign of his being the possessor and lord of the lower creation) was the deep interest of Jehovah Elohim in building woman out of the man, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, to be his wife. But sin now made God’s presence most alarming. Man’s conscience was bad; and the divine presence, instead of awakening love and gratitude, terrified them to the utmost. The fig leaves failed. Adam and his wife hid themselves among the trees of the garden. The summons told the sad truth: "Where art thou?" Gone from God! Till man sinned, there was no question of judgment. Sin made it necessary for God to judge him. From this man shrinks; his guilt cannot be hidden, and God must judge.

What has man done since? What have you done, dear reader? Added sin to sin. So the Psalmist, writing some thousands of years after, confesses that men are all gone out of the way; and this not of heathen merely who knew not God, but of those that knew Him and His law; for whatsoever the law saith, it speaketh to those that are under the law. But now God commands men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as He has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world, or habitable earth, in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance to all men in that He raised Him from the dead.

Oh, hear His call, while it is called Today. For this is the day of grace. As God came in quest of man who hid away from Him, convicted him of his sins, yet revealed the Seed of the woman to crush the great enemy of God and man; so Christ has already come, been made sin on the cross, was there and then once offered to bear sins in His own body on the tree. To Him does God direct the eye of faith. He is the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He is the unfailing Saviour, being God as well as man. He suffered once for all for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. And "be it known to you therefore, through this Man is preached [not promised merely, but preached] unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe [to none other is it pledged] are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

You are not only gone from God but lost as you are. For when God in Christ came into the world to reconcile men to God, they would not have Him but cast Him out of His own world; they crucified and slew Him, Such is man's position after all God's dealings: he is lost. But the gospel, which says so, makes known God's salvation in Christ without money or price on man's part, as in truth it cost God everything, His message therefore is that, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up land so He has been], that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Do you think that this is too easy a way to be saved, too uncertain for you to trust? Alas! the thought betrays your unbelief. For no way was so hard, even for God, as to give His own Son that you might live through Him, and that He might die in propitiation for your sins. And the only certainty a soul on earth can have is from receiving God's witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life (1 John 5:1-21).

11 Convicted Genesis 3:12-13.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 105-106. Gospel No. 3: 11.) The chapter tells how Adam and Eve fell into transgression, with mutual shame, and with undisguised alarm at the presence of God. There was no Sinai smoking as a whole, because Jehovah came down in fire; neither did smoke ascend like that of a furnace; nor did the earth quake; nor the trumpet sound loud exceedingly. His voice without a reproach or a menace struck the guilty pair with terror; and they hid themselves from before Him among the trees of the garden. Compelled to answer His call, the man owned, not his sin, but his fear because he was naked; but he could not escape the searching question, "Who told thee that thou art naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?"

Truly the word of God is living and energetic, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to discern thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature unapparent before Him; but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes with Whom we have to do. As yet there is not a trace of repentance, but hardness of heart and self-justification. Had there been the least self-judgment, any real sense of dishonour done to the LORD God, they had confessed their sin in listening to the tempter, and humbled themselves at once instead of covering their nakedness in their own way. And when they

heard His voice, they would have gone to Him though with bitter sorrow, instead of simply biding from Him in conscious guilt. Each would have said, "Behold, I am vile: what shall 1 answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "Now mine eye hath seen Thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes."

Far otherwise was it as yet with our first parents. "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:11-12). What glaring disrespect and ingratitude to God! What utter lack of affection and compassionate care for his wife, whom he ought to have led and shielded if he could from evil, instead of following her into it! What unworthy and impudent reflection on Him Who gave the woman as a helpmeet for his good, not as an excuse for disobeying God! To hear Him was his first and known duty, even before she was made. Both the man and the woman knew the prohibition of the LORD God; both were fully aware of the penalty of disobeying; and both consciously rebelled, though separately, she quite deceived, he not so yet persuaded by her, preferring the creature to the Creator Who had set them blessed in responsibility to Himself.

It is hard to conceive aught lower, and withal more insolent, than the answer of the man:- "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and 1 did eat." On the surface the words might be true; morally they were false, unworthy, and irreverent, yea blasphemous. Adam was so debased by sin as to seek to excuse himself by the woman's fault, and even to throw the blame on the LORD God; the woman only pleaded the serpent's craft. Neither felt or confessed personal wrong any more than disloyalty to God. The excuses only proved their guilt, and could not but be their conviction. Thus Adam was condemned expressly because he hearkened to his wife's voice (Genesis 3:17); and enmity was put between the serpent and the woman, who had sorrow multiplied instead of the pleasure she sought. So it is with their offspring to this day. Sin brings in moral ruin; guilt leads to guile. Man without exception ever since is wilful and ungodly. There is no good but always worse evil from palliation or blaming others, as all are prone to do. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and as if is corrupted through sin, out of that treasure the wicked man brings forth wicked things.

Thenceforward the sole hope for fallen man lay in God; and God's sole available and effectual good for man was in sending His only-begotten Son to become not man only but a sacrifice for the sinful. And so the Lord Jesus is the Saviour of all that believe in Him, as the scriptures abundantly testify: the Saviour of the lost, not the poor notion of a reinstatement of the race in what the first man ruined, but the blessing of the believer with all that God counts worthy of the Second man, His own Son, and of His redemption. What a blessed refutation of "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me"! God so loved, not His children, nor His people, but "the world," the Christ-rejecting Satan-serving world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. As this is the greatest blessing God could give, not pardon only, nor even peace, but eternal life; so His Son, in Whom that life is, becomes the test of every sinner here below, small or great, civilised or barbarian, wise or unintelligent. All are alike sinners: there is no difference in that awful fact, though some are bolder than the rest. It is appointed to men once to die, and, after this, judgment. Impossible for any one to escape either by any resources of his own or by other men. But Christ, sent of God to that end, went down into death and bore the judgment from God, as propitiation for sins; so that, when He shall appear a second

time, it will be to those that wait for Him apart from sin for salvation. So perfectly did He on the cross bear the sins of believers that none of them, as He said (John 5:1-47), comes into judgment.

Therefore does God call on you now, if you have not already obeyed His call, to receive life eternal and salvation in His Son. To receive Him is to receive, not only what you need and can find no. where else, but all the blessing God loves to bestow. Seek not to extenuate your case like Adam and Eve. Hide not away from Him Who, knowing all your sins, pities you no less than them, and now sends you the gospel in all its fulness, as could only be when Christ came, and died atoningly, and rose triumphant. It is therefore now not only the grace but the righteousness of God. Through Christ's work He is just and the justifier of the believer. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He that believes on Him is not judged: he that believes not has been judged already, because he has not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness more than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hates the light and comes not to the light, lest his works should be convicted; but he that does the truth comes to the light that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God (John 3:1-36).

12 The woman's Seed The Serpent and the Woman's Seed.

Genesis 3:14-15.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 127-128. Gospel No. 3: 12.) Of the man and the woman the LORD God inquired; not of the serpent, a known and old rebel. On him judgment was summarily pronounced, but governmental, in accordance with the O.T., rather than everlasting, which was reserved for Christ and the N.T. "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field. On thy belly shalt thou go and eat dust all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it (he) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:14-15).

What can be more striking or instructive? It is in judging the enemy that the revelation of grace is made, not in what was said subsequently to the woman (Genesis 3:16) or to Adam (Genesis 3:17-19). This was not only just but for the divine glory in Christ. What could morally warrant promise to fallen man or woman? Their transgression just perpetrated called for judgment, and the LORD God did not fail to declare it. He is not slack to reprove sin or to vindicate His majesty. Both are evident here in His own words at the beginning; still more, and perfectly, in the completion of the ages, when Christ has been manifested for putting away of sin by His sacrifice. Never before had sin been adequately judged, never before had God been absolutely glorified about sin. And the salvation which results to the believer is according to the perfection of Christ's atoning work and of God's glorification thereby (13: 31, John 17:4; John 5:26).

All the pretensions of sinful man are thus swept away and annihilated. No room is left for the dream of man's amelioration. Not so is God vindicated or sin judged or the sinner saved. There is no restoration of the first man, but the revelation of the Second; no promise to the fallen head, but the assurance of the Last Adam, a life-giving Spirit, the woman's Seed, to crush Satan. In Him and His cross meet, as nowhere else, truth and love, righteousness and grace, man to the last degree obedient and submissive, holy yet suffering, and suffering not only for righteousness and truth as

well as love beyond all that ever were, but for sins — He alone, when man and Satan had done their worst, suffering for sin from God, His God. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? . . . . But Thou art holy that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psalms 22:1; Psalms 22:3).

God answered Him, not merely by receiving His spirit committed into His Father's hands but by resurrection from among the dead and seating Him at His own right hand in heaven. We answer it too in our measure by believing in His name and confessing that it was for sin, yea for our sins, He the sin-bearer on the tree was thus abandoned of God, that sin might be judged, and we who believe be completely cleansed, and the glad tidings of repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem, the city of all the world most guilty of His crucifixion.

Undoubtedly the blessing of divine grace was for Adam or any of his race, sinful though they were, if they believed; but the utmost care was taken that none could say truthfully that it was a promise to Adam. On the ground of the first man there was sin and ruin and death. Innocence lost is irreparable. There is no possible return to what was lost, any more than ground for hope that fallen man would do better than man innocent.

It is in this judgment on the Serpent that the LORD God pointed out the only hope and the full assurance of victory over the foe. It is wholly and exclusively in the woman's Seed. Christ is Satan's conqueror, Christ is the Saviour of man. It was not yet the due moment to make Him known as the Son of God, as God, yea as Jehovah. All this and more we find in the course of O.T. revelation; and all is most clearly revealed in the N.T., each aspect of His glory just as it was needed and fitting.

Here we may readily see His deep grace, His wisdom, His holiness; yet the simple truth, that the vindicator of God, the avenger of man, and the destroyer of Satan, would be the woman's Seed, not the man's, with a strict propriety that marks out the Lord Jesus from every other born of woman. The responsible man was altogether left out. Weak woman, who had at the beginning listened to the evil one and drawn her husband after her into transgression, was to be taken up in the pure and rich mercy of God. For in man and by man it was His counsel to bring a new and real and abiding glory to His name, and thus only to save the lost and defeat Satan.

There is indeed a true and essential work in the conscience, heart, and ways of every soul that believes unto salvation. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. But, morally speaking, the beginning of all goodness for a sinner is a divinely given sense and confession of his badness; and it is clear that this alone could give not peace, but despair. He is called therefore in the gospel to look out of himself wholly unto Jesus, the woman's Seed, and to rest in the work He wrought for us, in His suffering for sins on the cross. To this scripture pointed throughout, as the N.T. expresses it with the utmost fulness and precision. Even here we have it in the crushing of His heel: a figure, taken from the serpent's habit, to set forth the acuteness of the wound inflicted on the woman's Seed, yet leave room for the contrast of his own crushed head under the risen Conqueror. The type here was but a shadow, as indeed elsewhere, and could not in this case fully announce that the deliverance of the guilty demanded the Saviour's death. But even this lack was supplied in the intimation of the skins wherewith the LORD God immediately after clothed Adam and Eve. It was a covering, not of mere nature like the fig leaves, to which they first had recourse. The divine clothing of the guilty is founded on death, the application of which to Christ is easy and

most intelligible.

Such then is the object of faith presented in Scripture. One believes God when he believes in Christ, the woman's Seed. So deep is the glory of His person, that only the Father knows Him fully. Man's mind, presuming to fathom that depth, breaks away into one heterodoxy or another, on the human side especially, but also on the divine. The only safety is to believe God's testimony concerning Him Who is the Son of God and the woman's Seed. This is the mystery of godliness, not only of truth but of godliness: "He Who was manifested in flesh." It is the abandonment of self, of the first man, the confession of our evil, to find the salvation of God in the woman's Seed, and in the Son, not incarnate only, but in the body of His flesh through death. Thus only has God reconciled us who believe, once in settled alienation and enemies in mind by wicked works, now children and sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

05.06. Gospel Words - Fourth Series.

Gospel Words - Fourth Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Jewish leper 2 The Gentile centurion and his servant 3 Peter’s mother-in-law 4 The Paralytic healed 5 The Tempest, and unbelief rebuked 6 The Demoniac delivered 7 The Woman healed and sent away in peace 8 The Daughter of Jairus raised 9 The Healing of the blind in the house 10 The early Haul of fishes 11 The Water made wine 12 . Nobleman’s son healed 1 The Jewish leper Matthew 8:1-34, Mark 1:1-45, Luke 5:1-39.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 141-142. Gospel No. 4: 1.) In the first of the Gospels this is the earliest miracle given in detail: a suited testimony of Messiah to His people, a testimony that He was Jehovah in their midst acting in power and grace. Indeed even here the account is brief. The fact is in some respects all the more significant. The real state spiritually of the chosen people was no better in God’s sight. The law had singled out leprosy as the standing sign of uncleanness and exclusion from His presence. Hence the more manifest was grace toward the Gentile in the action of the prophet of old, when Israel was sinking down more and more into apostacy. But now a greater than Elisha was here. Immanuel was on earth, in the land; and this unhappy Jew prostrates himself before Him, and makes his appeal: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The chosen people were morally what he was physically; but they knew it no more than they bowed to His glory. But it will dawn on the remnant by-and-by, when they shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Far different was it in the day of Messiah’s visitation.

Even the leper, who did pay Him homage then, feebly apprehended the grace that was in Him "Lord, if Thou wilt." Why question? Why doubt? Wherefore was He come, and come Himself, the Holy One, to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips? A man, yet the King, Jehovah of Hosts! If the eyes of the blind were to be opened, and the ears of the deaf to be unstopped, and the lame to leap as a hart (and prophecy had bound up this and more with the advent of Messiah) was the leper to be an exception? Was he without the pale of mercy? The leper, abject as he was, acknowledged His power without hesitation. But grace rises over all difficulty and applies the power to the need, however desperate; and here Luke lets us know, suitably to his own character, that the man was "full of leprosy." But if faith was small, grace comes forth in its own immensity. "And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him."

It was not always thus that the Lord wrought in cleansing lepers. When the ten met Him, as we hear in Luke 17:1-37, they stood afar off, and the Lord cleansed all, but touched none of them. Here we have the beautiful sign of His mercy toward Israel another day, when He will bless them with His gracious presence and heal all their diseases, as He will forgive all their iniquities.

Now, present in humiliation, His glory could not be hid. Had He been merely man under the law, there was no license to touch the leper. Jehovah Messiah was there; and however He might stoop in love, He could not deny Himself. He and He alone could touch the leper, not only undefiled, but banishing the leprosy. How manifestly it was God in Christ winning the overwhelmed heart, and blending power with grace in a way beyond all human thought! Mark tells us that He was "moved with compassion"; and indeed the act was exactly suited to express it. But He added words, recorded in all three Gospels, of the utmost weight — "I will; be thou clean." None on earth but He was free so to speak. His Person gave Him the right. He, Who could truly say "I am," was entitled to say "I will." In every other born of woman it would have been not only presumption but sin. He could say these words Who does say in John 8:1-59, "Before Abraham was, I am." "Be thou clean" was immediately followed with power that could not be disputed. "Immediately" the man's leprosy was cleansed. The Lord Jesus spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

It was but a sample; and, as the Lord enjoins, "for a testimony unto them." Therefore Jesus said unto the leper, "See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded." A greater work was needed for man before God. A deeper want than any created by disease, however fatal, lay upon Israel; but this was "for a testimony unto them." To show himself to the priest ought to have raised the question there, if his lips kept knowledge, or if his heart sought it, Who has healed him? It would have drawn out the answer from faith; Jehovah is here; Jehovah has healed him. For no one knew better than the priest that man is powerless here; and the law has no provision for healing leprosy, only directions for cleansing ritually him who is already healed.

Alas! like people, like priest; all were unbelieving then, save the little remnant which heard the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him. How is it with my reader? The Gentile professor, though christened, if this be all, is no less a leper in God's sight than the Jew; and the outward bearing of the Lord's name cannot bring to God without living faith. Nay, to possess externally was and is a great danger for the flesh, which goes asleep under privileges now as Israel did of old.

Oh, listen to His voice, that speaks still from heaven, and assuredly with no less power than to the Jewish leper. Why is the tale recorded so fully if it be not a multiplied witness, that you should believe on Him? Your case is no less desperate than the leper's. But the Saviour and His word are the same for ever if your faith may be as small, your appeal as hesitating, as his was of whom we read. The grace of the Lord Jesus meets faith however little and weak, and acts according to God's glory. May you then hear and live!

2 The Gentile centurion and his servant Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 156-157. Gospel No. 4: 2.) In the first Gospel the leper is set immediately before the Centurion, to mark the grace at hand for the Gentile when the defiled people should reject the Messiah. So the Gospel shows from its beginning to its end. Hence it is that in its account of the Centurion (not in the corresponding narrative of Luke), the Lord declares that many should come from east and west and share the feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whilst the sons of the kingdom, their seed, should be cast forth into, the outer darkness with its unspeakable anguish. In the third Gospel, which has a moral object rather than dispensational, the Holy Spirit led to placing the forgiven paralytic after the healed leper (Luke 5:13-14; Luke 5:18-25): the two striking pictures of sin as needing divine grace to cleanse, and the known remission of sins for power to walk and

serve aright. Here too, the case of the Centurion is given in its actual place, which equally fell in with the scope of the Gospel. The Lord had laid down for His disciples in a large way and wholly above human thought or feeling that blessedness which He know in its perfection which grace calls to and forms. Hence it is no question here of scribes and Pharisees, or of those of old time, He urges the principle of God's kingdom in words which leave the Jew out of sight and instruct the man of God where and when ever he may be. The faith of the Gentile Centurion follows, with a detail of similar propriety. His bondman was dear, yea precious, to him, but sick and about to die. Yet the Centurion did not present himself to the Lord. He came to Him only, as those are said to do themselves what they do by others. He was no heathen; he honoured the Jew, low as they were, because God chose them and entrusted them with His oracles, the scriptures. Therefore did he (a rare thing in a Roman officer) love their nation, as he even built them their synagogue. And so he sent to the Lord elders of that people, who besought Him earnestly on the behalf of one so worthy in their eyes (as rare a thing in a Jewish elder). But when the Lord was not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him, saying, Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy (adequate or qualified) that Thou shouldst come under my roof. The very grace of the Lord, which offered to come and heal the servant, awoke a deeper sense of the Lord and of himself in his heart. This was a morally right feeling in the Centurion toward One Whom he could not but regard as possessed of divine power and title; as the elders were right in their sense of the Gentile's worth and religious feeling. He was in truth a believer. This made him humble as well as reverent. He recognised in Jesus what made himself nothing, yet what encouraged him to lay at His feet his appeal for a dying slave; and this first through Jewish elders, then through friends; for what was he himself to be accounted of? Whereas He, the Lord, has but to say by a word, and his servant shall be healed. He too, a man set under authority, had soldiers under him, and says, to one Go, and he goes, to another Come, and he comes, and to his servant Do this, and he does it. Can we wonder that the gracious Lord wondered? It was faith simple and strong, the fruit of divine grace. The word of God, for this was read and heard in the synagogue, acquainted the Centurion with God's nature and ways, as none of the Jews learnt who listened with no such sense of need but claiming a monopoly of possession. Not even in Israel, the Lord said, had He found so great faith. Those who were sent returned and found the sick man in sound health.

How is it with you who read these words? If not born of God, you are in the evil and darkness of the fall, and all the more guilty because you have heard not the law only, but the gospel from your tenderest years. Yet you have lived as if you were not a lost sinner, as if God were not a Saviour, as if Christ who died for sinners was not ordained Jude of quick and dead, most of all to be dreaded boy those who hear but neglect so great salvation. You are in a worse and more dangerous case than the sick slave of the Centurion. Only the breath of your nostrils severs you from death, the forerunner of the second death, the lake of fire for ever. Oh! weigh the tale written to save — written by the Holy Spirit to save — a slave of sin. Christ speaks in it to you who read or bear. For Him to speak by a word is ample to save the soul that believes. And He has said many words to give you confidence notwithstanding your many sins. He gives healing, life, pardon, peace, and power. He gives all things worthy of God, all needed by man. But beware of doubting beware of deferring. The "convenient time never comes. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. If you put off, beware lest you perish.

3 Peter's mother-in-law Matthew 8:1-34, Mark 1:1-45, Luke 4:1-44.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 166-167. Gospel No. 4-3.)

We have only to compare the first Gospel with the two which follow, in order to learn not only how reliable in them all Scripture is, but the faithful persevering goodness of the Lord to Israel which was Matthew's task. It is Mark, who by his notes of time, "straightway" and others, gives us the surest clue to the historical order of events in His blessed service. With this we can compare the others, and may by grace gather why that order is left for other objects in the mind of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see that with Luke, who describes the Lord morally, there was no motive for departure from it; and so here Mark and he coalesce. But the dispensational design, which He used Matthew to make known, required the change to a much later occasion, and therefore a wholly different connection. Hence all can notice that here are no links of time in his account. Both the others bind their narrative of the miracle with the precious and notable facts of that day in the synagogue of Capernaum. Matthew, because of transplanting the case, says nothing of the kind.

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she arose and ministered unto them" (Matthew 8:14-15).

If the Gentile centurion appealed in faith to that gracious power, which had only to speak the word and healing followed, the Lord in no way turned from Israel. His heart yearned over the favoured but guilty people. And Peter's wife's mother laid down in fever gives us to see it clearly. Here He does enter the house, and touch her hand. Luke tells us that she was seized with a great fever (for the sickness differs much); and adds that they besought Him for her; as Mark, that they told Him of her anon or immediately. This was all seasonable on their part; but He was there ready to cure. So Mark lets us know that He took her by the hand and lifted her up. Nor was it only that the fever left her immediately, but that she was serving them (Mark and Luke) as well as Him (R.V. of Matthew).

Such is the Lord to any sinner's need now. His ear is open to every cry direct or indirect to Himself. He was then healing the sick. He is now delivering men for time and eternity. Why should not you, my reader, appeal for your guilty soul? Is not the soul more than food, as the body is more than clothing? He only is the Saviour of both if you believe the gospel: of the soul now, of the body by-and-by. "Fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." These words are faithful and true. Beware of unbelief; for now is the hour "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Life is in Him, and He gives it to all that believe. "Verily, verily, 1 say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (judgment), but is passed from death into life" (John 5:1-47). But you may plead that Peter's wife's mother had the apostle and more to speak for her to the Lord. This is true; but there is no appeal like the needy one's himself to the Saviour. Search and see if He ever refused one. He declares in John 6:1-71 that "him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Oh, I beseech you, be not faithless but believing. To find Him you need not to ascend the heights where He is, nor to descend where He descended. He is near to every one that calls on Him. Every secret of every heart is bare before His eyes. Doubt not then, but believe. On the evening of the same day He cured Peter's mother-in-law, and so immediately that she was able to serve Him and His followers, He did yet more for others. "And when even was come, they brought unto, Him many possessed with demons, 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 sicknesses" (John 6:16-17). (See Isaiah 53:4). The very aim of that prophetic oracle was to announce that, before He suffered atoningly (which follows in Isaiah 53:5-12), He entered into all that troubled His people even in their bodies, and as we see in the Gospels from Satan's more immediate power. And this He did not in power only but in the tenderest bearing of the burden on His spirit, while He took it away; as it is said elsewhere by the same prophet, "In all their affliction He was afflicted." Here then is more and most ample encouragement for you to bring your need to His feet. If you so come, He will never say you, Nay. Why is all this revealed, but that you may cast your soul on Him now? If you are a great sinner, be assured that He is a greater Saviour.

4 The Paralytic healed Matthew 9:1-38, Mark 2:1-28, Luke 5:1-39.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 182-183. Gospel No. 4: 4.) The new and precious feature which betrays itself at the point in this narrative of Matthew is the growing opposition and hatred of the religious leaders toward the Lord. It is not, as in Matthew 8:1-34, a certain scribe ignorant of himself and self-confident who proposes to follow Him whithersoever He may go. In Matthew 9:1-38 the scribes begin with saying within themselves, This man blasphemeth; and the Pharisees end with their own blasphemy — that it was in virtue of the prince of the demons He was casting out the demons. Through the darkening unbelief the Lord gives His blessed and blessing testimony. The first incident recorded is the cure of the paralytic as He was speaking the word to a crowd at home in His own city — Capernaum. This malady aptly sets forth the effect of sin in destroying power; as leprosy in its unclean taint before God or man. The occasion was the house filled even beyond the door, as Mark tells us; which accounts for the difficulty the four bearers had of getting near. Eastern buildings, however, furnished easy access to the roof; and this they uncovered, and let down the sick man on his pallet through the tiles, as Luke tells us. The Lord saw their faith and says to the paralytic "son" (or "child" rather), "Thy sins be forgiven."

It was indeed a startling word; and so it was meant to be. The Lord laid bare the root of the evil, and dealt with it at once fundamentally. He alone could thus speak. Not even an apostle approaches its force. It was proper to Him Who was alike Jehovah and Son of Man. The men learned in the law were shocked. They unbelievingly reasoned in their hearts to His dishonour; but He, the ordained Judge of quick and dead, read their hearts as He does, those of all, and answered their unuttered and evil reasoning by the question:- "Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (or, authority) on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the paralytic), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go to thy house." And so the man did immediately before them all. And the crowds at least were filled with fear and said, We have seen strange things today.

Let me plead with you who have sins and cannot avoid foreboding of judgment. Why should not you take hold of such words of divine grace? They are for every soul of man that believes. They were not limited to that age or race or land. They are written in the imperishable word of God, for guilty men wherever they be who bear, that they may believe and be saved. Therefore did He come not yet to judge, but to say still, Thy sins are forgiven. Miracles may cease; but the love never fails which forgives sins to every needy sinner that believes. And if Jews reject, it but gives the opportunity to open the door freely to the Gentile, far and wide. Is God of Jews only? Is He not

of Gentiles also? Yea, writes the inspired Hebrew of Hebrews, of Gentiles also. Fear not then, but believe.

"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." This the scribes learned in the law did not believe; for they knew not Him, nor the God Who sent Him. They would not have disputed that God forgive sins. They rebelled against the Lord's exercise of any such authority. He claimed it as Son of man, exercised it on behalf of the paralytic, and gave Him immediate powers to rise take up his couch, and walk, before their eyes, as His disproof of their evil doubts, His witness outwardly of that precious boon. He had overcome Satan for this life and was dividing his spoils. But more: Christ has accomplished redemption since. He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had made purification of sins. Risen from the dead, He has told us that all power (or authority) has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He has vanquished finally; He has borne God's judgment of sin on the cross; He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. Is there not all the more urgent ground for you to believe, and all the deeper encouragement for you to confide? He has sent out His servants expressly into all the world, and told them to preach the gospel or glad tidings to the whole creation. But He solemnly warns that he that disbelieves shall be condemned (or damned).

Oh, deceive not your soul, nor slight the Saviour Who is the Lord of glory. If He humbled Himself to become not only man but a sacrifice to God for sin, is there not the best of all grounds for you to bow, and bless and worship Him, even as the Father Who gave Him? And how many, once unbelievers, have become the most devoted of His servants like Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the great apostle? Be not like the proud scribes or bitter Pharisees, who trusted themselves, rejected Him, and perished everlastingly.

Power to walk aright and glorify God is inseparable from knowing your sins forgiven. Till you believe the gospel, you are as powerless as the paralytic was on his couch. When you have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of your offences, you can enjoy God's love in Christ, His counsels and His ways; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you to walk worthily of Him, and of the calling wherewith you were called. Ability to walk as a Christian follows faith in Christ and His grace in forgiveness. They reverse God's way and Christ's word whose effort is so to walk as to be forgiven. It is all vain, because it is self and unbelief: a flame of their own kindling. And this shall they have of God's hand: they shall lie down in sorrow.

See then that ye look to Him, Who, if He is exalted now, is still the Saviour. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. If you believe not, you will assuredly be judged by Him and lost for ever. So His word declares plainly.

5 The Tempest, and unbelief rebuked Matthew 8:1-34, Mark 4:1-41, Luke 8:1-56.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 197-198. Gospel No. 4: 5.)

Here is another manifestation of divine power and goodness in the Lord Jesus here below. Matthew wished to take it out of its historic place, after the parables of Matthew 13:1-58 were uttered, for that express purpose; or rather the Spirit Who employed him, if one may so say reverently.

"And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And the disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish" (Matthew 8:23-25).

Thus did the gracious Lord test the faith of His followers, that they might confide in His supremacy over all need, His concern for them in all dangers and difficulties. Was not He with them Whom God had sent to save? Was not the Reconciler not only of all believers but of all the universe, in the ship? He, Who was come to lay the basis of the new creation and everlasting glory? If He could not perish Who was here to rescue from everlasting destruction all that look to Him in faith, how weak and unworthy to wrong His love as if He would leave them to perish? Yet appearances were allowed to prove their hearts. The sudden violent squall, the sea raging, the little ship or boat on which they had gone aboard, the waves beating in so that the ship was already filled, the Lord asleep (not on a pillow but the boat-cushion)!

It was assuredly perilous increasingly, with but one ground of confidence: Jesus was there. But this to faith should have been everything; and it would have been, had they looked away from the wind, sea, and all else, to Him. When they woke Him, it was but with the appeal, "Lord, save us: we perish." Even on the resurrection day they were yet more sad and despairing, if not blinded by alarm, because He had bowed to death and suffered on the cross; and He had then to reproach them as senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke. He, despised and rejected of men, had only to speak the word, and the elements least controllable by man obeyed His voice, Who stooped so low in love, yet was their Creator. "And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." But He said also, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith"? Sinner, or saint, what a word of truth to both! No doubt there is a difference immense, between him that believes and the unbeliever, for the one is in the hand of the Father and the Son; the other lies like the whole world in the wicked one. Yet the unbelief which in the latter resists the Holy Spirit fatally, so far as it works, dishonours the Lord and injures the believer; and scripture abounds with proofs of both, that each may respectively be warned. It was certainly fear that prompted the importunate repetition which Luke records (Luke 8:24), "Master, Master, we perish." The disciples soon learnt the vanity of their alarm when he arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; though they to the end of the earthly pilgrimage need to look earnestly to Him, as His love values it, and it is due to His glory. And if a rebuke to unbelief, how strengthening to the heart when we learn afresh His faithful and effectual intervention, whatever the manner of it! But is this nothing to you, who are perishing in sins and unbelief? The Creator of all things did not become a man save to glorify God and to bless man, as blessing could only be thus; and by nothing short of death, the death of the cross. His incarnation was not only to manifest Him in life, solely doing God’s will, as it never had been on earth before, but to suffer for sins in the body God prepared for Him, that sins might be taken away by the all-sufficient sacrifice, and that believers might be sanctified, yea, perfected for ever. For this Hebrews 10:1-39 declares to be the fruit of the Saviour’s work. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. Whatever may be the good things in store for Israel when they repent and look in faith unto their pierced Messiah, the good tidings are now sent by God to any sinner, Jew or Gentile. Oh, take the place of truth, and own to God your sins and ruin, that you may not come into judgment. For His judgment (and the Lord Jesus is the Judge) is holy and righteous, and therefore must be utterly destructive of the guilty. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be

saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). He is the object of faith set before any, and all by God, that whosoever believeth may not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:1-36).

Listen not to the wiles of the devil, who whispers that you are taking away from God's honour by looking to His Son, the Lord Jesus. Not so; for "he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also," and "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:1-29). And this is the reason why "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" that all men might honour Him as the Father (John 5:1-47). Those who believe honour Him now, and have eternal life in Him, and by grace walk accordingly; but all who now dishonour the Son, by refusing His word and disbelieving Him Who sent Him, must be raised to a resurrection of judgment which will compel them to honour Him in the solemn endless day of their everlasting ruin. So He declares Who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Sin no more against God and your own souls; but believe on Him Who by the grace of God tasted death for every one. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus a man, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due times"; and so He is to you now, that you may no longer neglect so great salvation, but believe on Him to the saving of your soul.

6 The Demoniac delivered Matthew 8:1-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:1-56.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 212-213. Gospel No. 4: 6.)

There are two very different forms in which the enemy of God and man works: one which may be called extraordinary; the other far more common. It is thus for evil with the spirit that operates in the sons of disobedience, as the Holy Spirit does for good in children of obedience. The history in which the demoniac plays so conspicuous a part illustrates both. The second Gospel enters into affecting details of the man's hopeless misery, and of the Saviour's gracious power; as the first is more general in the display of a present Jehovah-Messiah, taking notice of a second victim as is usual throughout (Matthew 8:28, Matthew 9:27, Matthew 20:30), the least adequate testimony to Israel. Mark and Luke graphically bring before us the more notable of the demoniacs. When the Saviour was here, it would seem that Satan put forth his malignant power beyond all example. But a stronger than he was here to overcome him, take from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils.

Immediately, on the Lord's quitting the ship from Capernaum to the other side of the lake, there met Him a man with an unclean spirit who had his dwelling in the tombs. None could bind him, not even with chains. Often as he had been bound with fetters and chains, the chains were rent asunder by him and the fetters shattered; and none had strength to subdue him. Continually by night and day in the tombs and in the mountains was he crying and cutting himself with stones. What a depth of unspeakably wretched and appalling degradation! Matthew adds the fierceness and danger to others; Luke, that for a long time he had worn no clothes. The sight of the Lord Jesus even from afar arrested him, so that he ran and paid Him homage, and with a loud voice cried, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not. For the Lord said, Come forth, unclean spirit, out of the man. Nor was this all: He asked him, What is thy name? and got the answer, My name is Legion, for we are many. There is a fact outside human ken, on the evil side of the spiritual world, beyond measure horrible: a man with such a host of evil spirits in him as could justify the well-known name of a Roman battalion, and a man with a personal consciousness, yet also merging his personality in theirs! — Legion, for

we are many! But mighty as a spirit is, and especially when in such multitudinous and tyrannical force of evil, demons have no sceptical hardihood. They believe and shudder (James 2:19). Therefore did they beseech that He would not command them to depart into the abyss; for their sure doom was before their eyes; and they knew that when He reigns, they will be cast there, which they dreaded even now. Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? is the cry in the first Gospel. So, when they begged to enter a great herd of swine feeding on the mountain side, the Lord gave them leave; and the swine, about two thousand, no sooner received the unclean spirits, than they rushed down the steep and were choked in the sea. It was the witness, to all that believe scripture, of the Lord's delivering power on the one hand and of Satan's destructive energy on the other. It is idle here, as everywhere, to confound possession by demons with either lunacy or disease. Either or both might be also, or neither be, and yet that possession of evil spirits. The reality was thus transparent. The effect on the swine made the objective fact undeniably plain, and the suggestion of a physical or mental derangement inexcusably false. Nor does the Lord, to Whom all belongs below as on high, need the apology of man to justify His permission, any more than for the sickness and death, the plague and the famine, the tempest and the earthquake, which He employs providentially in this fallen world. To what purposes of grace does He not turn every one of these inflictions for such as hear His word So doubtless it was then whether Jews or Gentiles owned the swine. And here we face the more ordinary working of Satan's power. For when the swine-herds reported all, the whole city came to meet the Saviour and besought Him to depart out of their borders! They saw the possessed that had the legion sitting, clothed, and sensible; and they were afraid, not of Satan but of the Saviour! The witnesses related what explained all as to the demoniac and the swine; but all the people round about began to beseech Him to depart!

Such is man under Satan's power ever at work, if not so terrific in appearance far more dangerous than the maddening possession in its intensest form; and none is recorded beyond Legion's. Yet his presence never so acted on their fears, as the proof of the Saviour's beneficent power.

O my readers, are you under the same fatal spell? Do you dread to approach the Lord of all, the Saviour for eternity of all who believe? is it Jesus you dread in your soul? Is it from His grace that you shrink back, lest you should be saved now? Consider your most perilous condition. You are slaves of Satan, children of wrath, enemies of God. What must follow as you are? Death, and judgment. So it is laid up for men as they are. Without faith on your part, baptism and the Lord's Supper, blessed as they are to faith, only aggravate your guilt. There is no Saviour but the Lord Jesus, Who, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to those that wait for Him unto salvation (in contrast with judgment, as He died a sacrifice for their sins). Not such was the state of the delivered demoniac, who besought Him that he might be with Him. But becoming as the desire might be, the Lord had work for him to do, before that first love is gratified as it surely will be in due season: "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and showed thee mercy." And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus did for him. And he did right, though all were wondering.

Alas! wonder is not faith. Let it not be your lot to fall short of the demoniac. Delivered from the oppressive power of Satan, he was to bear witness of the gracious power of the Lord, even Jesus, shown to himself. But was it not by the hearing to produce faith in souls exposed to Satan in other

ways? May you be delivered from the snare that would bid the Lord Jesus to depart. The day is fast approaching when He as King shall sit on the throne of His glory, and say to the faithless nations gathered before Him, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

7 The Woman healed and sent away in peace Matthew 9:1-38, Mark 5:1-43, Luke 8:1-56.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 230-231. Gospel No. 4: 7.)

Here we have a living picture of a soul smitten incurably for man, every effort fruitless, all medicine and physicians in vain, her resources spent, herself nothing bettered but rather grown worse. But faith cometh by hearing; and, having heard of Jesus, she came in the crowd behind, and touched His garment, or, as Matthew and Luke say, its hem. Faith is always sure of the Saviour; it may have as feeble knowledge of itself as of Him, but it does not doubt in Whom the virtue lies. Much remains to be learnt and corrected, but it goes straight to its object. For she said, If I but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole. And faith does not fail to receive its answer through grace. Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she knew in her body that she was healed of the scourge. But the Lord knew the whole case better still, and meant for her no half blessing. She did not question His power; she seems to have connected it in her mind with His person and surroundings physically. She must learn that His soul acted with it, that His mind and heart were engaged in the blessing. It was not a charm, as heathenism made it in thought; nor was it even dependent on His bodily presence, as Jews were apt to conclude. He Who had deigned to become the Servant of divine love, in a world where sin reigned and had wrought fell ruin, would show her the kindness of God.

Touching the hem of His garment stealthily, she would, if the case had been left there, have ever felt that it was underhand and surreptitious. She did not as yet know God, though availing herself of Messiah’s healing energy. The Lord could not in His grace consent to so partial a mercy. He is entitled, and He loves, to bless fully all whom He blesses at all; and "him that cometh to Me," said He elsewhere, "I will in no wise cast out." So fully did He come as a servant, that He was here only to do the Father’s will, not His own. Whosoever came, He received. And the full blessing He gave from first to last; He would lose nothing, but raise up at the last day. So even at this day He not only forgives transgression, and covers sin, and imputes no iniquity, but takes guile from the spirit. This the healed woman needed; this the Lord gave. So immediately perceiving in Himself the power from Himself gone forth, He turned round in the crowd and said, Who touched my clothes? The disciples, as so commonly, misunderstood; and Peter, with the rest, talked of the crowds hemming Him with their pressure. But the Lord alone knew in the highest way, that a certain one did touch Him; and He looked about to see who had done this. It was not that He could not have named her, but to give her opportunity to confess the truth. How little she knew the grace that filled Him! For frightened and trembling, conscious of what had been done upon her, she came, and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. How little she knew that such was the condition of her better blessing! And He said to her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go away in peace, and be well of thy scourge. How transporting to her as yet confused and anxious spirit! What solid abiding comfort for her to be thus in His presence, and to have all out before Him, and to know Him more than confirming all she had got, with a message of peace unfailing for all that is to come!

Such is the Lord to every need that is brought to Him; such is He most of all to that deepest need, which demanded not power only but propitiation in His suffering to the uttermost, the death of the cross. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. As He does not change, among human shiftings and men's various and strange doctrines, so neither does His power, nor His love. But to be blessed fully we must meet Him face to face, and know from His own lips grace given to us. It was an immense mercy to have the mischief stayed, the living death arrested; but how much more to hear His voice banishing all fear and sending her forth in peace, as we pass through a world of strife, and spite of a fallen nature which ever tends to pleasures that war in our members!

There may be crowds around the Lord. He is not occupied with them, but passing through. The touch of faith, however uninformed or feeble, arrests Him at once. But a blessing, though immediate and rich, is not enough to satisfy Him. The Blesser will be known, that faith may have a blessing, good measure, pressed down, shaken up, and running over: so does God give, not man. If it is for His glory that all be clear and confessed, it is also the condition of peace by faith. When silence is kept, the bones wax old through roaring all the day long, and the Lord's hand is heavy night as well as day, so that moisture is changed into summer's drought. But peace is known, when one's sin is acknowledged to Him; this cannot be while one's iniquity is hid. "I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So it was, so it is, so it must be, as long as grace brings sinners to God. Nature is all wrong in fearing that the Lord begrudges blessing, and the fullest, and for ever. It is no question of our merits who have but sins and death and wrath as we are naturally. It is His grace that saves; and His grace would have us to know that He makes salvation assured with all His heart.

8 The Daughter of Jairus raised Matthew 9:1-38, Mark 5:1-43, Luke 8:1-56.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 245-246. Gospel No. 4: 8.) A great request was now laid at the feet of Jesus. The petitioner was Jairus ruler of the synagogue. His daughter, a maiden of twelve years, was dying. "But come" said her father, "lay Thy hand upon her: and she shall live." Nor did our meek Master turn a deaf ear, but arose and followed him. The dying maiden was a striking type of the daughter of Zion, for whose sake Messiah was here. And the Jewish ruler expressed his faith in engaging His gracious presence and power to restore his daughter at the last gasp. On the way the woman with a bloody flux for twelve years touched His garment and was healed. And the Lord not only yielded to her deed, but drew her out from her hiding, and sealed her faith and confession with His open approval to her better blessing. It is not otherwise with the Lord now, as we have proved who have gone to Him in out depth of need in this interval, since He came as Messiah to be sought by Israel, and before He reaches the daughter of His people, not sick only but dead. Grace has met us to the uttermost, not merely immediate healing for such as have touched Him on His way, but clearance away of all fear and doubt that we might taste how gracious He is and rest in peace through His word.

Yet this created a delay which must have tried most severely the importunate Jairus. And while the Lord was yet speaking to the healed woman, one comes from the ruler's house saying, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the teacher. But an answer was given to nourish his drooping faith, Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made well. So it will be in the day that hastens. Unbelief will do its deadly work among the mass of the Jews. But the desperate condition of the chosen

people will draw down the action of grace; and faith will, according to God's word, look to Him that loves to heal, and to Him that smote to bind up; and He will in due time raise them up and cause them to live before Him. Whether it be the long and desperately tried woman or the maid of Israel, faith alone enjoys the blessing. And justly so; for faith renounces all dependence on self and honours God and His Son, giving credit for love as great as the power, and Christ's word as unfailing as either. Faith therefore purifies the heart, us well as relieves and assures it.

Here the Lord, when come to the house, suffered none to enter save chosen witnesses, Peter, James, and John, with the father and mother of the maiden, As for all the rest who were weeping and bewailing, He put them out when They derided His saying, "Weep not: she is not dead but sleepeth." They believed their senses, not His word; and the scornful shall not see the blessing. But He took hold of her hand and called, saying, Maiden, arise. Then her spirit returned (for it was gone), and she rose up immediately; and He directed food to be given her. So in due time will the same Lord raise up the people from the valley of dry bones, as the prophets assure us, no matter how many say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. As Jehovah hath spoken, He will perform; and in that day shall it be known through all the earth.

Quickening was no strain on the Lord of glory. It belonged to the Son as to the Father; and now that the Son was here a man to do His will, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, showing Him all things that Himself doeth. Of these none was more characteristic than awakening the dead and quickening them. His dignified calm is remarkable here as on all such occasions. He took the dead child by the hand, and called; and she arose immediately. He graciously thought of her bodily need, which at such a moment even parents might not unnaturally overlook. Truly "He hath done all things well," and as none other; though many another did like works or even greater in His name, which exalts Him as much or more than if He had done them all Himself. And has this tale of the Holy Spirit no bearing on you who read these lines, — dead to God while you live? Nay, it was written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name (John 20:31). How many have heard His voice, since He was here, in the written word! For the hour now is (John 5:25), as the Lord so solemnly avers, that souls hearing Him may not come into judgment but pass out of death into life.

Leave not such an issue uncertain. You might well despair if it turned on you, as men fancy in the pride and impenitence of their hearts. But the life you need is wholly and solely in the Son of God; and God is calling you to believe that Jesus is He, and that He gives eternal life to every believer on Him through His word.

It is "the dead" who are now called to hear: and they that hear, the Saviour assures us, shall live. Clearly they are not dead physically, but in trespasses and sins; and they are called to hear Him and live. For fife is not in the first man whether profane or religious; it is in the Second; and faith by grace receives it. For such a boon, morality is as vain as ordinances. Those that live do live to God, and honour His institutions; but believers guided by God's word and Spirit testify to Christ as their life, and reject every other dependence as a destructive error and a cheat. He is the way, the truth, and the life, as He Himself declared; and so it is in John 5:1-47 with His "verily, verily." Woe is his who despises Him or sets up a rival in His stead. "Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life! It is far better than to be raised to natural life as Jairus' daughter

was, though He Who raised her is the same Who quickens those who believe now, and Israel from the dust of death by-and by. Fear not; only believe.

9 The Healing of the blind in the house Matthew 9:27-31.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 260-261. Gospel No. 4: 9.)

Healing of the blind was a marked work of the divine Messiah. So Isaiah predicted in his earlier announcement (Isaiah 35:5): "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened"; nor was it otherwise in his yet more personal anticipation later (Isaiah 42:7, Isaiah 61:1). So in the synagogue of Nazareth the Messiah applied the last scripture to His own service. "Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Without doubt we are justified in giving the largest scope to the language employed; but the figurative in no way supersedes the literal. Nor was there any act more characteristic of Messiah than giving the blind to see; as the testimony to His Sonship was rendered by, His raising dead men (Romans 1:4), most of all in raising Himself from the grave, after the Jews crucified and slew Him by hand of lawless men. Many a wonder had been wrought in days of old by Moses and Joshua, by Elijah and Elisha, and others; but never do we read of eyes given to a single blind man before His advent; so that the Jews justly regarded it as a special sign of the Anointed of Jehovah. The present miracle is also peculiar to the first Gospel. There are two blind men specified: a fact which made it very suitable to him who was inspired to testify of Jehovah- Messiah to the circumcision. For it was a well established maxim of the law for them to look for at least two witnesses. Hence the mention of the two demoniacs in Matthew's account of the last fact in Matthew 8:1-34; whereas for Mark and Luke it sufficed to dwell on the more striking of the two (Mark 5:1-43, Luke 8:1-56). A similar principle applies also to the two blind whom Matthew shows healed at Jericho (Matthew 20:29-34 : compare Mark 10:1-52 and Luke 18:1-43). As the Lord then was quitting the scene of raising up the Jewish ruler's daughter, two blind men followed him, crying aloud and saying, Have mercy on us Son of David. Even Mark and Luke record the like appeal in their account of a similar miracle at the close. In all cases it strikingly attests that He was owned as the Messiah, pre-eminently that Son of David Who alone could avail those so afflicted. Thus they could with assurance appeal to Him on the ground of plain and positive warrant of scripture:- "Have mercy on us, Son of David."

Even the Jewish leper of Matthew 8:1-34 made no such appeal; still less the centurion, as recorded next. Nor do we find it in the general account of the healed, any more than the particular case of Peter's mother-in-law in the same chapter. The call of those imperilled in the boat during the tempest on the, lake was, "Lord, save us: we perish." When the demoniacs cried out, it was "What have we to do with thee, Son of God?" It was not the paralytic that cried to the Lord (Matthew 9:1-38), but Jesus (seeing their faith) said to him, Child, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven. Even Jairus did not so address Him on Whom he counted for his dying daughter; nor of course did the woman who only approached behind and touched the fringe of His garment. On the other hand in Matthew 15:22-28 we have the converse, so full of instruction in the ways of God. The Canaanitish woman, real as her faith was, failed to receive the answer she sought or indeed any at all because at first she called amiss. The grace of the Son of David to the distressed of His beloved people is a clear and blessed encouragement for a Jew; but what had a Canaanite to expect from Him? When He brings in the power of His kingdom by- and-by, it will not be as it was in the day of His humiliation, and as it had been ever since the entrance of Abram. "The Canaanite

was then in the land" (Genesis 12:6); "the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (Genesis 13:7). Even Judah in the days of Joshua failed to purge his portion of that accursed race: those of the hill country were driven out, but not those of the valley. And so it was for others yet less. But the sad issue to their ruin was that "the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites," etc. (Judges 3:5) When the kingdom by-and-by is in Messiah's hand. "there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts" (Zechariah 14:21). Was it then hopeless for the woman of Canaan? By no means; but He answered her not a word, when she cried substantially as the blind men, On that ground judgment for the Canaanite is predicted rather than mercy; and the disciples had nothing better to say than "Send her away, for she crieth out after us." This the gracious Lord did answer with a word that cheered her tried spirit. "I was not sent (said He) but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Therefore there was an answer to the blind who so cried out, and none for her as yet; for she was not only a Gentile but of a race specially cursed (Genesis 9:25). She drops accordingly a claim of relationship valid for the most wretched of Israel, but wholly void for her, and paid homage, saying, Lord, help me. Then He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. The truth fully burst on her, and she submitted to it. Her faith, already real, threw off its hindrance and became great. She abandons claim, for she had none; she confesses sovereign grace, and receives the blessing at once. She said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then the Lord answered her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. This helps to give the emphasis of the miracle in our chapter. And when the Lord came into the house, the blind came to Him, and He said, Believe ye that I am able to do this? and they say in reply, Yea, Lord. So it was in that day, and so it will be for the people by-and-by. Jehovah will bring the blind with a deeper blindness by a way that they know not. In paths that they know not will He lead them, when He will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight In the day that is coming the blind will look to Jehovah-Jesus that they may see; as we see a little earnest of it in the two who followed into the house, and confessed their faith. How graciously Messiah touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it to you! And their eyes were opened. Has this no echo of comfort and blessing for you, my reader? Granted that you have eyes to see naturally; but your lack is of the deepest. You see not Jesus for your soul, nor believe in Him. If you too are Gentiles, the gospel is expressly sent to you to open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. This is much more and better even than the boon the Messiah gave the blind Israelites. It is the fruit of yet richer grace and of His own unfathomable sufferings. It is what the love of God sends to the poorest of sinners through the redemption that is in Christ. How blessed to see the Son and to believe in Him, and have eternal redemption! May it be your portion now through faith! For this cause is it of faith that it may be according to grace. It is not your righteousness, for then it were of works; it is God's righteousness founded on the redemption of Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe.

10 The early Haul of fishes

Luke 5:1-11.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 278-279. Gospel No. 4: 10.) The Holy Spirit transposes the call of Peter and his companions to a later place than the historical order adhered to by Matthew and Mark, which fell in with His design in their Gospels. But it suited His work by Luke to give previously the Lord's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, His striking procedure in Nazareth on the sabbath day,

His deliverance of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, His healing of Peter's mother-in-law with many more, and His preaching in Galilee. He Who arranged the task for each evangelist knew all the truth, which judges every man, and can be judged by none save at his peril. In beautiful connection with the great work of proclaiming the gospel, we see the Lord standing by the lake of Gennesaret, as the crowd pressed on Him to hear the word of God. Into one of two little vessels there, from which the fishermen had gone and were washing their nets, He entered, and asked Simon (for it was his) to put out a little from the land, and thence He, sitting down, taught the crowds. After that He said to Simon, Put (thou) out into the deep, and let (ye) down your nets for a haul.

What can one conceive to act more powerfully on the mind of Simon and the rest! Sailors, especially fishermen, are apt to trust their own judgment in their craft and to think cheaply of landmen's advice. The circumstances too made any hope naturally forlorn. Master, said Simon (who had already, been led to Jesus and received from Him a name of honour), through a whole night we laboured and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets. And having done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. And their nets were breaking. And they beckoned to their partners in the other ship to come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking. But great as the wonder was and pointing to the Son of man with all things put under His feet down to the fish of the sea, it was small compared to the spiritual power which let the light of God in Christ into Simon's soul. For when he saw it, he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me; for 1 am a sinful man, O Lord. He knew himself as he never did before. God in His grace brought thus near filled him with self-judgment, and he pours out the confession of it at the Lord's feet. He believed already, and before the miracle promptly gave up his own thoughts and his discouraging experience at Christ's word. Then the immediate and amazing answer to his confidence not only awed his soul but searched his conscience thoroughly. It seems like a moral dilemma to say at Jesu's knees, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. It is really what an exercised soul feels on which the light falls with overwhelming power. Nothing farther from one than to depart from the Lord, yet His divine goodness and glory so realised that one feels utterly unworthy to be near Him while clinging to Him. When the work of redemption was done, much more could be enjoyed by the purified conscience and the heart resting on His love known in peace; but for this all had yet to wait. Even now the grace Simon saw in Christ made manifest his sinfulness but filled his heart. The vast take of fish, the bursting nets, the sinking ships, each of which would have commanded Simon's interest at any previous time, were all unheeded. Jesus was all to his soul. Self-importance dwindled, no less than anxiety, and every earthly desire. He fell before One, a Man on earth, Who presented God with a power which delivered from Satan and the effects of sin for soul and body. As He Himself had read at Nazareth the opening of Isaiah 61:1-11 and said, Today is this scripture fulfilled in your ears, so His course demonstrated in an outreaching grace which irritated even then all who would limit divine privilege to themselves. Even then it was clear that preaching the kingdom of God was more momentous in His eyes than the mightiest deeds of power: "therefore am I sent." He received not glory from men; He would by the word bring them into living relationship with God; He would not only lead such as Simon into deeper blessing, but call them from every object and tie on earth to Himself and the activities of His grace.

Depart from Simon! from a sinful man! Why, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. As His grace made God better known, so it discovered Simon to himself, who would soon learn and own that He the Lord Jesus knew him perfectly, yea all things. Yes, the Lord Jesus knew all when He entered Simon's ship, and heard him own His word; and He so revealed Himself to his soul that Simon could not but follow such a Master and Lord. And now He Who spoke the word of power for the miracle says to Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt be catching men. There is a season to everything, a time to fear, and a time not to fear. Nor is this peculiar to Simon. It is for every believer in Christ. Till we know Him by faith we do well to fear. Not to fear before that is impenitence with indifference or presumption. But when grace makes Him known to us, "Fear not" is as truly for us as for him. And so it was for James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. The word addressed to Simon they took for themselves believingly; and they were right. It was written for us, that we might believe and have the blessing with like assurance. Perfect love casts out fear.

All, no doubt, are not called to "be catching men," as Simon was; and eminently was made good in due time this word of the Lord also. But while the Lord still calls and sends to preach the gospel, neither man nor woman that believes ought to hide the word of His grace, but publish His name far and wide, as they have opportunity, and in all earnestness, though decently and in order. Time was, whilst all the apostles lived too, when the scattered faithful went through the world evangelizing the word; and the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 8:1-40, Acts 11:1-30). Let us fear neither for ourselves, if we believe on Him, nor to speak a word in season, His word, to the weary, if they too by grace may hear and live.

11 The Water made wine

John 2:1-11.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 294-295. Gospel No. 4: 11.) This was the beginning of the miracles, or "signs" as they are called in the fourth Gospel, wrought in Cana of Galilee. In it the "Lord Jesus manifested his glory," a glory truly divine. The occasion was a marriage feast, to which He was invited, and His disciples, His mother also being there. How instructive the grace which thus lighted up with love and holiness from above an institution of God that began in the paradise of man, but apt to sink with the fall of man into levity and licence! The law failed to retrieve it; the Lord alone vindicated it according to the mind of God that had been expressed before the law (Genesis 2:1-25; Matthew 19:1-30), The Lord's bearing is a hard thing to those who idolise Mary. It is written for everlasting profit that, when the wine failed, His mother said to Him, They have no wine; and that He replied, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come (John 2:3-4). Assuredly if any infer disrespect from these words, they are in error; but so are those who do not learn that the Son of God solemnly objects to dictation where divine glory was in question. He was sent to do the will of God His Father, not to please His mother, as here in her amiable solicitude for a family with whom she was evidently intimate, and at a time which engaged her feelings in their strait. Christ had already as a youth of twelve years testified to Joseph and Mary, after their anxiety, His consciousness of Sonship in the highest sense; now when emerging into public ministry He remonstrates with Mary, who as evidently now alone remained. Not even His mother must interfere with the glorifying of His Father, by a wish of hers however kindly meant. And Mary understood it, saying to the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. She was still the meek

bond-servant of the Lord, if others blasphemously make her the Queen of heaven and claim falsely the honour due to the Eternal Son. He, not she, is the One pre-eminently to be heard; as the Father's voice proclaimed on the holy mount, This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him. No more unworthy thought of fallen nature than to doubt His grace in Whom all the fulness dwells, or to imagine that He the one Mediator needs her intercession to stimulate or strengthen His love. He is Himself full of grace and truth; and He is able also to save to the uttermost (completely) those that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. On the contrary she is unable, either to save or so to intercede for others, and needed to pray herself, as she was a sinner like others to be saved by faith. So we find in the last record scripture gives of her in Acts 1:14 : "These all [the apostles] with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer with [several] women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." What a contrast with ecclesiastical development in no long time! How soon men turned from him that called them in Christ's grace to a different gospel, which is not another, but perversion!

According to scripture, to hear His word and believe Him that sent Him, is to have eternal life and not to come into judgment, having passed from death into life. And that life is a life of obedience and love, as 1 John 5:1-21 carefully shows. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Practical obedience flows from submission to His person, and proves the reality of the heart-subjection of faith.

Christ's hour was not yet come for going down below all depths to glorify God; still less to be set on high with all things put under Him. He was here to give such witness as might please His Father in all dependence. And a worthy witness followed. For as six stone water-pots stood there according to the purification of the Jews, each holding two or three measures (probably the Jewish Bath), He said, Fill the pots with water. And this was done to the brim; whereupon He bade them, Draw out now and bear to the feast-master. Thus the servants and the feast-master became the irrefutable vouchers of the work Christ wrought; as did the bridegroom, who for the moment reaped the credit of reversing man's way, and, instead of supplying what is worse when men have freely drunk the good wine, of keeping it till the last. But no! It was Christ Who thus made grace to shine; not the first man, but the Second, and this, manifesting His glory, yet never leaving the servant character He had taken, always refusing to allow the honey of humanity in the offering no less than the leaven. If He proved the omniscient to Nathanael, He is here the omnipotent. It was the true transubstantiation of God's word. The water was made wine, and the good wine, as all could see and taste, and bow to the manifestation of His glory. To reject Him is to men's own shame and ruin, who obstinately will not have God or His Son on any terms, even when divine glory veils its splendour with flesh and in lowly grace adapts itself to our every need with power incontestable. Such is the Lord Jesus. He is speaking still to every soul in the gospel. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven.

"The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word that we preach," says the apostle; "because, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To he saved from perdition through faith is not a miracle, sensible outwardly; but it is a greater wonder than the water made wine. It is the wonder of grace, yet of divine righteousness through redemption. And it is a wonder God is showing day by day in all who believe, to the honour of His Son. Oh! refuse not Him that speaketh,

and is near you on the earth, the Son of man now in glory Who came to seek and to save that which was lost, Jesus the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Blessed are all those that put their trust in Him.

12. Nobleman's son healed

John 4:46-54.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 310-311. Gospel No. 4: 12.) The story of our Lord, in His dealings with the Samaritan woman and the town's people that followed, is all the more admirable, because there was no miracle. It was His power in bringing the conscience face to face with its sins before God and in revealing the Father in the Son, the Saviour of the world by His Holy Spirit.

Here we are in presence of our Lord not only giving a blessed sign of gracious power when all else was hopeless, but correcting unbelief in a Jewish courtier, who came to Him in Cana and appealed for his child sick in Capernaum. "When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him and besought him that he would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." It was not surprising that those who only looked on Jesus as the Messiah should connect His power with His actual presence. But one of the great designs of our Gospel is to make known in Him God, the Son eternal, superior to all times and circumstances. When the nobleman then entreated him to go down and heal his son, the Lord laid bare the error that demanded a visible wonder; his condition was as yet little different from the Galileans of whom we read in John 4:45, of whom it is written that they received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast. "Unless ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." This only increased the father's importunity, who says, "Sir, (or Lord,) come down ere my child die." Then comes the word of power, "Go thy way: thy son liveth." The man believed the word that Jesus said to him and went his way. If the Lord did not go with him and lay His hand on the sick child, it was but for better and in a better way. His word was given and believed.

Thus was the blessing wrought, a two-fold one; to the father's soul, and to the son's body. The father believed the word of the Lord Jesus, the son had his fever cured, and the Lord was honoured in both ways. And we readily see how different the case is from the Gentile centurion and his bondman about to die of the palsy. For there the Lord went with the Jewish elders, and was only stopped when not far from the house by friends whom the centurion sent to say, "Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof. Wherefore neither did I count myself worthy to come to thee. But say with a word, and my servant shall be healed." Yes, his was faith of the simplest and strongest character, formed by the sense given him of the Lord's glory. The word of Jesus was ample: He had but to speak, and it was done. Yet some famous men in early days have confounded these two distinct cases. But to a similar point of simple faith was the nobleman now brought as the centurion took himself. "Go: thy son liveth" was received in his heart from the lips of the Lord Jesus. And as he was going down, his bondmen met him, saying, Thy child liveth. He enquired therefore from them the hour when he got better; and their answer was, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. It was clear as light, the immediate unmistakeable action of divine power, not beginning but complete. At that very hour, as the father knew, Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. Here at least it was no form, but a reality without danger of accrediting what might be untrue, and a fact which helps us to understand other statements of like kind. But how is it with you, my reader?

For this is written, like the rest of the Gospel, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye way have life in His name." It was blessed when sickness drove men to Jesus for healing; it is more blessed still when sinners feel their sins before God and look to the Saviour for that deepest need. He is the Life as well as the Resurrection; and He gives life eternal now to every one that believes, as He will raise their bodies at the last day. Undoubtedly the Saviour is now in heaven; but this assuredly detracts nothing from His power or His love. The same Jesus is now exalted on high and shall so borne in like manner, as He was seen to go up into heaven: The more urgent is it that you should neither slight God's call to believe, nor forget the consequence of neglecting so great salvation, for either is to brave the judgment.

If you are looking for a sign or wonder in order to believe, profit by the Lord's gracious correction of one far more to be excused than you who have all the word of God, and the N.T. in particular which leaves no room for such an error. Is it not plain to you that all depends on the Lord Jesus, and that His grace is as great as His glory? When He does not answer a word, it is to draw out self-judgment in faith. When He does not comply with a request, it is to lead by His word into faith of the unseen.

Sometimes souls are discouraged by a harsh rebuke of their feebleness at first. Never does the Lord so deal with any. He corrects in order the more to bless and prove and strengthen. Here we perceive faith growing exceedingly, when the mixture of sight, so natural to a Jew and indeed to flesh and blood, was removed by His word. And next we are told that the whole house was brought under the blessing of living faith: a result by no means unexampled in the ways of the God of all grace, but rare enough at any time, yet, where or when ever it is, full of interest and encouragement to those who would learn of Him, and seek the honour that comes from the only God. With Him you must have to do. If you hear Christ's word and believe Him that sent Him, you receive life eternal and do not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life. If you refuse now, you cannot escape the voice of the Lord, when He summons men to stand before the great white throne, and be judged for works of which you may boast now — but oh! the shame and horror when the truth is out. May the goodness of God lead you without delay to repentance at the feet of Jesus.

05.07. Gospel Words - Fifth Series.

Gospel Words — Fifth Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Sower 2 The Darnel of the field 3 The Mustard seed.

4 The Leaven 5 The Treasure hidden in the field 6 One Pearl of great price

7 The Dragnet 8 The merciless Bondman 9 The Labourers hired 10 The two Children 11 The guilty Husbandmen 12 The Marriage feast

1 The Sower Matthew 13:1-58.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 323-324. Gospel No. 5: 1.) In Matthew 12:1-50 the Lord had pronounced solemnly on the Jews. They had spoken against the Son of man, and there was forgiveness for it; but they were hurrying into that blasphemy against the Spirit which admits of no forgiveness. No sign should be given but that of Jonah the prophet — the death and resurrection of the Son of man. That evil generation must have its last state worse than the first. And thereon the Lord formally disowns His relationship natural, stretching His hand toward His disciples and saying, "Behold, my mother and my brethren!" — only such as do the will of His Father that is in heaven.

Accordingly in the first parable of Matthew 13:1-58 the Lord addresses the multitudes which from the beach heard Him in the boat, and presents Himself as a sower. "Behold, the sower went forth to sow and as he sowed, some [seed] fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they had not much earth; and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was risen, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell upon the thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them. And others fell upon the good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:3-9), The Lord could not, did not, forego the rights of God, as later He made known in the parable of the Householder, and of Himself, the Son and Heir sent to receive the fruits (Matthew 21:33-41). But, well knowing the sad issue, He was come for the deeper purposes of grace, whatever be man’s evil and rebellion. He is "the sower" who "went forth to sow." He begins a new work on God’s part, though man cannot escape the responsibility of receiving and rejecting the seed sown, "the word of the kingdom."

Alas! man is indisposed, sinful man, to receive the word that grace sends through Emmanuel, God’s Son yet Man in the humiliation of love. And we have light unequalled given by His words; for "never man spake like this Man," His enemies themselves being witnesses. He explains the various cases of human unbelief with a simplicity and depth all His own. The wayside hearers are those who receive nothing from God. The wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart. Unless the conscience is reached and sin is judged before God, there is no quickening. The man that only hears abides in unremoved death; he is not born anew; he cannot

see or enter the kingdom. The seed, instead of taking root, is devoured by the birds, that is, the enemy. In the second case appearances were better. The seed fell in stony places and forthwith sprang up, where there was little earth. It was but a work in man's nature. And as hasty feeling received the word and it had no root, so when trouble or persecution arose because of the word, they as quickly shirked suffering. When the sun was risen, they were scorched, and withered away. A divine work is laid in the conscience, and life abides. Here all was superficial and evanescent. The third case looks at first rather more promising, the seed that fell among thorns. But the thorns grew up to their ruin. Here the bad result was slower; for though the word was heard, the anxiety of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choked the word, so that fruit could not be.

It is remarkable that in these instances the word is not "understood." For there is no true spiritual understanding of the word without the work of God, without life; or, as the third Gospel puts it, without believing and being saved. How is it with you, dear reader? Have you so learnt and judged yourself that you listen to Him assured there is only death within? Are you no less sure that life for you or any is solely in Christ? that it is in no institution, still less in the church? Do you know by faith that life is in Christ for every soul that believes in Him? So God declares in His word. This fallen man resists and resents. His confidence is in his own powers, or in something or some one like himself, not God's grace; for, having an evil conscience, he distrusts God.

Christ came on an errand of infinite love from God. In Him man if he had not been blind would have seen what he should have been toward God, and what God is toward man. Christ was the wholly dependent and the unfailingly obedient man; but God was also in Him reconciling the world to Himself, the perfect expression of divine love to the guilty and miserable. But man would have neither: his unrighteousness hated true righteousness; and his enmity to God hated the love that came to save and bless him. As He said Himself, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other hath done, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [it is] that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause" (John 15:22-25). As this is absolutely true, so is man evidently lost. But God declares the truth that He may repent and believe the gospel. It is by the word of truth that we are begotten of God. And this shows itself from the first in our receiving the word, which reveals how evil we are before God, and how good He is to us in giving His own Son to die for the ungodly. Thus it is God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Such is God's righteousness for the unjust, God's salvation for the lost, as He makes known in the gospel to every one that believes. So here the beginning of our goodness is in the real owning of our badness, and yet believing God's grace to us in Christ. Here, when the seed is received, it is "into the good ground." The souls hear and understand and bear fruit, one a hundredfold, one sixty, one thirty. For among believers there are differences. When the eye is single, all is bright and blessed; but flesh and the world hinder, so far as they are allowed; and all therefore do not bear fully.

2 The Darnel of the field Matthew 13:24-30.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 339-340. Gospel No. 5-2.) For the due understanding of this parable, observe that it is the first in which the kingdom of the heavens is likened to this or that. The opening parable of the seven contained in the chapter is of such a comparison; it presents the Lord as Sower before that kingdom was set up. The other six suppose its establishment; not in manifested power and glory according to O. and N.T. prophecy, but in mystery, as here made known by our Lord, rejected by men and exalted by God on high, unseen but none the less real and glorious, affording scope for faith no less than unbelief as being a day of profession. It is Christ's ascension which gives occasion to the kingdom of the heavens here revealed to faith and assuming a character of grace in keeping with His rejection.

We have the Lord's own interpretation that "He that soweth the good seed is the, Son of man" (Matthew 13:36). This it was of moment to explain; because His heavenly position might, have seemed incompatible with such activity of grace. There ought to be no doubt that He was the sower before He took His seat on high as in the first parable. Whatever the means or instruments employed, He it is that is still sowing good seed in His field. And as He says, "The field is the world." As He is the rejected but glorified Son of man, it is no longer the land of Israel, but the world. The needy, the guilty, the ruined world is precisely the object of His gracious care. Among the lost sheep of the house of Israel He had laboured in the flesh, and in vain (Isaiah 49:1-26) for the mass, who refused and hounded Him to the cross. Now from the right hand of power He sowed the good seed in His field, the world. Nothing less was suited to His glorious plans, any more than His love. Undoubtedly He will another day bring Jacob again to Him in sovereign mercy; but meanwhile He is given for a light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the end of the earth. "The field is the world."

O my readers, hear His voice, that you receiving His word, now sent to any and to all, may be sons of the kingdom. Even before the kingdom of the heavens was set up, our Lord said (Matthew 13:9), "He that hath ears, let him hear." So He says still at the end of His interpretation of this first likeness of the kingdom (Matthew 13:43). It is not the law laid down to an ordered people on penalty of death. It is the word, wherever received in faith, to produce fruit. The great principle the Lord introduced when here is individual responsibility. This He reiterates from on high. The kingdom when set up in no way enfeebles it, as we thus learn. And though the church, as we know from elsewhere, brought in communion of saints, common subjection, and common action, yet never does God sanction the giving up of individual responsibility. The presence of the Spirit gives power to the word for conscience and heart to conciliate what self-will under Satan ever seeks to dislocate.

Christ is life, and righteousness, and salvation. If you believe on Him, these are yours in Him; and they are found not otherwise nor elsewhere. Man cannot quicken, nor a minister, nor yet the church. Christ is all: so scripture testifies; and if you receive Him on God's word, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, Who glorifies Him. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are admirable and abiding institutions; but they are perverted to poison when put in the place of Christ and of faith in Him. Hence it is the word for individual reception. If you reject Christ and receive not His saying, you cannot escape One that judges you: the word the Lord Jesus spoke, that shall judge at the last day. Oh! neglect not so great salvation, nor His authority. And the danger is the greater, because Christ's enemy, while men slept, came and sowed darnel also among the wheat. Indistinguishable at first, they became manifestly different ere long. For the darnel are the sons of wicked ones.

They are found all over the field, the world of Christian profession. Such is Christendom, to speak of nothing worse, and there were soon greater abominations from early days too. But these are bad enough and prepare for every evil from beneath. The darnel are the heterodox and the lawless among the baptised.

Yet this does not make the field to be the church but the world, save in their eyes who understand neither, and are so deceived as to confound them. Hence we may see that, when the Lord forbade His servants from uprooting the darnel, He in no way denies in the church the discipline which the Holy Spirit demands (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). It is the extermination of the wicked professors He prohibits under His figure of gathering up the darnel from the field. And experience falls in with this. Disobedient servants of His have rooted out the good seed, oh! how often, under the plea of getting rid of the darnel. Grace is to reign now. "Let both grow together until the harvest," saith the Lord Who will then send forth the executors of judgment. The season for harvest will be a marked change: a different work with different workmen. The reapers are quite another class, His angels, whose business is to gather up first the darnel, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but the wheat are gathered into Christ's barn above. It is a vain dream that the world is to improve under the action of the gospel or the church. On the contrary the normal state of the wheat-field was spoiled as a fact from early days; and the servants are forbidden to employ their ineffectual efforts to efface the evil, which must go on till the consummation of the age. Then shall the Son of man intervene with His angels. Revival or reformation can in no way abolish the mischief the devil wrought while men slept, as they quickly did. God secures His own work by grace all through: the good will surely be gathered into the heavenly granary in due time. But the field was soon spoiled through man's lack of care and Satan's craft; and this cannot be adequately dealt with till the Lord come in judgment of the quick.

Look and listen then to Him now. Receive Him at God's word to life eternal. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and there is no other; that you who live may henceforth live not to yourselves but to Him Who for you died and was raised. Thus may you await His coming not only in peace but with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3 The Mustard seed.

Matthew 13:31-32.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 355-356. Gospel No. 5: 3.)

It is well to understand that "the kingdom of the heavens" does not mean heaven itself but its reign over the earth while the King rejected by man is seated on high. The six later parables present successive comparisons of that kingdom in its chief characteristics: three are its public aspect, and so, like the first, were addressed without to the great multitudes; the three last, like the explanation of the first similitude, or Parable of the Darnel, were spoken in the house only to the disciples, as dealing with what needed spiritual intelligence.

Another distinction is obvious. The Parable of the Mustard Seed, like that of the Leaven, shows what the kingdom is like, in marked difference from its predecessor, as it becomes more apparent still in its successor.

"The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard which a man took and sowed in his field; which is less than all the seeds, but, when it hath grown, is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches" (Matthew 13:31-32).

Here the Lord gives us to see the least and lowliest beginning of Christian profession growing to be a power in the earth. In Luke 17:6, He employs the same figure of a grain of mustard; as indeed it was a proverbial expression for what is diminutive. But the grain soon shot up so as to leave the pot-herbs behind, and afford shelter to the birds it notoriously attracts. So it was to be, so it has long been, with that which bears His name here below. The Lord marks beforehand the surprising contrast between the extreme littleness of its first estate when sown, and the height to which it was ere long to advance. He is not here pronouncing on its inner or moral nature. He shows from the first what all the world can see when it came to pass. It is one of "the mysteries (or secrets) of the kingdom of the heavens," but secrets given for the disciples to know. And the Lord here sets out the fact, in due time palpable to all mankind, that what began the most minute was to develop into a conspicuous and protective power on the earth, according to the well known figure of a nation or political system in Isa. 11: 33, 34; Ezekiel 31:1-18; Daniel 4:1-37, etc.

Now this was no mystery for Israel any more than for the Gentile powers. It was expressly allotted to the ancient people of God, as we read in the Psalms and the Prophets. So in the days of depression when captivity befell "the rebellious house," God made use of a tree to illustrate His ways with them, and their ways before Him which drew out His sternest chastening. But He adopted the same figure to assure the believing heart that in His mercy all will be reversed in the day to come, and that He will plant the tender twig on a mountain high and eminent, even the height of Israel. "And it shall bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I Jehovah have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I Jehovah have spoken and will do it" (Ezekiel 17:1-24). It is all of His mercy; but how could the result in this case be otherwise? For Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously.

Wholly different was to be the proper portion of the Christian on earth. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth . . . Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are ye when they shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you" (Matthew 5:3-12). Even those whom God set first in the church were expressly charged by our Lord against power and glory of an earthly sort. "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among; you. But whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you, let him be your slave: even as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

Thus the Lord lets us know in this parable that, in the face of His revealed will, Christendom would soon manifest a portentous change, and from its primitively low estate vie with the powers of the

world in earthly grandeur and influence. We are called now to walk apart from the world, its power and its glitter, content to be hated as our Master was (John 15:1-27), cherishing also the secret of God's grace and the relationships it gives us, and suffering with Christ meanwhile. "But if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may he also glorified with Him" (Romans 8:1-39). "Faithful is the saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Timothy 2:11-12). Now is the time for us to have tribulation in the world, till He come to take us to the Father's house, and we be manifested also with Him in glory when He is manifested. The day of glory with Christ will make ample amends. But how is it with you, dear reader? Is Christ the object of your faith? If so, it is well indeed with you now and evermore. If He is nothing to you beyond any other whom men discuss, notwithstanding God's testimony to Him, it were better for you that you had not been born. Refusing God's light and love in Him Who went down below all depths for sinners, you cannot escape the judgment which He will execute on all the impenitent and unbelieving, that despise Him and the saving grace of God in Him. Before that everlasting judgment there shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and mighty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low. Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. Meanwhile God commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent. Oh, that His goodness may lead you to repentance! The time is short: delay not. Your sins are many and great. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from every sin: nothing else can.

4 The Leaven

Matthew 13:33.

(B.T. Vol. 20, p. 373-374. Gospel No. 5: 4.) The Lord Jesus here pronounces the fourth parable of the seven, the third likeness of the kingdom in these mysteries.

"Another parable spake he unto them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was wholly leavened" (Matthew 13:33).

Individuals are not the question here any more than in the two that precede, especially in that of the mustard seed which is most akin as the structure marks. Individuals had their place in the opening parable, and, hearing, were born again, and were each fruit produced by the seed. If received into good ground, there was life and fruit; if not, the word of the kingdom had no vital effect. But in the parables that follow before the multitude, we have successive states which characterise the kingdom while Christ is hidden on high. The first is the ruin of the harvest here below by the mixture, while men slept, of darnel with the wheat; which mixture must be left for the returning King to deal with at the end of the age. The second is the portentous rise of what was planted an exceeding small thing; but it grew into an earthly power of attractive pretensions. Neither of these clearly has to do with the individual, but, as it suits "the kingdom," with the state of things, and each in its due sequence.

What then signifies "the leaven"? Does the bearing of it revert to the opening parable and its appeal to individuals? Does it not rather continue the line of the comparisons of the kingdom? Surely the latter only, setting forth the assimilating effect of a doctrine, or creed, over a certain measured sphere till it was wholly permeated. This very distinctly differs from seed with a principle of life that bears fruit, a suited and frequent figure in scripture. Never is leaven so employed

elsewhere. From earliest days it symbolised a corruption that tended to work and spread, as in the Passover, authoritatively applied in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 to evil which must be purged out, By our Lord it was used to set forth the teaching of Pharisees and Sadducces, of which the disciples were to beware. Compare Galatians 5:9 for doctrine, as 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 for immorality. In no case then does scripture warrant leaven as a figure of quickening, in no case identify it with the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit which God shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Living water is as different as can be from leavening; which, being a process of fermentation, causes dough to rise find makes it pleasanter to the natural taste. If Christ be in Levitical language the unleavened bread the redeemed eat, leaven has its appropriate use in the two wave-loaves which represent the Pentecostal first fruits; for the regenerate have still evil in their nature. Hence the sin offering which always accompanied the wave-loaves; whereas for the wavesheaf, figuring Christ risen, as there was no leaven of course, so no sin offering could be thought of. The same principle explains the leavened bread alone with the sacrifice of peace offerings for thanksgiving. Where fallen nature enters, so does leaven ; whatever the promises of grace, God takes account of it. But quickening is the direct energy of Christ, Who is life acting by the word of faith.

Hence, the best, that can scripturally be said of leaven is of doctrine working among men, as here in three measures of meal till it was wholly leavened. The kingdom was not only from the humblest beginning to become a towering power on the earth, like any worldly state, with its elevation coveted by those that found shelter there. It was also to penetrate men’s minds within a definite sphere, forming and fashioning them according to the teaching presented. What the spiritual character of that doctrine might be is hardly within the scope of what is said before the crowds. And we know that what spread over a large part of the shattered Roman empire and beyond, after the Christian profession rose up to worldly power and influence, was a mere creed, and by no means God’s gospel for faith obedience: an idolising of the sacraments and of the crucifix, and a setting up, if not of gods, yet of mediators to the dishonour of the One; not the word of the cross as His power to those that are saved. It was no longer God choosing the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, or the weak to shame the strong, but the wise, mighty, and noble choosing the symbol of Christendom as the object of visible homage, and even the means of advantage or ambition. Such was the work of the "woman." The Lord had long been in the back ground. My reader, see that you be not deceived nor deceive yourself. The unseen enemy has boundless and subtle wiles; and you are exposed, but ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Christ only can avail your soul for salvation. And He is as acceptable, as He is unfailing, Other foundation can none lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. It is not when we become strong or godly; but just as we are that He saves and to the uttermost: while we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Only hearken to God’s call. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

5 The Treasure hidden in the field

Matthew 13:14.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 7-8. Gospel No. 5-5.)

Here the importance of the Lord’s speaking to the disciples in the house is manifest. He began with explaining the parable of the Darnel of the field. They are not exterior facts of the kingdom like

those said without to the crowds, but spiritual views for His followers only. If those spoken openly have been misinterpreted through the natural mind, the later are yet more exposed to it.

"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and for the joy of it goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field" (Matthew 13:44). The gospel or the soul's salvation is by no means what this parable or the next presents, though often so interpreted. In reality, one can hardly conceive any thing more opposite. For the gospel is the revelation of God's grace in Christ; salvation is a free gift, like eternal life. It is in no way true that the man, who has it brought before him, sells all that he has to purchase that treasure; still less does he buy the field, which is certainly something else very different, to acquire the salvation of his soul.

Never since the world began has any soul been led by the Spirit to sell all that he had to buy life or pardon, salvation or glory. And if any have sought in this fashion to be delivered from evil or to gain God's favour, we may be sure that their suit was rejected; for it is an ignoring of guilt and ruin, a frustrating of God's grace, and a making void in effect Christ's death. On the other hand it is allowed fully that, in those that are Christ's and have Him as their portion, there may be and there ought to be a like devotedness to any extent in our measure. But this is a very different thing, and not what the parable teaches.

It is overlooked that the soul's need and blessing we have had already in the opening parable of the Sower, as it is indeed a personal question, antecedent to the mysteries of the kingdom, and carefully presented as distinct, before any likeness of the kingdom begins. Those likenesses bring out larger considerations, whether outside or within. And the Lord is the "man" here, as nobody can doubt in His field of wheat spoilt by the darnel (Matthew 13:24).

Thus read, all flows without jar and in accordance with all truth. It is the Son of God incarnate Who is compared to one who found and hid the treasure in the field. And, in this aspect, "the field" retains its significance as "the world," instead of being twisted into "the scriptures," or "the letter" or "the Christian profession"; it is "the world" where Christ found His own, who constitute His "treasure." The meaning is then not only enforced by but agreeable to the rest of God's word. And the Lord's consequent action is no less in harmony. For what can be more certain than that He emptied Himself to become man, and, when found in that fashion, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death-even death of the cross? Nay, we may press the analogy closer still from the known facts of the case. He was as Messiah heir of David's throne, but gave up all in His death, which purchased the world and redeemed His own who were in it. Even His enemies, who blaspheme and deny Him Who bought them (2 Peter 2:1), are His purchase. But His own have also in Him redemption through His blood. So plain is it that purchase and redemption are not the same, nor equally extensive. For clearly the purchase is not of the treasure only but of the field (or world) wherein the treasure was hid. Redemption is not thus universal but belongs only to those that believe, as all scripture teaches and this parable illustrates. Christ has paid (to say the least) the full price, to reconcile "all things, whether the things on earth or the things in the heavens" (Colossians 1:20); and the day is near, when God will head up the universe in Him (Ephesians 1:10), the Heir of all things, at His coming. Christ bought the world, but His joy is in the "treasure" which is to be with Him and like Him in that day.

How then do you stand as to Him? To be bought, as is the field of the world, is only the more. terrible if you deny Him. And all that call not on Him, all that neglect so great salvation, do deny Him, though they may not break into heresies of perdition. You are summoned by God in His word to believe on Him. So believing you shall have mercy: for it is written that whosoever does believe on Him shall not be ashamed. All who reject Him, high or low, poor or rich, must bear their doom to endless shame and woe, Oh, why sin against God and His Christ and your own soul? Why regard lying vanities, whatever they may be, and forsake your own mercy?

Christ, the world-rejected Lamb, is worthy, and He has brought to your door redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Is not this your deep need whoever and whatever you are? In none other is remission; in Him it is as perfect as Himself. Oh, delay not, nor turn away. It is yielding to His enemy and yours, to the liar and murderer from the beginning. Consider too how your unbelief insults God in all the ways of His grace. "As though God did beseech through us, we pray (says the apostle) on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Unbelief directly dishonours the Father Who sent, and the Son Who in love deigned to be sent. And the Holy Spirit is sent down since Christ's ascension to testify of His Person and work and glory. Oh! beware of doing despite to the Spirit of grace. For we know Him that said, Vengeance belongeth to Me: I will recompense.

6 One Pearl of great price Matthew 13:45-46.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 23-24. Gospel No. 5-6.) As the leaven followed suitably the mustard seed in the parables spoken without, so does the pearl duly come after the treasure in those within, the house. None of these conveys what was shown in the parable of the sower before the likeness of the kingdom. In that first parable did the Lord set out the word as the germ of life and spiritual understanding to the believer. The comparisons of the kingdom of the heavens, external and internal, present subsequent truths and larger considerations; whether of the outward course of the dispensation while the rejected Lord is on high; or of its spiritual aspects for the guidance and enjoyment of the faithful who have the mind of Christ.

After the Lord explained within the house the parable of the darnel to his disciples, the latter class opened, as we have seen, with the treasure. Now is given the far more precise instruction of the "one pearl."

This, which is evidently true as a sketch, helps to save the reader from serious misconception of the particulars. From early times men, having lost the fresh fulness of grace in the gospel, began to bend scripture generally to meet the first need of the soul. Hence the mustard seed was diverted by many to teach the work of grace in the heart from its small beginning, as the leaven was supposed to mean the gradual work of sanctification to bring about a universal change. Even the parables within the house are turned to the same account, only employing great things, instead of small, to show in the treasure the value of what we should make our own, and in the pearl the dream doubled to make it certain. No believer doubts that the Lord Jesus is the richest of treasures, and the jewel above all price. But as the general structure and the bearing of the discourse point to a different aim, so the special forms of these similitudes are inconsistent with the assumption that the work of divine grace in the heart is intended. How plainly untenable it would be to suppose a sinful or even an exercised soul selling all he has to buy the world! in order to possess the treasure said to be hidden there. Nor can any deny the truth that Christ in His joy

over the treasure did, as He alone could, buy the world. in order to have the treasure of a people out of the earth for heaven. A late dignitary, who treated the parables in a very interesting way, thought this interpretation "strangely reverses the whole matter." What matters overturning an error however old, if we can only receive and enter into the truth with simplicity? The fact is that spiritual men have long felt the inadequacy of popular views. The word of the Lord abides. Be this our criterion. "Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a man of merchandise seeking goodly pearls; and having found one pearl of great value, he went and sold all whatever he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46). Now is it not harsh in the extreme to infer that lost sinners are compared to a man inquest of goodly pearls? It is untrue even of the uncommon case of the rich young ruler, irreproachable as his conduct was, who clung to his wealth, and forfeited treasure in heaven, and left Christ full of sorrow. He never knew his ruin and did not even seek to he saved. And never was a greater mistake than that Saul of Tarsus answers to the merchant, "determinate, discriminate, unremitting." He was, as he said, "chief of sinners" and, like every other, saved in sovereign grace.

It is Christ then Who really seeks and buys. It is Christ Who alone has also the perfect discernment of the moral beauty He saw and prized above all. Indisputably He alone of men understood and sought goodly pearls; and this one pearl of great price He saw, in divine counsels, to be saints like Himself holy and blameless in love — yea, one with Him, the church glorious, which He will present to Himself, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. He alone was in Himself perfectly what the saints are in divine purpose to be; and shall be in fact at His coming again, as in principle they are even now.

He that is in Christ is exhorted, as he has life in Him, to have in himself the moral mind which was in Christ Jesus, to obey and serve in love as He did absolutely, to count all things loss and dung that he may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God on the condition of faith. But the parable sets forth what is the ground and pattern and spring of all such effects in the Christian, in the Lord’s own love to saints seen as the reflection of His own beauty, the one inestimable pearl, for which He sold all else, glory on high, kingdom below, all whatever He had, to buy that pearl. It might be, it was, in the depths, submerged in what was lowest and vilest; but He saw the end from the beginning, He discerned what grace would effect, loved us and gave Himself for us, as He will have therein the object of His love and rest in His love on high.

O my friend that reads these words, flatter not human nature, nor your own character. In an ungodly family you may have been shocked with the horror of open evil, and have walked morally; in a godly one you may have been guarded from corruption and trained in religious habits. Yet it strangely reverses, not the point of this parable only, but the whole force of revealed truth, and of the gospel particularly, if you compare yourself in your natural state to a merchant in quest of goodly pearls, still more if you credit yourself with such devotion, in your unconverted days, as would give up all you have to win Christ. Since man was created on the earth, never was such an instance; and if it had been, how could it avail for a sinner without new birth or redemption? The same apostle, who tells us this was his experience as a saint, condemns all he had been previously (though more moral and religious than you) as filth. He also proclaims from God of the entire race, that there is not a righteous person, not even one, that none understands, that not one seeks after God, that peace’s way is unknown, and no fear of God is before their eyes. He further

declares that it was not merely so among the Gentiles, but that the law expressly pronounces this sentence on those under the law, spite of all their privileges. Now the gospel is sent to all as equally lost. For, says he, there is no difference; for all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Hence God justifies freely though the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood. The very object is to cut off boasting of self in every form, that no flesh should boast before God. He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

7 The Dragnet Matthew 13:47-50.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 37-39. Gospel No. 5: 7.) The last similitude of the chapter is the counterpart of the first; for as this is the sowing of the good seed in the world, where the harvest is spoilt by the enemy's darnel, so that is the judicial dealing with the bad fish after the good had been gathered into vessels before the consummation of the age.

"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet cast into the sea and having brought together of every sort; which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach, and, sitting down, gathered the good into the vessels and cast the worthless out. Thus shall it be in the consummation of the age: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from amidst the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47-50).

Here again we have what was meant, not for the multitude, but for those who had ears to hear. The Lord speaks to the disciples only in the house. It is for the spiritual mind.

We may notice here as elsewhere how carefully the truth was communicated, so as not to impair the Christian hope. The Jew has had times and seasons set out and discriminated to guard him from being deceived by the cry, The time is at hand. Now that the Christ was rejected of Jew and Gentile, the unequalled tribulation must be before the times of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah and His Christ. But for the Christian it is of all moment not to confound the proper hope with prophecy, but to wait for the Lord to receive us to Himself precisely as the early saints did. Whatever events are revealed, and they are many, varied, and momentous before the day of the Lord, His coming remains immediately before the heart without any predicted events to intervene. In fact, we now know that many centuries have transpired; but from the parables here and elsewhere we should never have gathered such an interval as might hinder constant looking for Christ. We could not from the letter have gleaned, but that the fishermen, who first cast into the sea the dragnet, at length filled out of every sort, were the same that drew it up on the beach, and sitting down gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless outside. He Who knew the end from the beginning had all before Him but disclosed with a wisdom self-evidently divine. Mistake there was none: only the rashness or ill-will of unbelief can say so. If taught of God, we wait for the Lord Jesus now, as the apostles did. Our hope, as our faith, is the same. All hangs on His word, which can fail no more than His love. And those who have fallen asleep have in no way missed their hope; for it remains true as ever, that the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain to the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those that are fallen asleep, but shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18). The parable does mark in the first place the fishermen completing their work of filling the dragnet from every kind, and drawing it ashore; next, sitting down and sorting the good fish into vessels, while they cast away those unfit for food. This was the fishermen's work of delicate discrimination; and the more striking as the servants were forbidden

in the first similitude to gather the darnel. To deal with the wicked is in both parables assigned to the angels. They are, as the interpretation goes on to say (not only explaining, but adding), to come forth and sever the wicked from amidst the righteous. This is another truth, which must not be confounded with the fishermen's work of gathering the good into vessels. Both are true, but they differ in their nature and objects. We, the servants or fishermen, have to do with the good; the angels will execute judgment on the wicked. The Christian is called to the work of grace. So it was even among the Jews of old. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth," said Jehovah to Jeremiah: not the vile from the precious, but the precious from the vile.

How is it with you, dear reader? To be within the dragnet is no security. Are you Christ's? He Himself welcomes the anxious and the restless and the wretched and the despairing. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yea, He declares, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." And He deigns to give the most lowly and gracious reason: "For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And His will that sent Jesus is, "that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him shall have life eternal; and 1 will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:37-40).

What more do you want to win your hearts than these words, if you believe the Lord? To honour Him is to honour the Father, Who refuses to be honoured otherwise. And no wonder; for to Him it is that His God and Father is indebted for His glorification morally in a world which had departed from Him, and done Him foul wrong, not only among Gentiles, vain and dark and proud, but in His own people guiltier and prouder still. Then and there it was that the Lord Jesus vindicated Him, not only in emptying Himself and becoming man, but in humbling Himself when man and being obedient unto death — yea, death of the cross. There it was also God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Then it was He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree that we being dead to sins should live to righteousness.

Fear not therefore to receive the Lord Jesus at God's word, as your quittance from all that you have done and are, and as your new start; for He Who died is risen, the giver of a life in Him, which speaks to you of victory, and is the pledge of holiness. Fear not: only believe.

8 The merciless Bondman Matthew 18:23-35.

Gospel Words, 5th Series. No. 8. The grace which forgives to the uttermost is characteristic of Christianity. Christ Himself bore witness of it habitually, and expressly to the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. It is the prime message of the gospel; and the church assumes it to be settled for the least member of Christ's body.

Peter suggested what he regarded as a perfect limit of forgiveness, and enquired whether seven times satisfied; the Lord answered, Until seventy times seven. Grace declines a stipulated term and demands the widest margin; but the parable indicates solemnly the doom of him who has no heart for it. Whatever the man pretended to, the only true God, the Father, was unknown, and Jesus Christ Whom He did send: life eternal was not his.

"For this the kingdom of the heavens is likened to a king who would make a reckoning with his bondmen. And when he began to reckon, one debtor for ten thousand talents was brought to him. But as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and the children and all that he had, and payment to be made. The bondman then falling down did him homage, saying,

Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay all. And the lord of the bondman, moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. But that bondman, on going out, found one of his fellow-bondmen who owed him a hundred denarii, and having laid hold he was grasping his throat saying, Pay what thou owest. His fellow-bondman then, falling at his feet, besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay what was owing. But his fellow-bondmen, having seen what was being done, were greatly grieved, and went and fully explained to their lord all that was done. Then his lord, having summoned him, saith to him, Wicked bondman, all that debt I forgave thee, since thou didst beseech me: oughtedst not thou also to have pitied thy fellow-bondman, as I also pitied thee? And his lord, in wrath, delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was owing to him. Thus also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if ye forgive not from your hearts each his brother" (Matthew 18:23-35). But one debtor is specified, and his debt enormous. Even if of silver, Haman offered no more in lieu of destroying the entire Jewish people. Not less guilty is the sinner before God. No wonder he "was brought to Him": of himself he would never come. All depends on the reality of one's submission to God's righteousness. If he be not born of God, it is superficial. Profession may have no root of faith, but spring from the mere feeling of terror on the one hand or of sympathy on the other. It may be but creedism or deference to public opinion. It is often mental apprehension. In all such cases there is no thorough self-judgment, no divinely formed repentance, and hence no true sense of the grace of God, nor real appreciation of Christ and His work, whereby faith knows. But the sentence of judgment (for God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of them that hold the truth in unrighteousness) may alarm souls into the profession of the Lord's name apart from living faith. So it was when our Lord preached; as He warned such as quickly received the word with joy, and soon gave it up in trial. So it was yet more, when the gospel went out in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. A single case is more impressive than a crowd. Further, as individually one believes, so too judgment will be individual.

Here the debtor who did not keep the word, nor bring forth fruit with patience, "on going out," soon betrayed his emptiness. He, being a dead stone, who had never tasted that the Lord is good, ruthlessly assailed his fellow that owed him a comparatively small debt. And his lord incensed at cruelty so selfish after such grace, consigns him not to prison only but to the tormentors in irretrievable ruin.

O my reader, deceive not your soul: God is not mocked. Read not only Galatians 6:7-10 but Romans 2:7-11, which press not the grace that saves, but the indispensable character of those that are saved. "He shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy."

How is it then with your soul, my reader? Have you received Christ and believed the gospel to the remission of your sins? For this is the A B C of God's message based on Christ's redemption. There is far more given in His grace; but with this most needed and touching answer to our deep want God begins. He remembers no more our sins and iniquities, as He often assures us; but He would have us to know them blotted out by the Saviour's blood, as we remember Him and show forth His death habitually. What can be conceived more contradictory of His grace than a hard vindictive spirit? Are not we who are forgiven distinctly charged to forgive? Nay more, are we not solemnly warned that Christ's heavenly Father will award unsparing judgment, not to open adversaries only, Jew or Gentile, but to the Christian professor especially, if from his heart he

forgives not a brother's trespasses? Can any course be more fraught with danger than glossing over Christ's plain meaning under the fond claim that, whatever come, we are safe? He that believes to the saving of the soul is neither presumptuous nor cowardly where Christ is at stake, but keeps His word and denies not His name, sharing His life and displaying His character. The bondman with the debt to God of 10,000 talents is historically the Jew, availing himself greedily of a gracious oblivion of all in the gospel, but so little imbued with the Spirit of Christ, as to hate and persecute, forbidding any mercy to the Gentile because of his injustice to Israel, little indeed compared with the Jew's wickedness against God. Therefore, as the apostle shows, is wrath come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thessalonians 2:16). So also we see in the Acts of the Apostles, that though the blotting out of their sins was preached to them on their repentance and turning to God, they did not truly profit by His mercy. They dogged enviously and as enemies the steps of His messengers, whom He sent next to the Gentiles. Thus they pleased not God and were contrary to all men, and afford the sad witness that, if the despiser of Moses' law died without compassion on proof of two or three witnesses, much sorer must be the punishment of those that trample down and count unholy the blood of the covenant and do despite to the Spirit of grace.

9 The Labourers hired Matthew 20:1-16.

Gospel Words. 5th Series. No 9.

People have little difficulty in understanding the general drift of the answer to Peter, who said, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore? Our Lord shows that God will be debtor to no man, and that for every loss on account of His name every one shall receive again a hundredfold and inherit life eternal. But He adds the cautionary words, Many first shall be last, and last first. For as Christ is the motive where faith is, reward is but the encouragement to him that follows the Saviour, it cheers him when already on the way. Make the reward the object, and all becomes mercenary. Even where Christ is the constraining power, there is danger of clouding Him under an overweening estimate of sacrifices for His sake; and hence the need to think of the shortcoming implied through self-reliance. In every case however God never forgets but assuredly repays.

Why is it that there has been such perplexity and difference from of old to the present about the parable which opens Matthew 20:1-34? It is because man bulks so largely in his own eyes that room is not left for the sovereign grace of God. Now this is the very thing the Lord here asserts. Pious men might and must more or less distinctly allow it in His saving souls; but the Lord claims it for His dealing with service. And it ought not to be a question that in the parable not salvation but service is the matter in hand. Alas! in all ages the tendency has been and is to confound the two things to the deep injury of both; for if mixed up, no soul who has a due sense of his unprofitable service can or ought to be assured of his salvation; yet without that assurance God's grace is not fully received, nor has Christ's blood practically cleansed the conscience, so that the service is vitiated correspondingly from first to last. And no wonder; for never can exist the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, which we are exhorted to hold fast firm unto the end.

Now what can be plainer in scripture than the truth that "the free gift of God is life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23)? In John, Gospel and Epistles, it is no less plain that the believer has that life now. No doubt, it is in the Son, and alone in Him rightly and securely; but "he that believeth on Me hath life eternal" (John 6:47). And the First Epistle was written that God's

children might know, that they believing on the name of the Son of God have life eternal. They do not wait for His coming again to have it; they have it now for their souls, they will have it for their bodies also, and in its proper glorious sphere, when He comes for them. And it is of life eternal by-and-by that the Synoptic Gospels speak. But the parable contemplates, not conversion, nor life eternal, but labouring in the vineyard. How can those that know the gospel fall into a mistake so evident and profound as to overlook this? It was for Christ that Simon Peter left all and followed Him. Christ drew him, not reward, though reward there is; for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love shown to His name in the service of the saints or of the gospel. But it is divine love in Christ, seen by faith, which draws the soul after Him, and makes His call effectual. Such alone do work that pleases God; and life eternal is therefore shown in Romans 2:1-29 to come at the end of a fruit-bearing course; but the utmost care is taken in the same epistle to declare that we are justified freely by His grace (Romans 3:24). Yea, it excludes any work on our part from that great act of His grace. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt, but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5). In the parable on the contrary it is a question of work done for the householder, who calls and sends into his vineyard.

"For the kingdom of the heavens is like a householder which went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard; and when he had agreed with the labourers for a denary* the day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto the steward, Call the labourers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a denary. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a denary. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a denary? Take up that [which is] thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:1-16).

*A denary was a silver coin, and of far more value than our penny. "The denarius a day was the pay of a Roman soldier in Tiberius' time, a few years before this parable was uttered (see Tacitus, Annal. i. 17). Polybius, ii. 15 6 (but in illustrating the exceeding fertility of the country), mentions that the charge for a day's entertainment in the inns of Cisalpine Gaul was half an as. = one-twentieth of the denarius. This we may therefore regard as liberal pay for the day's work." Alford's Gr. Test. i. 200, fifth edition.

Plainly the Lord lays down the true spring and principle of service. It is confidence in him who calls. All is set out with divine wisdom. The workmen first called agreed to the terms. Those at the third hour went to work on his word; "whatsoever is right I will give you," as did those at the sixth and

ninth hours. The last batch at the eleventh went there simply at his call: "Go ye also into the vineyard." With these last the steward is directed to begin, giving each a denary. This aroused the murmurs of the earliest workmen, who resented the householder's liberality. But he stopped the mouth of their spokesman at once. The injustice complained of was solely in the complainant. "Didst thou not agree with me for a denary?" Grace reserves its title to bless. "Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last." The despised enjoy the grace that abounds beyond all question of man, and those who indulge in selfish thoughts justly sink. God Who never fails in righteousness maintains His right to act according to His own goodness. He is sovereign even in this where man sets up his claim to his own chagrin. Indisputably just, He is good and will act upon it, as He loves to do: what loss and misery those make for themselves who dispute it!

10 The two Children Matthew 21:28-32.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 88-89. Gospel No. 5: 10.) The proud men who were blind to the glory of Christ, and averse alike to God's grace and truth raised the question of His authority. It is always so with such as value themselves, and love not God's intervention, and are jealous of those that do His work. He could have pointed to witnesses greater than John; though among women-born none had risen greater than John the Baptiser. But the works which the Father gave Him to complete testified yet more. So did the Father's voice. And the scriptures which bore witness of Him He treats as the highest possible, for they have a permanence which no mere words can possess. But here the Lord met their unbelief by appealing to the baptism of John: whence was it? Of heaven, or of men? They saw their dilemma, and fearing man, not God, they answered, We cannot tell. Confessing their incapacity, chief priests and elders though they were, as the cover of their dishonesty, they are left without an answer. The Lord however presents them with a portrait, not of themselves only, but of those they despised.

"But what think ye? A man had two children and he came to the first and said, Child, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not; but afterward he regretted and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise; and he answered and said, I [go], sir, and went not. Which of the two did the will of the father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say to you, that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go before you into the kingdom of God. For John came in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax-gatherers and the harlots believed him. And ye, when ye saw, regretted not afterward to believe him" (Matthew 21:28-32).

It is a plain and direct dealing with conscience. For two classes were then before the Lord's eye: the rude and profligate, the careless and profane, who made no pretension to religion and pursued worldly profit and open sin; and the respectable and decorous, who piqued themselves on heeding the rites of religion and on their own decent character. Now mankind in Christendom is the same still, tested by a standard more searching than John's, though his was a mighty work, as the Lord bore witness to him. Viewed in themselves or in the light of testimony, how living is the picture! The one class puts shameless insult on God, and glories in lawlessness. But an appeal comes which convinces the daring sinner of his outrageous evil: he breaks down in self-judgment, he turns to God and serves Him whom he had set at nought. The other class, on the contrary, claims credit for its proper ways; and as conscience is untouched, they are self-satisfied, and God remains unknown. How exactly such souls answer to him who says "I go, sir, and went not!" Are

there not many like him now?

Hence when John, who did no miracles nor claimed official position, came preaching a baptism of repentance for remission of sins, people flocked freely to be baptised, confessing their sins. But as the rule, the Lord here shows that it was not those who justified themselves before men that were baptised by John. They disdained to enter the kingdom by the same strait gate and narrow way as was open to the tax-gatherer and the harlot. But there can be no other way to God for the sinner. The grace of the gospel condemns sins and insists on repentance still more than John coming in the way of righteousness; for the gospel proclaims that nothing but the blood of Jesus, God's Son, could cleanse from sins, and that His blood does cleanse us from every sin. How deadly and defiling were our sins that such a propitiation alone could avail! Therein is a test far deeper than John's preaching, excellent and efficacious as it was; for it was repulsive for a moral man and zealous Jew to confess his sins, like a tax-gatherer or a harlot. How intolerable to be put with such on the same common level of guilt and ruin! This is precisely what the gospel does even more thoroughly; and it is therefore of all things most odious to the self-righteous formalist. When John came, calling men to confess their sins in view of the coming Messiah and the kingdom of the heavens, conscience answered to his call in those who had walked in gross lusts and indifference to the religious world. "The tax-gatherers and the harlots believed him." They knew in their souls that they had led a life of shame and iniquity; and they bowed to a call which they recognised to be of God. But not so those who stood well in their own eyes and in the public opinion of the day. They therefore annulled for themselves the counsel of God, instead of justifying God by being baptised by John as the despised ones did (Luke 7:29-30). The self-righteous when they "saw, had no regret afterward to believe him."

Hence too, since that day, when the gospel is preached, men who are boastful of their religion, their church, or their character, are ever its bitterest enemies. The Jews as the general fact not only refused it but tried to stir up the Gentiles against it everywhere. Nothing in their eyes more hateful than that grace which denied the value of their righteousness, and announces God's righteousness that He may be just and justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. For this openly declares that there is no difference, all having sinned and coming short of God's glory; as it also declares to all who believe, that they are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, being apart from works of law, the gospel is as open to the Gentile as to the Jew, since God is one, Who shall justify circumcision by faith, not otherwise, and uncircumcision through their faith since they believe. Jesus the Lord is the way to the Father: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And salvation is in none other name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved. Did any wonder at the Lord eating with sinners and the disreputable? His answer was, They that are strong have no need of a physician, but those that are sick. But go and learn what that is, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I came to call not righteous but sinners. Do you, dear reader, know Him thus?

11 The guilty Husbandmen Matthew 21:14-33.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 104-105. Gospel No. 5: 11.) The parable before us is morally historical. It presents briefly but fully the ways of God with His people of old up to their ruin in the rejection of the Christ, and not morally alone but nationally. The Lord even adds from the scriptures His own consequent exaltation, and their setting aside meanwhile, Himself in humiliation the

stumbling-stone of unbelief, but about to return in power as the executor of judgment in this world.

"Hear another parable: There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and made a fence round it, and due, a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and left the country. But when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his bondmen to the husbandmen to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his bondmen, and beat one and killed another and stoned another. Again he sent other bondmen more than the first, and they did to them likewise. And afterward he sent to them his son, saying, They will feel respect for my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and get his inheritance. And they took and cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed [him]. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come what will he do to these husbandmen? They say to him, He will wretchedly destroy those wretches, and let out the vineyard to other husbandmen who shall render him the fruits in their season" (Matthew 21:33-41).

It is plain that the Lord here takes the ground, not merely of relationship and conscience as in the preceding parable of the two children, but of responsibility to render fruit to God Who had done all possible for His people to that end. The prophet Isaiah had similarly appealed in his Isaiah 5:1-30. Here the Lord adds a great deal more, but on the same ground, and with similar result, only yet more plainly proclaimed. For it is not only that the vineyard, instead of grapes, brought forth wild grapes. Here the upshot was growing enmity manifested to the lord of the vineyard. In both what could have been done on behalf of the vineyard that He had not done? The prophet announced that Jehovah was going to lay His vineyard waste; and so it has been, as the state of the Jews proves. The Lord shows the patience that for ages waited on those active among the Jews, if there might be fruit for Jehovah. But His bondmen, the prophets, whom He sent to recall His people to their duty, met with nothing but contempt, ill-usage, and death. Others He sent increasingly, as the evil grew; but they fared alike contumeliously.

Lastly, He sent His Son. The Lord spoke of Himself. But the dignity of His person and the intimate nearness of His relationship to Jehovah gave the opportunity to the religious leaders among the Jews to demonstrate their contempt and deadly hatred to both the Father and the Son, as the Lord says in John 15:1-27. Could evil go farther? Other sins, shameful and ungrateful as they were, became in comparison as nothing. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father." And they had been fully warned. For they simply fulfilled what was in their law, "They hated Me without a cause." It was not only utter unrighteousness, but deadly enmity to Jehovah and His Anointed, to the Son, their own Messiah. And the Lord, on the near approach of this fatal result of their rebellious alienation from God, Himself puts the question to them, "When therefore the Lord of the vineyard shall come, what will He do to those husbandmen?" And they could not but answer, "He will wretchedly destroy those wretches, and let out the vineyard to other husbandmen who shall render him the fruits in their seasons." So it is that the guilty own in their consciences their just punishment for positive rejection of One so good and faithful, and of their own obligations to Him, yea, of apostasy carried out to blood. Is this nothing to you, reader, with the still greater privileges of Christendom? Are you hardening your heart against the truth, and shrinking from the God Who came so near to you in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to men their offences, and having put in His servants the word of

reconciliation? Beware then of a fate not better but worse than what befell and is to befall the Jews. "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, this was made the corner-stone: of Jehovah this is, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust" (Matthew 21:42-44). Such is the danger of stumbling now; such the judgment the Lord will execute on living man when He appears in glory. And the time hastens. See therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you."

12 The Marriage feast Matthew 22:1-14.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 117-119. Gospel No. 5-12.) The parable of the guilty husbandmen at the close of Matthew 21:1-46 shows the issue of God's testing men on the ground of His own claims and their responsibility to yield Him fruit. It is just the question raised with the Jew and settled by the rejection of their own Messiah, the Son, yet to be avenged when He comes again. In the parable with which Matthew 22:1-46 begins the Lord handles a wholly different case. It is therefore, what the last chapter nowhere furnished, a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens; and therein God is manifested in the ways of His grace, not man under His just claims. God no longer requires fruit from man, though He may and does produce fruit in those who receive His grace in Christ. But in the gospel it is no question of demanding fruit from man. He is represented as in sovereign majesty making a marriage-feast for His Son. This means a total change in His ways: not God requiring from men what is due, but His own grace blessing them in honour of His Son. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; and this not the law but the gospel vindicates for God, Who gave His dear and only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have life eternal.

"The kingdom of the heavens is likened to a king which made a marriage-feast for his son; and sent forth his bondmen to call those who had been called to the marriage-feast; and they would not come. Again he sent forth other bondmen, saying, Tell those that have been called, Behold, my dinner I have made ready: mine oxen and my fatlings are slaughtered; and all things [are] ready come to the marriage-feast. But they slighted [it] and went off, one to his own land, another to his traffic; and the rest, seizing his bondmen, insulted and killed [them]. And the king was wroth and, sending his troops, destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then saith he to his bondmen, The marriage-feast is ready, but those that were called were not worthy. Go therefore unto the outlets of the roads, and, as many as ye shall find, call to the marriage-feast. And those bondmen went out to the roads, and gathered together all as many as they found, both wicked and good; and the marriage-feast was filled with guests. And the king on coming in to behold the guests saw there a man not clothed with a marriage-garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in here not having a marriage-garment? But he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and take and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew 22:2-14).

Here too we have an historical unfolding, not of the past under law, but of God's dealings in grace. We begin with the gospel of the kingdom before our Lord's death in Matthew 22:3. Next in

Matthew 22:4 the gospel goes forth on the ground of His finished work. Only then was the urgent message that "all things were ready"; and then, too, the rebellious hostility ripened into insult and bloodshed; as also in due time retribution came on those murderers and their city (Matthew 22:5-7). But grace must reign and do its wondrous work, whatever the hindrances. Accordingly the offence of the Jew is salvation to the nations, and the loss of the one is the wealth of the others. The Jews but filled up their cup of sorrow, and wrath came on them to the uttermost, as far as the gospel is concerned; and this salvation of God has been sent to the nations, who also will bear, as the apostle added. This luminously follows in our parable (Matthew 22:8-10).

Nevertheless God is not mocked under gospel any more than under law; and contempt of His grace brings an even sorer punishment than violation of His law. The acceptance of God's testimony by faith is and always has been the soul's turning-point from death to life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God and His kingdom. And His testimony has ever been to Christ, whatever the measure once, whatever the fulness now. Hopeless effort under law was used to drive to Christ those who were not won by promise. Grace and truth came as a fact through Jesus Christ, Who is both life and righteousness to the believer, as He is the image of the invisible God and declared Him. Christ is all, and in all. This therefore becomes the surest of tests, as it is the fulness of grace. But the King, when He entered to behold the guests, saw one who had not on a marriage-garment. This was conclusive. The King provided all in His royal bounty; but here was a man who preferred his own clothing. It was no question of anything else. The man's robe might be splendid or sordid. But it was not the marriage-garment. It was therefore a direct offence against the grace which alone could and did provide according to the king's majesty and magnificence. Nothing could justify such wanton scorn of the king's honour and goodness; nothing could excuse the man's preference of his own things, especially on an occasion expressly to honour the King's Son. The man was speechless at the charge. The outer darkness must be his portion: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

It is not providential judgment like that which befell the city of murderers; it is personal and absolute, away for ever from Him Who is love and light, from Him Whose grace was so thoroughly despised. To render this all the more impressive, a single individual is thus specified, though the moral at the close prepares us for its applying to individuals far and wide. "For many are called (i.e., by the gospel), but few chosen." In result it is but a "little flock"; not because grace was not ample for them all, but because grace is abused and Christ is in so few, though He is all in such as have Him. Have you then, my reader, received the Christ, Jesus the Lord? If so, "walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and assured in the faith as ye have been taught [in the written word of God], abounding in thanksgiving." See to it that you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that created him: wherein there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all things, and in all. Remember that there is no putting on Christ on high, unless you have put Him on now here below. Here we have the joy and duty of confessing Christ; as it will be His to confess us before His Father and before the angels.

If baptism be made the marriage-garment, it is only a less destructive delusion than making it the Lord's incarnation. In the one case the baptised in Christendom would be all elect, if it were not a contradiction in terms; in the other case, all mankind would be. The parable is really subversive of both these dreams, and is meant to show that no mere profession can save, that only the

reception of God’s grace in Christ will stand in that day.

05.08. Gospel Words - Sixth Series.

Gospel Words - Sixth Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Fig-tree 2 The Household Servant 3 The Ten Virgins

4 The Talents 5 The Seed left to grow 6 The two Debtors

7 The Samaritan 8 The importunate Appeal 9 The Blasphemy of God's Power in Christ 10 The rich Fool 11 Waiting for the Lord 12 Working for the Lord

1 The Fig-tree Matthew 24:32-35.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 133-134. Gospel No. 6: 1.)

We have the Lord's authority for regarding the fig-tree here as the groundwork for its parable. "Now from the fig-tree learn the parable. When its branch is already become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors" (Matthew 24:32-35).

It is clear that the Lord treats this tree as symbolic of the Jews. So He had done shortly before, and both so graphically that no believer need miss the meaning. Mark gives details, as often beyond others, illustrating His ministry. Seeing a fig-tree (there was but one, as Matthew says), and being hungry, He came and found nothing but leaves. This was decisive, for it was the season of figs, it was too soon for gathering; so that if none ware there, the tree must have borne none. The Lord therefore said unto it, No one eat fruit of thee henceforth for ever; and His disciples heard. On the morrow, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots; and Peter remarked on it, when the Lord's answer dwelt on the all-importance and the power of faith. There is no obstacle too strong to resist; only the grace that forgives all personal wrongs must accompany the faith of him that serves Christ. And so it has been. Not only have the fruitless Jews, as responsible under the first covenant, lost their religious position, but they are no longer a power. They are scattered and swamped in the sea of peoples.

It was one of the two miracles of the Lord which was not an expression of grace but judicial; and both told the destinies impending on Israel because of their evil and unbelief. The one, as we have seen, was their judgment under legal responsibility as barren after all God's care and claim of fruit. The other was set forth by the destruction of the swine, when the demons expelled from Legion entered and drove the herd into the abyss. So it will be in the latter day when the apostate Jews are given over to uncleanness and energised by the powers of darkness. These were the two exceptions. All the other miracles of the Lord displayed the glory of God and grace toward man.

What then is the parable to be learnt from the fig-tree in our chapter? The Lord is opening to the chosen disciples His appearing for the Jews first (Matthew 24:4-44) ; then (Matthew 25:30) His dealings with professing Christians; and lastly (Matthew 25:31-46) His judgment of all the nations

or Gentiles.

It will be seen therefore that Matthew 24:32-35 concern the Jewish remnant directly, however we may profit by this as by every other scripture. The Jews will be objects of grace once more, and come under the new covenant in that day. Here accordingly the fig-tree falls under no curse. Far from withering away from the roots, Israel, which knew nothing but misery and ruin from trusting its own righteousness, is cast on the Messiah in repentance and faith ; and now mercy henceforward flows as a river. But "the many," the mass, judge themselves unworthy of life eternal and perish with their Antichrist; the godly remnant become the strong nation, and they are "all Israel" that shall be saved. They will have dates which must run their course; and also have successive events which must be accomplished. Times and seasons particularly characterise them.

Here the Lord deigns to give them signs in a way He never did to us of the church who are called to walk by faith, not by sight. So we may observe in the early verses of Matthew 24:1-51 and specially in Matthew 24:14. Still more emphatic is what follows from Matthew 24:15, where Daniel 12:1-13 is referred to, and, more than any, Daniel 12:11. There is a tribulation without parallel, but no translation to heaven; and the coming of the Son of man is like the lightning. For there is pre-eminently the carcase, whither gather the eagles. Immediately after the tribulation convulsions above and below follow; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and all the tribes mourn, and they see Him coming to the earth. And His angels gather His elect (who seem here to be of Israel, as in Isaiah 65:1-25; Isaiah 66:1-24); for over these He will reign in the promised land. The heavenly saints are seen in their own place. Here our Lord treats of Israelitish saints. The fig-tree is no longer barren; for the Son of man received, and the new covenant with Him, will change all. These are early days; end we hear no more than of the branch tender, and putting forth leaves. The time of fruit will come; but as yet, they only know that summer is nigh. "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors." Grace will not fail to work its due effects.

How is it with you, dear reader? Have you learnt that you are no better than the barren fig-tree? If you have, it is well. For most deceive themselves and are indifferent If you know that you have neither fruit nor life, oh! look to Him by faith Who is life and gives it to all that believe. It is ruinous to talk of your privileges. The greatest is that you have the New Testament as well as the Old. But only Jesus, the Son of God, can avail; only His blood cleanses from every sin, when you will have the seal of His Spirit and bear fruit by His grace. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thus will you welcome His coming Who says, "Surely I come quickly," and you will answer, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus."

2 The Household Servant Matthew 24:45-51.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 149-150. Gospel No. 6-2.)

It is the first part in our Lord’s prophecy at Olivet which bears directly on Christian profession. This therefore is wholly distinct from the parable of the fig-tree which refers to Israel, as all the preceding discourse did, and accordingly from Matthew 24:15 occupied with the land and the sanctuary, the sabbath day, and the tribulation without parallel for the Jews, with signs before and after, heed being expressly claimed to Daniel the prophet, and illustration drawn from the deluge in

Noah preserved through it, not from Enoch caught up before it.

Here begins that which is so general that it applies wherever the Lord's name is called on, Jewish peculiarities being quite dropt. The Lord takes the place of other objects. His service in His house is without restriction or addition the prominent character. Relationship to Him and His rules exclusively. We shall find in the third and last parable of the series His gifts conferred on His servants according to His sovereign will, with which each is called to trade according to the figure of talents committed for profit. But here it is the supply of His house with food in season.

"Who then is the faithful and wise bondman, whom the lord set over his household to give them food in season? Blessed [is] that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find thus doing. Verily I say to you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if the evil bondman say in his heart, My lord delayeth [to come], and begin to beat his fellow bondman, and eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of the bondman shall come in a day which he expecteth not, and in an hour which he knoweth not, and shall out him in two, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:45-51).

It is clear that the Lord looks for faithful and prudent stewardship in His absence from him who is entrusted with the charge of His household, and that, when He is come, He will deal with this responsibility. Did the bondman dispense food in due time? Blessed that bondman whom his Lord on coming shall find thus doing! It is His mind and will and grace about His own. Already elsewhere He had assured His own sheep that entering by Him they should be saved, enjoy liberty, and find pasture. It is in the last particular that the bondman is here made responsible; and this would test him. Faith and love alone render any one faithful and wise; they attach the heart to the household through devotedness to the Lord. Loving Him leads out to feeding His sheep and His lambs; as the Lord puts it to Peter, restored and reinstated after his fall: which by grace would only make him more tenderly considerate of others. And him who thus nourishes duly Christ's household He will set at the head of His inheritance by and by, when He returns the Heir of all things. It is only Christianity which is based on the Lord already come and about to return, while His own serve during His absence; and hence the prominence given to this in the third parable. But solemn beyond expression is the doom of the man who, professing to be his Lord's bondman, arrogates to himself dominion, and is no model to the flock, but lords it as his possession. What can be conceived more opposed to the mind which was in Christ Jesus? He in infinite pity to the lost and to the glory of God the Father emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, coming though yet in the likeness of men; and found in figure as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient as far as death, yea, death of the cross. The evil bondman, oblivious of all and heartlessly inconsistent, seeks a place of power and pride; he courts the world as one who never died to flesh nor was crucified to the world, but begins to beat his fellow bondmen, and eats and drinks with the drunken. There is both ecclesiastical oppression and commerce with the world, even in its self-indulgent dissoluteness.

Such is just the general aspect of Christendom for long ages, as at the present moment. There way be differences of degree here or there. But the picture applies to Catholics and Protestants nationals and dissenters. They are not separate from the world; nor do they walk in the Spirit, as those that crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts; they boast in man and his literary elevation and his scientific inventions, like heathen that know not God. And what does the Lord

indicate as the occasion if not cause of so ruinous a departure? "But if the evil bondman say in his heart, My lord delayeth [to come]." No one betrays the evil of his unfaithfulness so much as a faithless professor of Christ. And here the Lord puts His finger on his heart putting off His own coming again as a living practical truth. Abandoning that hope, the heart can soon learn to value and associate with the world, to slight and ill-treat Christ's household.

What is the end? "The lord of that bondman shall come in a day which he expecteth not, and in an hour which he knoweth not, and shall cut him in two, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; and there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." God's wrath is revealed from heaven upon. all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness. The Jew if wicked is worse than the Gentile; the professing Christian if evil is more guilty than either. His portion shall be, not with bondmen only, but with the hypocrites.

How is it with you, my reader? You, most of you, are neither Jews nor heathen; are you not a professing Christian? Do you not then own your evil if you slight the word of God, and especially the gospel? Any one who disregarded Moses' law died without mercy on the strength of two or three witnesses: of how much worse punishment, think you, shall he be judged deserving that trod under foot the Son of God, and esteemed the blood of the covenant whereby he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? But the door of grace is still open. Oh! flee for refuge to Him Who is set before you, the only yet sure Saviour of the lost. Delay is proverbially dangerous; and nowhere is danger so great as in putting off the word of salvation which God has sent you. For, as He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, when He sent Him into it, so even when Christ was rejected, God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made divine righteousness in Him.

3 The Ten Virgins Matthew 25:1-13.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 166-167. Gospel No. 6-3.)

Here again we have the mysterious likeness of the kingdom of the heavens while Christ rejected but glorified is hidden on high. Only, as the parable looks onward specially to the future, when the difference between those taught of God and mere professors will be manifested, the word is "Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins," etc. "Then" refers to the execution of judgment on the evil bondman who embodied the collective responsibility of Christendom, as our parable sets out rather the secret of wisdom or the lack of it individually.

"Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins, such as, having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish and five prudent. For the foolish, when they took their torches, took no oil with them; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all fell heavy and were sleeping. But at midnight a cry is made, Behold, the bridegroom: come ye forth to meet him. Then arose all those virgins and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our torches are going out. But the prudent replied, saying, Nay, lest there be not enough for us and you: go rather unto those that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and those that were ready went with him unto the marriage feast; and the door was shut. But afterwards came also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the

day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:1-13). The ten virgins vividly represent the Christian profession. All took their torches and went forth to meet the Bridegroom Who is coming again. But if anyone have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. The unction of the Holy One is indispensable. The possession of this, symbolised by oil, depends on having faith in Christ and His work. The foolish never knew their ruin; they were content with ordinances and rites and their own heed to them. To be born anew, to receive remission of sins through Christ's blood, to be sealed with the Spirit, they were strangers: Jews or heathen might want these things; but they had every privilege in their religion, the christian religion, and had no cause for alarm: such was their self-deception.

Alas! as with Israel so with Christendom, the forgetfulness of God's work and departure from Him were complete. While waiting for the bridegroom they fell heavy and were sleeping. The true attitude of the Christian was lost; the blessed hope no longer animated any. They ceased to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, and turned in here or there to slumber. Prudent or foolish, all slipped away from the true hope. But God is faithful, and, when things are darkest, He arouses the sleepers. At midnight is made a cry, Behold the bridegroom. All awake, when even the foolish become uneasy, for they perceive that the prudent have a power which they have not. Torches may burn brightly for a while; but without oil they soon go out. But the believer has the Spirit only for himself; and none can receive that anointing save through God's grace on the faith of the gospel. Hence the appeal of the foolish to the prudent is vain. They must go to Him who sells on the terms of grace, without money and without price. Sinners must have to do with God. The creature cannot avail. The sinner must face his sins before Him, Who points the lost to the Saviour. Those who are religious after the flesh hate grace and shrink from God's presence. They may be zealous; they are willing to do "some great thing" if bidden; but to stand before Him as nothing but guilty ones, and to be saved of divine grace like the worst by a dead and risen Saviour, is repulsive to the old man. They may go their way to buy; but this is all we here learn of these self-deceivers.

Meanwhile the bridegroom came; and those that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast. And the door was shut.

Oh, the horror of finding out the truth too late! In vain then to cry, Lord, Lord, open to us! To such as are refusing a like warning and invitation now, His word then will be, Verily, I say to you, I know you not. My reader, how would the coming of the Saviour find you? Those who really long and watch for the Saviour have already heard His voice and found in Him redemption, the forgiveness of their sins, through His blood. Hence they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption. They know Whom they have believed, as the Good Shepherd knows such as hear His voice and follow Him. Do not trust in any institution, even of Christ, or any observance of your own, or any class of men however honoured, to fit your souls for God's presence. Nothing but the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses from all sin; but this it does perfectly even now on earth for every believer. And unless you here believe in Him and in the efficacy of His sacrifice for your evil case, flatter not yourselves that He will receive you to Himself or present you to His Father. But if you are born again and resting on the redemption that is in Christ, you will have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and strengthening you to render a true witness to Him who is on high and about to return. "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth." Your hope will be as real as your faith, and Christ the object of both. You will not doubt His love,

but long for His coming to receive you to Himself, having the oil in your vessel, and earnest to call the thirsty, or whoever will, to drink of the water of life freely.

4 The Talents Matthew 25:14-30.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 179-181. Gospel No. 6-4.) This is the third of the parables in our Lord's great prophecy, which are distinctively Christian, as compared with the Jewish section (Matthew 24:3-44) and the Gentile that concludes all (Matthew 25:31-46). All three contemplate an absent Lord, Who is to return, and Whom His own are to expect. The first embodies the professor in one bondman set over the household, either wise or evil, The second is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens in virgins, five foolish and five wise, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom. All slumbered, but were awakened at midnight. But they only who had the oil in their vessels, the indwelling Spirit, were there to meet Him, and go in with Him to the marriage-feast. This applies not to the future remnant, who are not anointed till Christ appears, but to Christians wholly who are now before them. The third is not such a likeness being in no way the general state, but refers nevertheless only to Christians, as is certain from applying to the entrusted servants while the Lord went abroad (that is, to heaven), Who meanwhile delivered to His own His goods.

"For [it is] as a man, going abroad, called his bondmen and delivered to them his goods (or, substance). And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to. each according to his own ability, and went abroad immediately. And he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. Likewise he also that [received] the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and dug in the earth and hid the money of his lord. Now after a long while the lord of those bondmen cometh and reckoneth with them. And he that received the five talents came up and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst me five talents: see, I gained other five talents (besides them). His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful bondman; thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that [received] the two talents came up and said, Lord, thou deliveredst me two talents: see, I gained other two talents. His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came up and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering from where thou didst not scatter; and being afraid I went away and hid thy talent in the earth: see, thou hast thine own. And his lord in answer said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather from where I scattered not; thou oughtest then to have put my money to the bankers, and I on coming should have received mine own with interest. Take then from him the talent and give [it] to him that hath the ten talents. For to everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, even what he hath shall be taken. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:14-30).

It is plain that the substance which the Lord submitted to His servants for work in His absence means gifts of a spiritual kind. For He delivered to each according to his respective ability. They are distinguished from the ability of each, which was natural, and are suited to it. They are not merely "sanctified capacity," or "theological learning," but a gift from the Lord adapted to the ability of each as the vessel. With His goods they were to trade, "each ministering it one to another, as

good stewards of God’s manifold race; if one speaketh, as oracles of God; if one ministereth, as of strength which God supplieth, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen" (1 Peter 4:10-11). The reception of a gift was the ground of exercising it in dependence on the Giver, and for His glory.

Accordingly, where this loyalty ruled, one made five talents, another two: such is the figure in the parable. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and this is no less true of service, than of walk, as it is of salvation too. But God sets Christ before us everywhere: no creature’s authority can become the object in any of them, save to His dishonour and our own sin and hurt. Confidence in the Master’s grace was the animating spring of the true labourers. They bowed to His sovereignty Who entrusted as He saw fit; and they will in result enter into His joy. The kindred parable of the Pounds in Luke 19:1-48 shows individual responsibility, all starting with the like sum, and each rewarded according to the issues of labour. Both are true and important; but each is distinct. In either case the third servant wronged the Lord. He regarded Him according to his own hard and wicked heart. He did not believe in His grace, and so sought not His pleasure or glory. Such selfish fear as his excludes love. There was no answer to the Master’s trust. On his own showing he was inexcusable in hiding the talent in the earth. "Wicked and slothful bondman, thou oughtest to have put my money to the bankers, and I on coming should have received mine own with interest." To yield to fear was to distrust his Lord; and this is fatal. It is unbelief in His goodness. This servant had no sense of grace. A bad unpurged conscience led him to impute to the Lord what wholly denies and mis-represents Him, Who is full of grace and truth. And his end was according to his heart and his works. The evil he falsely attributed to the Master, which was really his own, finds its place in the outer darkness. It rendered him useless for God. He must be cast where the weeping and the gnashing of teeth shall be. His Master’s joy was nothing to him.

How is it with you, my reader? Have you bowed to God’s word which declares you to be sinful, ungodly, and without strength? If so, you must need a mighty and a gracious Saviour. And God Who pities you has sent in His love His beloved Son-sent Him to die for you, yea, for your sins. Do not presume to think of serving Him till you are brought to God without a spot or stain. Nothing but the blood of Jesus His Son can thus cleanse you: His blood cleanses from all sin. So His word attests, that you may by faith know yourself made whiter than snow. To doubt this is to dishonour both the Father and the Son; as it is to set yourself against the Holy Spirit Who is here to glorify the Saviour. Those who would bid you distrust God in such mercy are His enemies. Those who curse the proclamation of this truth pronounce a curse which will fall upon themselves when the Lord judges them.

5 The Seed left to grow

Mark 4:26-29.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 197-198. Gospel No. 6-5.) This is a parable peculiar to the Gospel of Mark, and therefore characteristic of the divine design. It is as far as possible from having any analogy to the leaven in Matthew 13:1-58, which a woman took and bid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened. Christ’s service is here set out first and last, marking for the kingdom of God the unexpected fact of His seemingly leaving things to take their course between His action at the beginning and that at the end.

"And he said, Thus is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast the seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, how he knoweth not himself. Of itself the earth beareth fruit, first a blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is presented, immediately he despatcheth the sickle, because the harvest is arrived" (Mark 4:26-29).

Matthew gives a complete view in its seven parables of the varying phases of the kingdom of the heavens, and especially in view of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews and of its special form, "the mysteries of the kingdom," while the rejected King is on high, before He returns as the glorified Son of Man in possession of the universal inheritance.

Mark was led to dwell on the Sower, as the fullest expression of the Saviour's personal ministry, thwarted for the most part, but fulfilling the purpose of grace in such as have ears to hear. Then he records like Luke the solemn admonition that follows. The lamp was not to be put under "the bushel" or under "the bed," but to be put on its stand. God's testimony exposes the true character of things, and tests the witness himself; who, if he makes it his own, has more given, and if not, loses what he has. If the lamp was to shine openly, the truth was to be valued personally.

Then Mark alone adds the beautiful comparison of the Lord's relation to the work which has been cited. He would prepare His servants for the trial of faith that awaited them in His absence. He carefully guards against the difficulty which has often been expressed, and sometimes weakly evaded. For those who know Him reject the unworthy thought that He absolutely abandons all care over His work here below, and yet more, that He Who knows all things knows not how it fares with that on which He laboured. Our Lord took pains to say that the kingdom is "as if"; not that He did not watch and work diligently, any more than that the husbandman does no more than sow and reap, without intermediate interest or services. These dealings are through other scriptures fully revealed, which the parable assuredly does not in any way contradict. The aim was, while affirming His personal work as ushering in God's kingdom and His gathering the. fruits at the end of the age, to mark emphatically how it should be left while He is on high; but this with fullest confidence that His sowing would come to the just and expected result. We have, therefore, here no thought of seed destroyed by the enemy's power, nor of failure through the flesh, nor of the choking influence of the world, any more than of darnel foisted into the field unawares and spoiling the crop. All goes well, though the great Servant is hidden in God: just "as if a man (after sowing) should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knows not how."

Jehovah's messenger had been sent before Messiah's face to prepare His way; but he was imprisoned and slain. Messiah came Himself proclaiming the gospel of God's kingdom, and saying that the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom had drawn nigh. The cross, not the throne, was before Him; and He begins to call servants and to make them fishers of men. For though the unclean spirits obeyed Him, and disease vanished at His touch, even then the men of repute and leading taxed Him with blasphemy, because He forgave sins as God only can. He therefore, knowing all that was to befall Him, provides for the progress of God's work in His rejection unto death, and shows how nothing should hinder its completion.

So, even in Isaiah 49:3-6, we have Jehovah saying, "Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have laboured in vain. I have spent my strength for nought and in vain: nevertheless my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God. And now, saith Jehovah

that formed me from the womb to be his servant, that I should bring Jacob again to him (though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah, and God shall be my strength); and he saith, It is a small thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I have even given thee for a light of the nations, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

Similarly here too nothing shall destroy the gracious purpose of God in Christ; and His humiliation on one side and rejection on the other only give it lustre and force. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The apparent frustration for a while secures in the end, and glorifies God and Christ all through. It appears as if He who began and will end had no more to do than the man who, having sown his seed, sleeps and rises, yet the seed springs up and grows, he knows not how. God has so ordered this creation that of itself the earth brings forth fruit in the case supposed, first a blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear. And so it is spiritually, without visible intervention of His righteous Servant on high. But when the fruit is presented, He despatches the sickle immediately to reap, since harvest is arrived. It is the contrast of His two advents of personal action, with the unseen advance of what He has sown and what He will reap. On this His own can count without hesitation. God's work, of which Christ is the doer, can fail in nothing to glorify Himself. Have you, dear reader, a sure part and lot in this work? Are you content with flesh and its glory, though God pronounces it all to be as grass? Oh, receive His living and abiding word, that you may be born again, if you have not received it already" This is the word which in the gospel is preached to you. The Lord Jesus sowed what produced fruit; and this goes on still. It is of faith that it might be according to grace. How welcome should this be to one who knows himself a lost unworthy sinner! The word reveals Christ to you as God's gift; and fruits follow when you receive Him and life in Him. Apart from Him you can do nothing. May grace give you while owning yourself ungodly and powerless without Christ, to receive Him on God's word, that you may go on your way rejoicing!

6 The two Debtors

Luke 7:41-43.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 215-216. Gospel No. 6: 6.)

Among the beauties of this beautiful story is the fact that no name is given to make known who the sinful woman was, now plainly renewed by grace through faith. Many have thought her to be Mary of Magdala. But she first appears only in the chapter following, with a terrible history quite different from the woman "that was a sinner." Others yet more strangely have fancied Mary of Bethany had once sunk into that infamy, because she too at the close anointed the Lord — with marked difference from this. Luke was inspired to leave in the shade, not the trophy of grace, but her name, whose previous life had been so shameful.

Why should any wish to know what the Lord hid? It is enough to hear what she had been; best of all that He who knew and felt all according to God, pleaded the cause of grace, as it was never pleaded before, pronounced her forgiveness, and sent her away in peace. Whether she had heard the Lord before, or only heard of Him, she came in faith. This drew her to the Lord. This made her brave the Pharisee's scorn. This bent the eyes of her heart on the Saviour only, raising her above all fear of the company. The grace of God in Jesus so filled and transported her soul that at all cost

she went to pour her precious unguent on His feet washed by her tears, wiped by her tresses, and covered with her kisses. She came behind as He lay at meat in Simon's house, and thus told her love, and devotedness of that heart, once so debased, now repentant and purified by faith. Not a word did she say with her lips; but the Lord Who knew the hearts of all men appreciated every feeling and every act of a new-born soul entranced with the moral glory of Christ while bowing to light and love of God rising above her many sins. Simon too saw enough to manifest his utter distance from God and alienation from His goodness; he judged as a natural man, confiding in his own righteousness, and condemning the Lord from all that passed yet more than the woman that stood at His feet behind weeping., He had gone so far as to have Him at his house, and felt assured that He could be no prophet who allowed such a woman to touch Him The Lord answered the Pharisee's unuttered thought, and showed Himself not only a prophet of God, but God of the prophets, come in the lowliest humiliation not to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Only, he that believeth on Him is not judged; but he that believeth not hath been already judged, because he hath not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. The Lord put the case. "A certain creditor had two debtors: one owed five hundred denaries, and the other fifty. As they had nothing to pay, he forgave them both. Which of these then will love him most?" On Simon's supposition, "He to whom he forgave most," He said, "Thou hast rightly judged," and contrasted the woman's deep, fervent, and humble affection with the Pharisee's scant courtesy, which told the tale sufficiently of those two hearts.

"And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house: thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her tresses. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since I entered, ceased not kissing my feet over. With oil thou didst not anoint my head; but she with unguent anointed my feet" (Luke 7:44-46).

Simeon had in the temple said of Him as a babe that He was set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed. But there was more here. Jesus revealed God's heart, of which the Pharisee proved unconsciously that he knew nothing. The woman had learnt it. His goodness had penetrated her; and her sense of it expressed itself in her profound reverence to the Lord Jesus. There she had met God; there God made Himself known to her as God of all grace. It was not dogma, but a divine person of infinite love Who attracted, filled, and fixed her heart. All her way and bearing testified to her self-judgment, to her faith, and to her love (for she loved much); as Simon's conduct demonstrated, in Jesus slighted and grace misjudged, that he knew not God. But she knew Him, or rather was known of Him.

"Wherefore, I say to thee, her many sins are forgiven. For she loved much; but he to whom little is forgiven loveth little." Simon had unwittingly sentenced himself. Impossible to know God in Christ without discovering His goodness and our own shameful endless badness. "And he said to her, Thy sins are forgiven." O reader, have you heard His voice? This is your need; and this is His grace. May you too believe! Are there those who resent such love to the guilty on God's part? Who resist the Saviour, not knowing that they fight against God to their own ruin? How did He meet this, for well He knew it? "And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." May it be your portion.

7 The Samaritan

Luke 10:30-37.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 230-231. Gospel 6-7.) This parable is the Lord’s answer to the lawyer’s question. And who is my neighbour? A conscience not at case finds difficulties; the heart that is animated by love answers at once, because it finds none. Every sorrow or need makes an appeal to it, and never in vain. Flesh under law being self-occupied, has neither room nor time for others.

"A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who, having stripped and beaten him, departed, leaving him half dead. And by coincidence a certain priest was going down by that way; and on seeing him passed on the other side. And likewise also a Levite, when he came to the place and saw, passed on the other side. But a certain Samaritan on journey came to him, and when he saw him was moved with compassion, and came up and bound his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and setting him on his own beast he brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out and gave two denaries to the inn-keeper, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend more, I at my coming back will repay thee. Which of these three, seemeth to thee to have been neighbour of him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:30-37).

Grace and truth in Christ changed all. It was not only from earth to heaven now acting on souls who believed, but love that raised above our own things, imitating God, as the Apostle puts it, like dear children, Christ Himself the motive and power no less than pattern.

Man’s sad lot is graphically shown in him who was going down from the place of religious privilege and pride to that of the curse, and fell in with robbers who took his all and beat him, leaving him half dead. Earthly priesthood, and earthly ministry, wholly failed. Only the despised One availed; and none was more despised or hated than a Samaritan, unless it were the One Who exceeds all comparisons. He on His errand of love, far from passing by and shutting up His inmost feelings of compassion, came up and bandaged the wounds, pouring on soothing and cleansing grace, dismounted to raise up the wretched one now comforted, and took him under His care. Doubtless it is the Lord’s congenial sketch of practical grace for the lawyer’s help; but it is the shadow of His own path day by day, and far indeed from exhausting or even describing what was deepest in His work. Nor is His love satisfied with thoughtful beneficence for the present; He charges himself with the future in terms all the more striking, because the figure is homely. How full and transcendent is the love which is not bounded by ties of flesh or obligations of earthly duty, but flows from a divine and eternal spring from within, and only finds objects of need without to act on, no person too repulsive, no need beyond the resources of grace. "And on the morrow He took out and gave two denaries to the inn-keeper, and said to him, Take care of him, and whatever thou shalt spend more, I at my coming back will repay thee." Yes, His provision while absent is adequate, whatever the unbelief may think of it as of Him; and when He returns, what repayment where He is trusted! What forfeits, where He is scorned! Even the lawyer could not but feel the appeal, and own the superiority of that mercy which the Lord depicted and exemplified. If he ever did in like manner, it must have been through the faith that received the Saviour and realised the truth and love of God in Him.

God Himself is now acting on such love, though shown in a way infinitely more profound in giving His own Son up to compassionate, save, and bless the powerless and ungodly. It is no question of a claim but of ruin in man and of grace in Himself: only the work of Christ makes it righteous in God, and us righteous in Christ. Such is the efficacy of His death on the cross.

How does it affect you, dear reader? It finds you a lost and rebellious sinner. Such you have been really, whoever you are and whatever you may have seemed to yourself or other men. You may have sought and provided a religious veil; but it is of no more value in God's eye than the web the spider weaves. Their webs, says the prophet, shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. For none are prouder or more bitter than natural men under a veil of religion. The way of peace they know not, and there is no judgment in their goings. They have made their paths crooked: whose goeth therein knoweth not peace.

All depends for efficacy on Christ alone. He it is Who brings God to man and man to God; but it is vain for me or you or any that hear the gospel unless we believe on Him. This is to submit to the righteousness of God, Who is ever found in His grace, by him who truly owns his sins in the faith of Christ. Oh, fellow sinner, dare to be thorough in confessing what you have done and are at the feet of Jesus Who never rejects one that comes confiding in the call of God. It is what God delights in; it is to vindicate Him and honour His dishonoured Son, the all-worthy One, in the face of every foe, and of all our own sins and unbelief. Do not drop this call to your soul. You cannot pretend that you do not need the Saviour; or that you are now pleasing God Who summons you to believe in Him. Turn to Him therefore at once, and confess your guilt and evil, but doubt not His grace. Look not away till you rest on Him and His precious blood which cleanses from every sin.

8 The importunate Appeal

Luke 11:5-13.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 246-248. Gospel No. 6: 8.) The Holy Spirit at this point in the Gospel of Luke brings together, as is His manner frequently, two things which may have been by no means near historically, to illustrate a great moral truth. The value of the divine word, and of prayer. The one closes Luke 10:1-42, the other opens Luke 11:1-54. Of His own will God the Father begot us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures (James 1:18). So Peter in his First Epistle (1 Peter 1:22) speaks of our having purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Wherefore as new-born babes, we are exhorted, laying aside evil of word, deed, and spirit, to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby unto salvation, the salvation ready to be revealed at Christ's appearing. The same word of God that quickened us who believe, nourishes, strengthens, and guards our souls. Paul teaches the same truth. Faith is by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:1-31), not by baptism, for he had baptised very few, but by the gospel which they received of him and he preached to them. It was the word which corrected their faults and restored their souls, as we see in 2 Cor. For Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, to a sure and glorious end. Nor is John a whit less explicit; for he shows us the disciples already clean because of the

word Christ had spoken to them (John 15:1-27). They are sanctified through the truth, which the word is (John 17:1-26). But when we have received the word as Mary did in the love of it, and at the feet of Jesus, we none the less but the more need prayer to walk worthily of God, Who called us to His kingdom and glory. And so we find the Lord, as He is seen continually in prayer, teaching His disciples to pray. For the life we receive in Him, as it is of God, so lives in dependence on Him habitually and in obedience of His will made known in His word. Man, as our Lord cited to the tempter, shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God. My meat, said He to the disciples, is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work; and again, As the living Father sent Me and I live (not merely "by" but) on account of the Father; so he that eateth Me, as every true Christian does, even he shall live on account of Me. Christ thus becomes the believer's object and motive. None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's (Romans 14:1-23). And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:1-21).

Hence the great apostle lays down that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5). The word here used goes, no doubt, beyond the ordinary word for prayer and implies that intercourse which is now open to us with God by redemption, and encourages us in all intercession because of the access we have into the grace wherein we stand. But it is thoroughly prayer to God in a way that is as full as it is free which His love sanctions, now that His righteousness is manifested, the word expressing what comes from Him, as prayer what goes up to Him, in the life of faith. On the details of the prayer here given, and yet more fully in the Gospel of Matthew, we need say little beyond noticing the efforts of unbelief to assimilate them. Each is perfect for the purpose of God where they are given, the shorter one for Gentile instruction no less than the longer for believers of the circumcision. The petition for 'he earth is here omitted, as also about that power of evil, which the Jew must know peculiarly to mark the time which precedes their deliverance and blessing at the end. But what a stimulus the Lord here adds! "And he said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and 1 have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. I say to you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (Luke 11:5-8).

Truly the Saviour needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. As really man as Adam, He was always and perfectly above all the taint of fallen humanity, "the born holy Thing." Not only He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, but in Him, it could be and is said absolutely, is no sin. And He know what is in God, for God He was and is for ever. He was thoroughly aware of man's reluctance to draw near to God, and his indisposition to expect good from God. Man is not a giver himself, least of all does he feel that God gives continually and abundantly in the natural sphere of man's wants. But that God should give His best, the Son of His love, to deliver him from evil and from judgment, to blot out his sins, to give him life eternal, so exceeds all that is in his own heart and all that his conscience justly needs, that he cannot, will not, believe it, even though God has sent the most complete and solemn testimony in the grace and

truth that came by Jesus Christ His Son. He is averse to the glad tidings, because it makes nothing of man, every-tidings, be thing of God's own goodness in Christ. If it were only a rite or an institution of mysterious efficacy by man and for man, this he could understand; something done for him if not by himself by another, this he could trust, especially if many others accepted the same way. But to own himself only evil, God alone good, most and best of all in giving His Only-begotten that he might live and have Him as propitiation for his sins, this indeed is God's love beyond creature thought, yet the very love we are called to believe in the gospel. In early days a great persecutor had it revealed to and in him, as he was given to see the glorified Lord and to hear the words of His mouth. What was the immediate effect? "Behold, he prayeth." And so it ever is. Faith in Him leads into new relationships and creates new wants; while the old man is still there, though judicially condemned in the cross and calling for vigilant self-judgment in the practice of every hour here below. But the believer not only was justified by faith and has peace through our Lord Jesus Christ; through Him he possesses access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. No doubt he is called to praise and give thanks continually, but to pray in his weakness and exposure to a world of evil and a sleepless subtle foe. As prayer is due to our God and Father, so is it most necessary for His children. And the Lord illustrates it even from man, evil as he is, and though appealing at midnight, when difficulties were greatest. Yet then, where the want was urgent, and without any resource to meet it, a mere man does not fail to rise and give, not for friendship alas! but because of importunity. How much more should the believer count on God! "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened. For every one that asketh receiveth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." God giveth to all life and breath and all things; it is His nature.

Relationship only adds to this. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if [he ask] a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion?" An enemy might, but God is the truest of friends, a Father as none also approaches. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall the Father who [is] of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:11-13)? The Lord has in view His own in their new wants and awaiting their special privilege. The Spirit, though ever working in the family of faith, was to be given, as the Son was already; the Son for sinners, the Spirit to saints. The disciples were awaiting the promise of the Father and received the Spirit at Pentecost, when Peter laid down the terms, "Repent, and be baptised each of you on the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). No wonder that they continued stedfastly, as in other holy functions, so "in prayers," fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

9 The Blasphemy of God's Power in Christ

Luke 11:14-26.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 263-264. Gospel No. 6: 9.) The casting out of unclean spirits or demons has a great place in the synoptic Gospels, and most justly. It fell to the fourth Gospel rather to set out the positiveness of life eternal in Christ and of the Holy Spirit to be sent in His name on His departure. In the Gospel of Mark it is the first miracle recorded, and it often reappears and with no little detail. Our Gospel begins His ministry characteristically with His words of grace to man, and if His own would not hear, to the Gentile; for grace is sovereign. But the special power of Satan over man

(never so manifest as when Jesus was here) immediately follows, as we may readily see the prominent place it has also in Matthew's Gospel. But Christ's power in expelling demons drew out man's hatred and blasphemy. "Through Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, he casteth out demons," said some; as others tempting sought from Him a sign out of heaven. The folly and wickedness of such an imputation the Lord proved at once. Not only would Satan be at war with himself, but their own sons who cast out demons reproved them. Yet in their case it was rare, in His constant and unfailing, the witness that, if the display of God's kingdom in power and glory is not yet, that kingdom had come upon them in His person. Alas! the old sentence Was renewed only more stringently their heart grown fat, their ears heavy, their eyes closed as asleep, lest they should be converted, and healed of God.

Thereon the Lord states first the case of God's gracious power in Him, next the consequence of unbelief in them.

"When the strong one in arms keepeth his own court, his goods are in peace; but when the stronger than he cometh upon and conquereth him, he taketh away his panoply on which he relied and divideth his spoils" (Luke 11:21-22). This the Lord was then doing before all eyes in the land. The acceptable year of Jehovah was manifest, not yet to all the world, but in Him Who in the wilderness had vanquished Satan in simple obedience and by the written word. This is the moral power of the Spirit in man; and the Lord was the blessed witness of it in perfection. This was followed by the powers of the age to come, manifestations then of that energy which will wholly deliver the coming age from the enemy. Long had the strong exercised his baneful, blasting influence, long were his goods in peace. Now the stronger than he was come and had conquered him. His power was broken before the Seed of the woman; he could no longer retain his possessions. Demons, were they a legion, were cast out. Blind saw, lame walked, lepers were cleansed, deaf heard, dumb spoke, and dead were raised.

It is true that the devil was not yet crushed, and had departed from Him but for a season. He had sought in vain to draw Him out of the path of obedience; he would return to kill Him in it. But this would only turn to a greater victory for God and man, not merely over "his goods" in the present, but in the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world. The question of guilt and evil in the face of judgment and eternity would then he solved as it now is in the precious blood and death and resurrection of Him Who sits at God's right hand in glory.

Still the victory already gained was great, and the ground of confidence for all that would follow in its time, and the wondrous way of God in the cross. If, as Luke says, some from among the crowd, blasphemed; if, as Matthew says, the Pharisees did, and, as Mark says, the scribes, all together show that the Jews did high and low, religious and learned emphatically, to their common and utter ruin, But the Lord points out the crisis for faith. When the worst unbelief works, it is just the moment for bold openness of faith. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Luke 11:23). With this standard the believer too wins the victory. The middle way here is a delusion. Christ alone is worthy of all trust. Neutrality here is fatal. To be with Him is imperative; to gather save with Him is scattering, however fair man's promise or the appearance for the moment.

How is it with you, my reader? "I am (said He) the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on

me hath life eternal." Dread then above all things not to be with Him. If you are not with Him, you are against Him. Any or every other companion fails to be a security: Christ alone is so. And He is the True God and eternal life, so gathering with Him alone stands, and is acceptable to God. All that embraces or seeks the world bears on itself the brand of the enemy, and is in no way of the Father. Nay more, there is no gathering of saints that pleases God, unless Christ be the test and the centre. And the claim of infallibility for any man but Him Who is God is most daring sin against God, and a most manifest antichrist, denying the Father and the Son, however secure such think themselves.

What then is the consequence? "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he goeth through dry places seeking rest; and finding none he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out. And having come he findeth it swept and adorned. Then he goeth his way and taketh seven other spirits worse than himself; and entering in they dwell there; and the, last of that man [is] worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).

It is the failing away, the apostasy followed by the man of sin. The unclean spirit of idolatry among the Jews was the precursor and moral cause of the captivity in Babylon. Since then the Jews have been generally free of that evil, conspicuously so after the Maccabees prevailed. But they no less peremptorily rejected Jesus the Messiah. They were against Him, and, instead of gathering, scattered and were scattered as never before nor so long. And they are still "empty," as Matthew says, empty of the power of God. What avails then to be swept and adorned? The old unclean idolatrous spirit will surely return, with the sevenfold power of the enemy; and how awful the end for the many! A remnant who will then be with Jesus will be graciously owned as His own, and they with Him will be the centre for the gathered peoples of the earth. In Luke the Holy Spirit does not confine its bearing to "that generation," but widens it to "man." And the end of the individuals and the nations of Christendom will be no better. For God is not mocked. They have not continued in God’s goodness and must also be cut off. They are largely idolatrous already, and this will grow to greater ungodliness, to the apostasy and the man of sin for them as for the unbelieving Jews.

Oh! then receive Christ, and the love of the truth that you may be saved, while the door stands open and God calls you to believe in His Son.

10 The rich Fool

Luke 12:16-21.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 276-277. Gospel No. 6: 10.)

Christ puts before the disciples the consequences of Jewish unbelief. The light of God’s testimony shines only the brighter. He is the Son of Man as well as the Messiah, and His rejection by the old people of God but opens the door of grace through His death to all the nations of mankind. Here He warns of not Sadducean evil only but of Pharisaic: their leaven was hypocrisy. But as God is light, so everything covered up shall be revealed.

Such is Christ and Christianity. The veil is rent, and the blood of Christ brings the believer to God, Who alone, not man, is to be feared. And the Son of man is the test. Him who Shall confess Him before men will the Son confess also before the angels. For now it is not a question of the earth, but of hell (Gehenna) and of heaven, of things eternal, not seen and temporal. And the testimony

of the Holy Spirit is final: he that blasphemes Him shall not be forgiven. The Holy Spirit deigns to teach the believer; no matter what the emergency, he need not be anxious: the Holy Spirit suffices (Luke 12:1-12).

Another root of evil is now laid bare thoroughly — covetousness. "Teacher (said one), speak to my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who constituted Me a judge or divider over you?" This the Lord will be in the most glorious way when He comes in His kingdom. It was therefore no unreasonable wish for one, who if he owned Him as Messiah, had no perception of the change His rejection brings. It was in no way for the rejected Messiah to divide earthly inheritances. "And he said to them, See and keep yourselves from covetousness; for, while one may have abundance, his life is not in his possessions. And he spoke a parable unto them, saying, The land of a certain rich man bore fruitfully. And he reasoned in himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to gather my crops? And he said, This will I do: I will take down my granaries, and build greater; and there will I gather all my produce and my good things. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for many years: rest, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night is thy soul required of thee; and whose shall be what thou didst prepare? Thus [is] he that treasureth up for himself, and [is] not rich toward God" (Luke 12:13-21). Are not these evils rife now in Christendom? Do not both abound in what we are apt to think the most favoured lands on earth? Who can deny their sanctioned prevalence among the Anglo-Saxon race? Where are they more unblushing than in England and America? What is a fair show in the flesh but hypocrisy, not merely in Establishments here or there, but quite as really in the dissenting societies? Where is not the influence of money dominant? Where is "the unrighteous mammon" so much discussed, so earnestly sought, and, as far as given, so glaringly vaunted? Money is treated even by pious men as the sinews of the gospel; just as the world counts it the sinews of war. The entire system of religious societies rests on the pillars of gold and silver. Never was there so deep and open and general an affront put on the Holy Spirit; never did Christian effort rest on so debasing a foundation. Never were souls encouraged so distinctly to make money insatiably that they may give more liberally. In this gold and gain-hunting day are not Christians as assiduous and eager to heap up wealth as the sons of this age? And if they spend on themselves and their families, who reproves worldliness, if there be fairly large gifts for the chapel and the societies, for Bibles, for Tracts, and for Missions, to enumerate no more?

Here the Lord presents the picture of an everyday reality. Covetousness implies no dishonesty, and is not even hard or sharp dealing, being no more than the desire of more: the very spring of modern effort, the motive of bettering himself commended to all from the mechanic to the millionaire. Thus the creature becomes the object, not God; and therefore is covetousness declared to be idolatry. It is man looking down, not up in dependence on God. The rich man was not content, but high-minded and trusted not in God but in the certainty of what is most uncertain. Rich in good works he was not, nor liberal in distributing, nor grateful for the abundance which he had, nor disposed to communicate. He aspired after greater things and planned for nothing but his own ease and enjoyment, as if he had a lease for ever. God was in none of his thoughts, but read them all. When the rich man called on his soul to be merry over the many goods laid up for many years, the summons came: "Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

O my reader, rich or poor, is this your folly? For it may be in hope, yet more frequently than in possession; and God is not mocked. Many a rich man perishes in his selfish ease; many would-be

rich fall into temptation and a snare, into unwise and hurtful lusts which plunge them into destruction and ruin. Oh! look to Him Who, being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we by His poverty might be enriched. The abiding riches of glory we, changed into His likeness, shall receive and use aright. The riches of His grace He offers you now in His redemption. Despise not them nor Him; for this is to brave or court perdition. Confess your true place as a lost sinner before God, that He may give the salvation of your soul now by the faith of Christ, and by-and-by the salvation of your body at His coming.

11 Waiting for the Lord

Luke 12:35-38.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 292-293. Gospel No. 6-11.)

Throughout this chapter the Lord is withdrawing His disciples, now that His rejection proceeded and His departure approached, from their thoughts and ways as Jews. This is ever wholesome, for it grounds the believer in Christianity, which nature and the world resist. But then it was absolutely requisite and of the highest value that they should be weaned from the old weak and beggarly elements, to learn, enjoy, and live the new thing. It is not the power of Messiah present and governing here below, but God’s word and Spirit. Hence the unseen and eternal things are revealed; hence confession of the truth, of the rejected One, is imperative, as God only is to be feared, and the danger is of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Only the gracious Lord encourages the faith that owns Him by the very things which terrify unbelief. Earthly justice is not His care now; nor should earthly care be theirs. What was the portion of the rich man that forgot his soul? The disciples are called to confide in Him Who feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies and the grass, with a glory beyond Solomon’s. Why then should they be anxious like the nations of the world? Their Father knows their bodily wants, and adds these things to such as seek His kingdom. Moreover He would have them of good courage; for was it not His delight to give them the kingdom? Hence, far from covetousness, they were called to be kings now in superiority to money. The world was no more their quest, but to use its things in unselfish love. This is to make for themselves an unfailing treasure in the heavens, where also their heart was to be. And thus in practice they become heavenly. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye like men awaiting their own lord, when he may return from the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may immediately open to him. Blessed are those bondmen whom the lord on coming shall find watching! Verily I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline at table, and come up and serve them. And if he come in the second watch, and in the third, and find them so, blessed are they!" (Luke 12:35-38)

Here then beyond just question the Lord lays down the attitude of the Christian. Is it yours? He Himself is the test beyond all else. It is not consistent with faith to be worried with anxiety about the things that perish. It is well to be of good cheer, knowing His love and His purpose of glory for the little flock, tried and exposed as it now is. But to be like men that wait for their own lord is a still more positive and decisive test. It presupposes in a personal way faith working by love. Their treasure is in the heavens where He is. They love Him, because He first loved them. They do not forget Him in His absence; they are not merely occupied with their work, for indeed their loins were girt about and their lamps burning, but themselves awaiting their own Lord. Nor again were they discussing dates, nor on the lookout for political change, nor yet with eyes fixed on signs in the

sun, moon, and stars. The Christian watches for Christ. He, his life, his righteousness, his Saviour, his Lord, is gone with the promise of coming to receive him to Himself, one knows not how soon. And He has sent His last message since that He is coming quickly.

Therefore would we not doubt but wait, content with His word Who is the Truth, and the Faithful and True Witness. Long as it may seem, He is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, "but is longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." As He is waiting, so should we be; and thus we keep the word of His patience, but assure our hearts in the bright hope. Is He not worthy? is not the hope well worth the while? and is it not deep consolation that meanwhile many hear His voice, believe in His name, and with us wait for Him?

O my reader, if it be not so with you, where are you, and what? You well know whether you are waiting for the Lord Jesus; yea others, even the world, can in fair measure judge whether this is your habitual attitude. The Lord recognises no other object of hope in His own. This is also the chief responsibility as His bondmen. Be assured that other duties will be done all the better, because this has the first and constant place. Read all the N.T. and see if this hope be not bound up with every joy and sorrow, with the walk and work and worship of the Christian, who found in Him the object of faith when he was a lost sinner and now as a saint has none other as his hope. If you believe in Him, be not untrue to Him as your hope, but judge yourself in every thing that hinders your waiting for Him day by day.

If you have no faith in Him, how sad is your estate! Perhaps you are so beguiled by the spirit of the age growingly infidel, as to deny His glory as the Son of God and His humiliation as the Son of man. Perhaps you deny His resurrection, if not His death, yea the death of the cross. You deny all this at your peril; and your peril is everlasting punishment. For it is folly to suppose that, if the Son of God came to be propitiation for our sins, God did not give adequate proof to make mankind responsible to receive Him, and verily, fatally, guilty in rejecting Him. To reject a divine Person, Who in infinite love deigned to die in order to save you and me by faith from judgment, cannot be a secondary thing. It is the truth that God now testifies to all in the gospel, which bears the self-evidence of His holy love as no pretended sacred book does comparably. It has been proved to the peace and joy and salvation of millions as guilty and incredulous as you. Why then be so careless, so mad, so wicked as to fight more against God, and turn His message of mercy, because refused, into a sentence of condemnation righteous and everlasting? Receiving the Lord Jesus by faith, you are entitled by God’s grace to salvation, and can then welcome His coming with love and delight; and triumph. You can then join those that are waiting for Him, that, when He knocks, you may open to Him immediately.

Job 38:7 appears to express poetically the joy of the orbs of heaven when first ushered in as the hosts of heaven, with the audible acclaim of the angels, who in this book as in Genesis are called God’s sons.

12 Working for the Lord

Luke 12:41-44.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 308-309. Gospel No. 6-12.)

Christ is the fullest test for every soul of man, for sinner or for saint. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him; as he that has seen Him, the Son, has seen the Father. For no one has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father — He has declared Him. All blessing for the sinner turns on receiving the Saviour. He only is the propitiation for our sins, as He alone gives the believer life eternal. So also Christ makes manifest the practical difference between one believer and another. Thus of the two sisters with their brother, whom Jesus loved, Mary was shown to have chosen the good part which should not be taken from her; whereas Martha chose rather that much serving which distracted her, and made her grumble because her sister sat down at His feet, listening to His word. Not otherwise is it here in the Lord's estimate of waiting for Him with working for Him. Undoubtedly the believer is called to do both. But we readily let slip His mind, and are apt to prefer what gives us importance to what pleases Him most. Now the lack of being filled with the sense of His glory and His grace weakens and injures our service; because it exposes us to the ways, if not devices, of our own activity, instead of dependence on Him and subjection to His word.

Hence our Lord draws the twofold picture of blessedness in this chapter. (Luke 12:1) "Blessed are those bondmen whom the Lord on coming shall find watching: verily I say to you, that he will gird himself and make them recline at table, and coming up will serve them" (Luke 12:37). And He repeats their blessedness in the following verse. What immense grace on His part! It was love that wrought thus mightily. It was His love that created theirs; His that was seen by faith to be so great in One so glorious that formed and fed theirs, and drew them out in waiting for Him as their chiefest, clearest, and constant hope. At His coming He will not forget their loving and worshipping hearts. He will show in the day of His glory His appreciation of their longing for Him, while others expended it more or less on other objects. It will be His joy, never ceasing His service of love even in glory, to pay them especial honour, girding Himself to serve them.

(2) But there is more than this, though not so near His heart nor so high morally. For when Peter said, "Lord, sayest thou this parable to us or also to all?" the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward whom his lord will set over his household to give them the portion of food in season? Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus: verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath" (Luke 12:41-44). Here it is working as distinguished from waiting or watching. It is doing Him service, rather than the eyes of the heart fixed on His coming. His interests may be cared for with zeal, His work done faithfully and with intelligence. Sinners are sought earnestly that they may be saved; saints are loved and tended because they are precious to Him. Neither is the Lord unmindful of the service; nor is God unrighteous to forget the work. For that bondman whom the Lord on coming shall find so doing, He will set over all that He has. And has He not pledged Himself so to act, Who is Heir of all things? The servant shall share in the display of His Lord's glory, if he serve faithfully now in the day He is slighted.

Yet great and glorious as will be the day of recompence, and the requital worthy of Him Who is now served, however weakly in the face of the world which crucified the Lord of glory, what are such returns, wondrous as they shall be, compared to the inner scene of His love! Then, according to the graphic figure, He will make them recline in the Father's house and serve them in that loving service that has no end. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory. All the world will see and know it. But it is a deeper thing to enjoy His personal love and honour in a way beyond all creature thought and the world's ken, as He here promises to

the bondmen who wait and watch for Him.

O my reader, how is it with you as you read these lines? You may not be conscious of enmity to the Lord Jesus. But are you a confessor of His name? Are you following Him openly as well as believing in Him? Remember the ruler so moral from his youth, who could bear neither to part with his large possessions, nor to follow Christ. It is indeed impossible with men, but not with God, as the Lord said; for all things are possible with God. And what has He done for you and your salvation? — given His own Son to become a man, and a bondman, and a sacrifice that you by faith may lay your hand on that all-efficacious Burnt-Offering. "And it shall be accepted for you to make atonement for you." For nothing less than this, but even more, does the gospel of God present to you in His name.

Fear not therefore if you draw near in that Name of Jesus which is above every name; fear not; only believe. You cannot make too much of the one Mediator between God and man. God will honour your drawing on His infinite grace, if you draw in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Son of God became man, Christ Jesus, and gave Himself a ransom for all; and the Holy Spirit in the gospel proclaims it now that you may believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. This is God's testimony in the good news, and these are its own times. The night comes when none can work and none can hear, when those that refuse to hear must perish. If it be so with you, it is your own sin. God sent His only-begotten Son that you might not perish but have life eternal. Oh! hear His word that you may believe and be saved.

05.09. Gospel Words - Seventh Series.

Gospel Words — Seventh Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Wicked Servant 2 . The Fruitless Fig-tree 3 What is God's kingdom like 4 The Uprising of the Housemaster

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Luke 12:45-48.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 323-324. Gospel No. 7-1.)

Instructive and solemn is the picture which the Lord draws of the servant in Luke 12:45-46, rendered still more full and precise in Luke 12:47-48, when a notable difference comes to light. When our Lord announced His departure to the Father's house, and the mission of another Advocate, the Holy Spirit to be in and with the disciples, He was no less distinct in promising His own coming again to receive them unto Himself, for the same place as Himself on high. And when gazing into heaven after their ascending Master, they were told. by unimpeachable testimony that He should thus come as they had seen Him go. There is no doubt that in apostolic times the church walked in this hope, and that the mouths of preachers and teachers then spoke of it out of the abundance of their heart. Yet none ever regarded it as a question of date, any more than the Lord Who revealed it as a simple and pure and constant hope from His love to their love. And this difference is the more striking, because, the day of His appearing, which in due time follows His coming for His heavenly saints, is associated with prophecy and its judgments and signs in both the Old Testament and the New.

Hence the earnestness with which the apostle taught the converts, like those in Thessalonica from their first start, to await God's Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Not only did He write of His coming with all His saints in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, but of His coming for them to raise and change them, as a necessarily antecedent action in 1 Thessalonians 4:12-17. He does much more; for he identifies himself and all saints with it as their proximate hope by saying, not "they" as at a distant future, but "we, the living, that survive" (in contrast with those meanwhile "put to sleep by Jesus") until the coming (or presence) of the Lord, shall not precede those put to sleep. Both were to be caught up together. The aim of the Spirit of truth, Who knew the end from the beginning, and expressly gave the message "in the word of the Lord," was to put the hope over before the heart, made sure of its fruition, but by set purpose not sure when, so that all the saints might be always looking for it. It was impossible otherwise to have the hope common, constant, and living. Infidels and those under their influence mock, as if it was the apostle's error, at that which was really the perfect wisdom of

God in giving "one hope," which never did nor can pass away till His coming shall be its crown. In the parable the Lord points out from the first that putting off the hope would betray the evil heart of unbelief, the root of other evils.

"But if that bondman say in his heart, My lord delayeth to come, and shall begin to beat the men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat and drink and be drunken, the lord of that servant will have come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour that he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder and set his portion with the unfaithful" (Luke 12:45-46).

It is not a doctrinal mistake (though this is not a slight thing with God's word and Spirit to direct aright), but the far more serious aberration of the "heart," which is too easy where this doctrine may be held. How sad the soul's state where Christ's coming is unwelcome; and the bondman does what his heart likes! Thus is the separative power of the hope lost, and its attraction to Him Who is coming and His word. Violence ensues towards his fellows, who become disagreeable, as the world with its enjoyments become pleasant company. Can any words more graphically sketch Christendom's practical ruin, of which the first symptom was the heart's plea, My Lord delayeth His coming? This will not hinder but rather hasten His coming unexpectedly, Who will punish his disloyalty and assign his portion with the faithless, notwithstanding all his boast of Christian privileges. In the verses that follow, the Lord rules, that sad as the heathen's case may be in the day that hastens, incomparably worse is the Christian professor's. "And that bondman who knew his own lord's will and made not ready nor did his will, shall be beaten with many [stripes]; but he who knew [it] not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few. And to every one to whom much has been given, much shall be required of him; and to whom they commit much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48).

O my reader, forget not that You have an open Bible, hear the gospel, are sometimes troubled when you think of your sins and feel ashamed because you shrink from confessing the Lord's name, as much as you love the world and the things of the world. "The end of those things is death;" after which comes judgment. How will your guilt and the madness of your unbelief seem then when it is too late? Oh, turn not away from Him that speaks from heaven of His cleansing blood, Whose voice will soon shake earth and heaven also. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, end thou shalt be saved." His grace now is as sure to the believer, as His judgment will be shortly terrible for the unbeliever. God is not mocked.

2. The Fruitless Fig-tree

Luke 13:6-9.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 339-340. Gospel No. 7: 2.)

Men are apt to dwell on shocking events, and to measure the guilt of the victims accordingly. So it was when the Lord warned of the crisis for the Jewish people which His presence could not but bring about. For He was there in the testimony of the truth and in the humiliation of grace, not yet in the power and glory of the Kingdom; He was there for faith to receive, but for unbelief to refuse or despise. If rejection unto death was before Him, they were on the way to the sure dealings of God in judgment. Then it was that some reported to Him the tragic end of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. But our Lord in answer corrects their own thought of exceptional guilt in that case, and solemnly warns them that, except they repented, they should all

perish in the same way. Nay more, He points to the eighteen men, not slain by an unfeeling and truculent Roman, on whom the tower of Siloam fell. Yet were they debtors beyond all the men in Jerusalem? On the contrary He repeats, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." This is God's voice to sinful man in the present disorder of the world. Man is no competent judge of the tangled scene; but he is loudly called through such events to judge himself before God, in short to repent. And the Lord gives the call divine force: "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

O my reader, except you repent, worse impends over you than what befell those then occupied with passing sorrows. How often their blood was mingled afterwards with their sacrifices by their own infuriate zealots! Worse, far worse, impends over you than when the burning ruins of the temple buried its multitudes, who vainly trusted the sanctuary instead of repenting of their sins. For what is any judgment in providence compared with the everlasting judgment of God? And what is more inevitable for man? "It is appointed to men once to die, but after this, judgment." How unutterably appalling for the unrepentant! For it surely means no less than everlasting destruction. The Lord adds a parable also to enforce the truth. "A certain one had a fig-tree, planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, Behold, three years I come seeking fruit on the fig-tree and find none: out it down; why cumbereth it the ground? But be answering saith to him, Sir, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it and put manure. And if it produceth fruit thenceforth,-; but if not, thou shalt cut it down" (Luke 13:6-9). Can any doubt be that the Lord has in view the elect nation planted, not casually, but in His vineyard, with every advantage of site and of care? But no fruit was found. Of this there was more than adequate witness. For three years it is waited on for fruit, but there is none. It was worse than useless. It was a nuisance. Cut it down, said the owner. But He Who felt for God's rights and called the guilty to repent felt also compassion for man, and urges the plea, "Let it alone this, year also." New and final measures were to be taken. "If it shall produce fruit thenceforth,-; but if not, thou shalt cut it down."

Alas! we know the issue. No wonder the Lord leaves a blank. What had He not done? What had He not suffered? Even on the cross He cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But as they bore no fruit — nothing but leaves, so they in their pride should not be forgiven, rejecting every proof of their need and guilt. Hence they have lost not only their place as a nation but their religious status. The fig-tree is withered away. It was the people under law; never more shall there be fruit of it for ever. Thank God, there will be a generation to come; and it will believe in Him. That generation, not this, will repent. That generation, not this, will say, Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. His blood will wash them from their sins, instead of being as now a curse on them and their children. And He will write His laws in their minds, as He will give them to their hearts, never remembering more their sins and their lawlessnesses. For it is the new covenant of God's grace, not of man's works only to show them worthless and evil.

Meanwhile God is sending His glad tidings to you. to Gentile as well as Jew; yea now to the Gentiles emphatically, for it is the day of grace. He now enjoins men that they should all everywhere repent. Oh! hear the call and own yourself lost that you may receive the Saviour. This He is to the uttermost now toward all that repent. How would it be with you if He were come to judge the habitable earth in righteousness? How could you stand before the Judge? It is now His call that you repent. He waits to be gracious to you in all your ruin and to save you from your sins. He can afford and loves to do it, for His blood cleanseth from every sin.

3 What is God’s kingdom like

Luke 13:18-21.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 356-357. Gospel No. 7-3.) The kingdom of God is no secret hid in Himself. It is a purpose revealed of old in His word. When Moses and the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea which covered Pharaoh’s host, they sang, "Jehovah will reign forever." But this, like every thing else under the law, for the present failed through their sins. At length they rejected Jehovah’s reign, desiring a king "like all the nations." Saul their choice was their sorrow and shame; but God in pity gave them David and Solomon. Even then all was but provisional, and at best but a type of God’s Son, the true King, Who alone will make good His throne on the holy hill of Zion. When the Lord Jesus presented Himself to the Jews, they proved their evil estate by denying and crucifying Him, as their prophets had foreshown. And He Who knew all beforehand told that they should not see Him henceforth till they should say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah. But they surely will, and He will build up Zion, appearing in His glory. So the nations shall fear Him, and all the kings of the earth His glory. This will be the kingdom in the manifest sense, to which all the prophets gave witness, postponed as yet through Israel’s unbelief. When their heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away; to this day alas! it remains unremoved.

Meanwhile the Lord in His ministry here below announced the mystery or secret of the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11), while the King, rejected on earth, is absent on high. The consequence is that divine power is not manifested in the removal of Satan and the putting down of all the enemies; it works spiritually in those that believe, whilst a vast system of mere profession grows up and spreads to a certain extent here below. This last and by the Jews wholly unexpected result is what our evangelist was inspired to set out in our Lord’s two comparisons.

"And he said, To what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I liken it? It is like a grain of mustard which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew and became a great tree, and the birds of heaven lodged in its branches. And again he said, To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened" (Luke 13:18-21). The moral design of our Gospel is well illustrated by the peculiar introduction of the two parables at this point. No intimation marks that they were then uttered. The first Gospel gives them in their place where the seven parables disclose the kingdom of the heavens, or rather its mysteries, as a complete whole. The parable of the Sower is separated from them and given in connection with His own ministry in Luke 8:1-56; the others of Matthew 13:1-58. Luke does not at all record. Here the object is to enforce the solemn lesson of what man is in presence of "all the glorious things that were done by him" [the Lord] Adversaries might be put to shame; and all the crowd might rejoice. But man is the same as ever, and turns all to vanity and self-exaltation. Christendom with better privileges is not really better than Israel. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." "Ye must be born again." "If any one be in Christ, [there is] a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, new things are come. And all things are of God who reconciled us to himself through Christ." What are outward changes in His eyes? Yet man, professing man, without life in Christ, can show or effect nothing more. As the Lord described, such has been the course of God’s kingdom. In Luke 8:1-56 Luke tells us of the very different work wrought by the seed that figures the word of God. Even so it does not by any means produce in result what the Sower desired. For the enemy is not yet dislodged from his bad eminence, and he

avails himself of both the flesh and the world to spoil and hinder, besides his own destructive wiles. Still grace gives effect in good ground, and fruit is borne a hundredfold. But in the parable of the mustard seed which a man cast into his garden, we hear of the lofty growth from the lowly beginning of what bore the Lord's name here below. The symbol of a tree is taken, and of one that from a very little shot up to give shelter to the birds of the sky. So earthly potentates as the kings of Egypt and Assyria are described by Ezekiel, and the king of Babylon by Daniel; only that here stress is laid on the incongruity of what was originally small with its towering development in time. None can deny either fact in Christendom. As the philosophic Guizot says in his Lect. ii. on Civilization, "It was the church with its institutions, its magistrates, its power, which strove triumphantly against the internal dissolution which convulsed the empire, and against barbarity; which subdued the barbarians themselves, and became the link, the medium, the principle of civilization, as between the Roman and barbarian worlds." What a mighty factor on earth the little flock became! In the parable of the leaven, it is not the rise of earthly power out of what was originally despised, but the spread of doctrine till a given sphere was permeated. In it the creed-work of Christendom is portrayed. There is no thought of vital energy, only of a certain quantum assimilated by doctrine. Certainly grace in power is never so symbolised but doctrine such as that of Pharisees, Sadducees, or Herodians. Of this the natural mind is capable. The creed of Christendom, truth even, might be held, and held firmly, without faith and in unrighteousness (Romans 1:1-32). The action of the Holy Spirit appears in neither comparison.

O my reader, hear the word of God. Receive Christ, Who alone is the Saviour and gives life eternal. It is "of faith that it might be according to grace." Ordinances may figure truth but cannot save. On the ground of works you are lost; but Jesus is Lord and Saviour. "Ye are saved by grace through faith; and this not of yourselves [which some might have thought]; it is God's gift; not of works that none might boast." Jesus is the way, the sole and sure way, to the Father. Look to Him only, and call on Him. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The word of truth is the gospel of salvation to the believer.

4 The Uprising of the Housemaster

Luke 13:25-30.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 371-372. Gospel No. 7-4.) Do you believe these plain words of the Saviour? Do you, my dear reader, believe that the time is short, the Lord at hand, and the solemn change impends from grace to judgment? The scripture before us is but one of many like warnings, The day of grace will close with the "falling away," the apostacy. When once the House-master will have risen up and barred the door, how appalling to stand without and knock in vain! Did it ever come home that this might be your own case? Evade it not. The appeal arose out of the question, Are those to be saved few? The prophets had intimated such a remnant in terms as searching as they were repulsive to Jewish feeling. The Lord's words are a direct dealing with conscience. "Strive earnestly to enter through the narrow door; for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and shall not be able." Men are ready enough to do or suffer much for salvation. They welcome a means which allows of their efforts if not. deserts. But "ye must be born anew" is hateful, unless it be within their ability to hinge it on an ordinance, which works without bringing the soul into the

presence of God. This is what men naturally dread and shirk. They refuse to face God about their sins. Anything but the repentance which accompanies believing Him that sent Jesus. For He treats man, moral or not, as alike lost, and insists that salvation is in none other than Him Whom man despised and crucified. "For neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved." It is therefore by grace through faith ; and this not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works that none might boast. Hence strive earnestly to enter through the narrow door of being begotten by the word of truth. Entrance by any other way, however attractive, is vain and ruinous.

Thereon the Lord intimates the certainty that at an unexpected moment the Master of the house will close the gospel call. "When once the house-master hath risen up and shut the door, and ye shall begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he answering shall say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves cast out. And they shall come from east and west, and from north and south, and shall recline in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last" (Luke 13:25-30).

It is the rejection of Christ that tests souls; Christ in humiliation is the stumbling stone. So it was for the Jew then; so it is at bottom now for others. Yetis it thus that He has both glorified God and made propitiation for our sins. Christ crucified is to Jews a stumbling-block and to Gentiles foolishness; but to the called, both Jews and Greeks Christ is God’s power and God’s wisdom. There could be no gospel of grace without righteousness. Yet scripture is clear that it is not in the sinner to whom the gospel is preached. For "there is none righteous, no, not one." Hence the gospel is God’s righteousness, not man’s; and its ground is the redemption that is in Christ. And His righteousness is unto all, that they might hear the glad news, and upon all those who believe, that they might know themselves justified by faith. But this is not all the truth. He, the Lord Jesus — He will appear in glory to judge the habitable earth. In vain will men in that day say, Lord, open to us. He who now calls in love will sentence the guilty. He will say, I know you not whence ye are. For had they heard the word in faith, they had received, not only pardon and peace, but life in Christ. And His life is the only and the sure source of the fruit of righteousness which is by Him to God’s glory and praise. Not receiving Christ to life eternal men are but "workers of iniquity," the baptised no less than the circumcised, the Mahometan quite as much as heathen. Past privileges are pleaded to no purpose. "We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets." Neglected opportunities, slighted mercies, only aggravate guilt. He shall say in reply, "I tell you, I know not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." To the wicked, Gentile, Jew, or of Christendom, there is no peace: least of all to those who have heard most.

There indeed shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when in the kingdom the unbelieving Jews see their boasted fathers and prophets, but themselves cast out. But there is deep cheer for the despised Gentiles. For the Lord adds, "And they shall come from the east and west and from the north and south, and they shall recline in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last." Do you say, how terrible and true of unbelieving Israel, how blessedly true of the Gentiles who believe? What will it be for you who have heard the

gospel, and neglected so great salvation? What possible hope can be in that day! But blessing in faith there is now and ever.

5 The Guests

Luke 14:7-11.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 7-8. Gospel No. 7-5.)

It is beautiful and blessed to mark how our Lord turns the least things of daily life to everlasting account. This we find in all the Gospels, in none more than in that of Luke; whose design under the power of the Spirit was to contrast the God of grace with fallen selfish man, that through the faith of Christ and His work he might be saved and walk accordingly. Thus it is that the Lord spoke a parable unto those that were invited i.e. as guests, noticing how they chose out the first places (Luke 14:7).

"When thou art invited by anyone unto a wedding, recline not in the first place, lest perhaps a more honourable than thee be invited by him, and he that invited him and thee shall come and say to thee, Give this [man] place, and then thou begin with shame to take the last place. But when thou hast been invited, go, put thyself down in the last place, that when he who hath invited thee come, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in presence of all that recline with thee. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:8-11).

It is a world of evil, and man is fallen under sin and Satan, which gives occasion to grace and its ways, as God was then displaying in Christ. This tests the heart, which naturally seeks its own things, honour or power, ease or pleasure, money therefore as the means of gratifying self, whatever may be its direction. Here it was present honour that men coveted : and it is as true now as then. The true Light, coming into the world, laid every man bare. But He has done infinitely more. He, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, was the faithful witness, the living exemplar of all He taught, of all that pleased the Father. Who ever took the last place as He? If born in Bethlehem David’s city, to mark prophetically the "ruler in Israel," none the less was He the One "Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Yet was He to be smitten with a rod upon the cheek (Micah 5:1-2), as He was born in a manger, because there was no room for such in the inn (Luke 2:7). As the parents fled with Him into Egypt from the face of the destroying king, so did they return with Him to dwell, not only in Galilee the despised, but in its most despised Nazareth; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. So it was throughout the days of His flesh. Son of the highest, and subsisting in the form of God, He did not esteem it a thing to be grasped to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself. He did not and could not divest Himself of deity, but He did of glory, taking a bondman’s form, having come in the likeness of men. And who ever humbled Himself as He did unswervingly? Who but He could say, and say with absolute truth, "Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God?" Others, His servants may have done miracles as mighty, or, as He said, "Greater works than these;" but He and He alone never did His own will, always the Father’s. And this is the perfect moral place of man which He took and kept to God’s glory. But more even than this had to be if God were to be glorified about sin, if men were to be saved through faith from their sins? Would He stoop down to a depth unfathomable and bear the divine judgment of evil, so that the guilty might by grace be freed? Therefore it was that

having been found in figure as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, death of the cross. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for you, that you might be made God's righteousness in Christ. It was God's perfect way: no other could avail. Do you believe this, poor soul, miserable in the sense of your guilt, weary under sin's intolerable load, despairing haply of efforts to do the law of God? Not thus, never thus, can you come to God. He waits to be gracious, He can save to the uttermost; He gives all you need without money and without price, but only through your believing on Jesus, Who only is the way, and the truth, and the life; and He is the propitiation for our sins. How could it be otherwise? Did not the prophet say (seeing the great prediction as though come, seven centuries before the great fulfilment), "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

Believe God's call on you to doubt in yourself, to hear Christ's word (for the law can only condemn a sinner), and believe Him that sent Jesus in love as a Saviour. And what is His message to you? "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). The bold unbeliever braves the word of God and refuses to humble himself; the serious unbeliever tries to do better, trusting himself and his powers. The true believer owns himself lost, and finds Christ a Saviour indeed and in truth. Oh! look to Him and live. To the believer Christ is life as well as propitiation; and because He lives, we shall live also. He is our life now while we are on earth. Thus only do we live to God; and we are called all through to have Him as our object, and way, our motive, strength, and end. The apostle knew, and, walking thus, could say, To me to live is Christ (Php 1:21). Obedience, as He obeyed, is what the believer is sanctified to, in that humility which is content to be nothing in the world as it is. Christ took the last place. Let us who love Him seek to be as near that place as grace enables each. In the regeneration He will say to each of His own, Friend, go up higher. Then shall the poor and despised apostles sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then shall they that are Christ's, risen from the dead, reign with Him. The Corinthians sought to reign now, as do most in Christendom. But they were humbled, and by grace humbled themselves. Profit by that lesson; and God will exalt you in due time.

6 The Host

Luke 14:12-14.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 22-23. Gospel No. 7-6.) The Son of God was the true Light, Who, coming into the world, casts light on every man. It is not that all are enlightened by Him, but that He set each in the light. So here He lays bare alike guest and host. High and low, Jew or Gentile, Pharisee or Sadducee, priest or philosopher, were far from God; according as it is written, There is not a righteous man, not even one; nor he that understandeth; there is not one that seeketh after God: there is no fear of God before their eyes. If the law spoke thus of Israel, as it did, much more palpably did it apply to the heathen with their religious abominations and their unspeakable demoralisations; that every mouth might be stopped and all the world be under judgment to God.

Man seeks his own things and his own will; nor is any thing pleasanter to the natural man than to exalt himself. The Lord Jesus brings before us from first to last a mind wholly different. "For ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Such was the mind in Him and in all its perfection only there. But it is the mind God would have in His own now; and thus it was Christ spoke as we have here. It is an entire reversal of human thoughts generally, of Jewish feeling in particular. Settled down in the earth as it is, men seek present pleasure, worldly honour, earthly advantages. What did this age give Christ? A manger when born, nowhere to lay His head, and a cross to die on. What does Christ give to him that believes? Eternal life, and everlasting redemption. Life was in Him; and He gives it in Himself. Redemption He obtained by His death, and we have it in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of offences. Hearing His word, and believing Him Who sent Jesus, we are thus doubly blessed. Our evil He takes away, and His good He freely imparts for ever.

Thus believing we can profit by all He was and all He says. He has laid the axe to the root of the tree of self- seeking, and shown the blessing of humbling ourselves in a world quite out of course, in plain denial of a nature that seeks to be uppermost. Here He opens out the beauty of unselfishness in faith, love being the spring, glory the recompence and rest.

"And he said also to him that had invited him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen nor rich neighbours; lest haply they also invite thee in return, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, invite poor, crippled, lame blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they can not recompense thee; for thou shalt he recompensed in the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:12-14).

"It is more blessed to give than to receive," as He Himself not only said but acted on, Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by demons. If we have not that power, as things have long been, we are called to walk, as He walked, in love, and in distinct testimony of separateness to God from the pride of the world and the selfishness of the first man. Hence His exhortation would form our hearts for His path here below, instead of walking as men according to public opinion, which is just the spirit and course of the age. For if we are His, we are "heavenly" even now (1 Corinthians 15:48-49); as we are destined by grace to bear the image of the Heavenly at His coming.

Let our hearts then go forth to welcome the despised and suffering here below, and to show "the kindness of God" to poor, crippled, lame, blind. And the more too, in order to win their ear through the heart to hear of Him Who alone can take away the guilt and power of sin for eternity, Who alone brings through faith in Himself into the place of sons of God even now. Thus is the believer blessed himself; and those who, touched by unworldly love, receive the Saviour by believing on His name. And both will have their portion, when He comes, "in the resurrection of the just." For scripture never speaks of one common, simultaneous, and indiscriminate resurrection. There shall indeed be a resurrection of both just and unjust. But God’s word is clear and positive that the resurrection of the just differs not more in character and consequence than in time from that of the unjust. Hence the Lord calls the former a resurrection of life, the latter a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29): the one for such as have believed on Him and done good; the other for those that, dishonouring both the Son and the Father, only did ill, and are judged accordingly. In the great prophecy of the Revelation (Revelation 20:4-15), we find the gap, which severs these two resurrections, to be that special reign with Christ which follows the resurrection of life before the resurrection of judgment.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Had you in your own person spiritually all the disabilities of the poor, crippled, lame, and blind, you are none the less welcome to God's feast, to the glad tidings of His grace. Listen not to the tempter, but to the Saviour. Put not off His call. You are really worse than if yourself had all these bodily ailments together and with no means to alleviate them. For what state can be so awful as that of a lost sinner? And is not this actually yours? He Himself is express that He came to seek and save such. Oh, receive Him now! God's word warrants you. It is the only way a lost sinner can please Him. Doing good will follow here below, and the resurrection of the just at Christ's coming (1 Corinthians 15:23). Fear not, but believe God, Who has no purpose so dear to Him as the honour of His Son. Oh, no longer dishonour Him, the Son of His love, the Saviour of the lost!

7 The Great supper

Luke 14:16-24.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 37-38. Gospel No. 7-7.)

Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, said one to the Lord. Far different is the real thought, as was shown in the parable. Grace is repulsive to nature; man shrinks from God and slights His call.

"A certain man was making a great supper, and bade many; and he sent forth his bondman at supper-time to say to those that were bidden, Come, for things are now ready. And they all at once began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, I bought land and must go out to see it; I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to prove them; I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I married a wife, and on this account cannot come. And the bondman when he came up reported these things to his master. Then the house-master in anger said to his bondman, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the bondman said, Sir, What thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the bondman, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel [them] to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:16-24). The corresponding, though scarcely the same, parable in Matthew 22:2-14 is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, which gives prominence to the wedding feast for the king's son, to the dispensational difference of the Jews, and to the judgment that befell their city. Here man's moral roots are more laid bare; and where sin abounded, grace surpassed.

There was no harm in buying land, in acquiring oxen, or in marrying a wife. The evil lay in pleading these things, or any else, to set aside the call of God. The heart is at fault, which makes present interests or even duties a reason for putting God off and neglecting so great salvation. Have you, my reader, no object or pursuit, which stands between you and the knowledge of God and His Son which is life eternal? Be not deceived. Sin gives Satan the means of blinding every soul to the light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, as well as to his own ruin and exposure to the Gehenna of fire, where one's worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Your peril is extreme.

God in the gospel meets you in your need and guilt and danger. He asks nothing, He gives all things; and they are now ready. He provides a great supper; He invites freely. Oh, begin not once more to excuse yourself. Too long have you turned aside. Why should you die in your sins, lost for

ever? The Son of man expressly came to save the lost. But it is through faith.

Those who first had the invitation valued what was before them, forgot God's judgment for eternity. The Lord recorded their folly that you might fear God — the beginning of wisdom — that you might hear and live. He would give you another life, which is only in Himself, life eternal; and this life in Him loves the will of God, as it refuses the baits and bribes of the enemy. It begins with faith-obedience, and is sanctified by the Spirit to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus one becomes a child of obedience instead of fashioning oneself according to the former lusts in one's ignorance. The ball of God is paramount. He calls one to receive His grace in Christ. This is His commandment that we believe the name of His Son Jesus Christ. The first of rights is that God should have His rights; and He commands us to believe on the Lord Jesus.

See the activity of God's love. He is not content with gathering in the poor and maimed and blind and lame from the streets and lanes of the city. He will have His bondman go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them in importunate earnestness to come in. He insists that His house be filled. What a God is ours! A just God and a Saviour. He is assuredly. Why then trifle, when all blessing is proffered in Christ, when all is and must be ruin where He is refused? For does He not say to you, that none of those that were bidden shall taste of His supper? Are you not bidden? Come, then; for He welcomes in the name of His Son. Come without delay — dangerous everywhere, most of all in presence of your sin and of God's everlasting judgment. Now it is all grace, grace reigning through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord. Practical love follows, and practical obedience. It is the first step that weighs. That it might be open to you, it cost the Saviour all in unfathomable humiliation and the sacrifice of Himself for you and your sins. Oh, put. off no more, but believe and be blessed in and with Him! In vain men talk of a larger hope. There is no Saviour but Christ, nor any way to the Father but Himself by faith. For not to believe is to give very deep insult to God and to His Son. There is another evil yet worse; the abuse of His grace, the attaching of indulged lusts and passions, of unjudged pollution of flesh and spirit, to that worthy Name. Should such men taste of His supper?

8 The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:3-7.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 53-54. Gospel No. 7-8.)

Grace, the grace of God, is hateful to man's pride. The self-righteous take offence. What is the good of their decorous behaviour, of their prayers at home, of their public devotions, if they be no better than loose and open sinners? Yet the Lord (Matthew 21:31) solemnly assured the chief priests and the elders of the people, who built on their religious character, that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom before them. They are ready to repent and believe. So here the taxgatherers and the sinners draw near to hear the glad tidings, while the Pharisees and the scribes kept murmuring, He receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

Yes, it was true; nor was He ashamed of divine love to the lost, but gloried in it, and vindicates it against all cavillers. Is God to save nobody? If He save, it can only be by His grace through faith. Let us hear the Son plead His God and Father's title to save sinners.

"And he spoke this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And having found he layeth [it] on his shoulders rejoicing, and, when come to the house, he calleth together the friends and the neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I found my sheep that was lost. I say to you, that thus joy shall be in heaven over one sinner repenting, [more] than over ninety nine righteous, such as have no need of repentance" (Luke 15:3-7).

Man, selfish man, is not so indifferent about his lost sheep, as he thinks God to be about a sinner. A bad conscience makes him doubt God's love, still more does bad religion. The Lord Jesus alone represents God truly and perfectly. There He was in their midst the Saviour of sinners, the Son of man come to seek and save that which was lost. Did He not proclaim it from the first in the synagogue at Nazareth? Did not the prophet Isaiah predict seven centuries before, that Jehovah's Spirit should be on Him Whom He anointed to evangelise the poor, to preach deliverance to captives, and sight to blind? The miracles of His ministerial life were for the most part signs of His grace to the guilty and wretched: for this His death in atonement would give the ground of God's righteousness; as all proved His unfathomable love for us when powerless and ungodly.

He, the Lord of glory, pursued the wandering sheep till He found it. What did it not cost Him? Teaching the disciples, weaning them from Jewish elements, showing them heavenly things, forming their hearts according to God, exercising their perception to distinguish good and evil, were all blessed to the ninety nine in the wilderness; but what about the lost one? The Good Shepherd leaves the rest safe, inquest of the stray sheep. After it He goes in earnest love, as if He had none else; and having found it, He lays it, on His shoulders rejoicing; and when come to the house He calls together the friends and the neighbours, that they way rejoice with Him over the lost one found, He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes were we healed. For we were as sheep going astray. If we returned, as we can now say, it is only because the Shepherd and Bishop of souls came to seek and save us. The mere idea never dawned on Pagans of old, north, south, east or west. They admitted sympathy between God and His faithful worshippers; but what must befall the unfaithful? What would make and keep faithful? Their gods, on their own showing, had lusts and passions, evil demons self-evidently, and deserving punishment like their adorers. The true God declared Himself in Jesus, Who came to bring God truly known into the world, and to put sin out of it, as He surely will in its season. As God is light and love, so did the Lord prove Himself to be, Whom none could convict of sin, Who died for sinners, suffered for their sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. Yes, He is the true God, and life eternal.

Why then stay longer? Are you not away from God? Are you fit for His presence? If you know you are not, what is to fit you? Christ is the way, and the only way, to the Father. But what of your sins? He, Who came in love to reconcile you to God, took the load on Himself; He alone could bear it, and bear it away for ever. And God in the scriptures calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus, His Son, your Saviour. God raised from the dead Him Who died for sins and sinners does not this give you confidence?

You hesitate. Why? Do you love darkness rather than light? Alas! is it not because your works are evil, and your heart is proud, and you therefore hate the light which makes all manifest? Hear then

His warning word. You cannot escape the resurrection of the unjust; you cannot escape the Judge of quick and dead. Jesus, Whom you now refuse as Saviour, will judge those works of which you now boast; Jesus will prove their worthlessness to your everlasting shame, when He sits on the great white throne. What thenceforward must be your portion, if you reject Him now? "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). May you now hear and live.

9 The Lost Drachma

Luke 15:8-10.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 68-69. Gospel No. 7-9.) The parable which follows the lost sheep presents the sinner's case in another form. It is not as that animal foolish and straying, but like a coin without life, a dead thing. Both are true of fallen man. As all are gone out of the way, and none seeketh after God, with destruction and wretchedness in their ways (Romans 3:1-31), so were all dead in their offences and their sins, by nature children of wrath one as another (Ephesians 2:1-22). But grace goes forth to save and does save; not the creature's grace, but God's. This the Pharisees and scribes disliked; but the Lord demonstrates it, and draws the despised near to hear One so capable of telling out the love, of which He was the brightest witness and the richest gift. These parables are a pair, as the opening word indicates.

"Or what woman having ten drachmas, if she have lost one drachma, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently till she shall have found it? And on finding, she calleth together the friends end the neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, because I found the drachma which I lost. Thus, I say to you, there ariseth joy in presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:8-9).

Herein is a scene within the house, and a woman is active in seeking out the lost object; as in the former a man strenuous to recover the stray one without. But in both it is divine grace, grace entirely above man or woman, which the Saviour sets before us so vividly; and the lost one is man or woman whom grace seeks and saves. Is it nothing to you who read these lines that you are "lost"? that you have turned your back on God? and that you are utterly hard and insensible in your alienation? Assuredly He is not cold or indifferent Who so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal (John 3:1-36). Not hard nor regardless of guilty man is He Who commends His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, — died for the ungodly (Romans 5:1-21). Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:1-21). Such is the true God Whose compassion the Lord Jesus here makes known.

He here represents the painstaking of grace by a woman who spares no pains to win back her lost silver piece. She cannot rest about it. If sinners are beguiled by the enemy to disbelieve their ruin, the direct contrast is plain in her. She lights a lamp; she sweeps the house; she searches carefully till she finds it.

It is not otherwise with the Holy Spirit. In the redeemed He is come to dwell, and causes the saints, however opposed in their old natural state as Jews and Gentiles, fitted together, to grow into a holy temple in the Lord, even now being builded together for God's habitation in the Spirit. Also He takes a most energetic part as well as loving interest in awakening the sinner from the slumber of

death. It is He that makes the candle of the word shine into the dark recesses of the heart. It is He that probes the guilty conscience. It is He that discovers the fatal evil of darling sins in the light of God.

Oh, have ye not experienced these gracious workings in your souls? Have you not felt as you read or listened to scripture, that somehow God was speaking to your conscience? Beware of turning a deaf ear to Him Who warns and would win you to Himself from all evil. If He press home the certainty that God will have every work and word brought into judgment, He does not fail to remind you of the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. Do not longer ignore that the goodness of God leads you unto repentance? What goodness can match His spending the Only-begotten on you? What was it for the Lord of all to become Servant of all — yea, to die as a sacrifice for sinners.

Fear not to lay your hand on that infinite offering for sin. If the blood of bulls and goats could be no more than a witness by the way, if their effect could be but provisional and temporary, it is not so with the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus. By His blood peace was made for those who had been at war with God; and who can wonder? For His blood cleanses from all sin. It is God's word which so testifies to you. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? And his voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I will shake not the earth only but also heaven" (Hebrews 12:1-29).

It may be remarked, that as the first of these three parables points evidently to the Lord Jesus, so does the second to the Holy Spirit, and the third yet more unmistakably to the Father. How blessed is it, that all the divine Persons of the Godhead are engaged on behalf of the lost one that he may be saved! Who can deny that this the Saviour preached when here? And the Spirit has inspired the scripture for you to hear and believe.

10 The Lost son

Luke 15:11-32.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 85-86. Gospel No. 7-10.) The Saviour adds a third parable to complete as well as confirm the truth of God's grace in saving the lost who repent. The first set out the heedless active straying of the sinner; the second, his insensible dead state till the Spirit works through the living word; the third uses the figure, not of a sheep or a coin, but of a man to point the fact of an inward work in the conscience, and of the reception the returning soul finds in the Father's love and the privileges of grace.

"And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to the father, Father, give me the share of the property that falleth to me. And he divided to them the means of living. And after not many days the younger son gathered all together, and went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his property by dissolute living. And when he squandered all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine; and he longed to fill his belly with the husks which the swine were eating; and no one gave him. But coming unto himself he said, How many hirelings of my father's have abundance of bread, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go unto my father and will say to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before

thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hirelings. And he arose and came unto his father. But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him much. And the son said to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and put [it] on him; and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill [it], and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead and came to life again, he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:11-24).

Impossible to conceive a sketch more graphically true. The younger son indicates very emphatically the sinner's path from his start in self-will and independency to open profligacy and the depths of degradation. Such were "some of you" even very far; such were most in a measure. We shall hear of another form of sin at least as evil before we have done. But this far country " knows what extreme famine is. No one gave him." But as the wasteful feel the pressure of dire want, so that even swine's fare becomes desirable, God turns all for good in His grace.

O my reader, have you known such an experience? Have you ever tried to shake off parental authority, especially where pious? Have you, when you could, plunged into the pleasures of sin, the more eagerly because you were debarred under a father or a mother's eye? Have you fallen into the depths of immorality, and been "almost in all evil?" And in your misery have you learnt what the world feels toward one who has lost all? "And no one gave him." What! none of those who helped to drain the once full purse? No, not one. So the Lord describes the lost son. Are you like him in sin and misery? May you be also in repentance. For coming to himself he saw the folly, evil, and ruin of his life, His mind is made up. He must clear his burdened conscience, and confess his iniquity. He will go to the One before Whom he had sinned, and have all out with Him, to His vindication and to his own shame. The terror of the Lord may alarm, but the goodness of God leads to repentance as here and always. It produces true self-judgment in His sight. But whatever the hope of mercy that draws, spite of shame and self-loathing and grief at one's own sin, the grace of God much more exceeds. "While he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him much. And the son said to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill it; and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead and came to life again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry."

How incomparable is God's grace! With slow and sad steps came the prodigal, hope mingling with shame and many searchings of heart, in the rags that told the tale of ruin to the uttermost. Not so the father, who saw him a long way off, but moved with pity, ran, fell on his neck, and covered him with kisses just as he was. What was the impression made by such love? If ever such a vile son, certainly there never was such a father. The son speaks out his conscience, but not "make me as one of thy hirelings": the father's love arrests this. Nor was it after all the humility of grace, but rather of law, drawing inferences from his past misconduct. But in the gospel it is a question of God's love, giving Christ and resting on what is due to Him and His work, before which the sinner's evil vanishes. "Jesus was found alone," the ground of all blessing. Therefore is it God's righteousness, not man's. The best robe is brought out and put on the repentant prodigal, a ring on

his hand and sandals on his feet. Beyond all re-instatement, the lost son now found is blessed and honoured as never before. He put on Christ, not Adam even unfallen; he became God's righteousness in Him. He feasts, and not he only but all that are of God on the fatted calf; yea God Himself rejoices in it with a joy proper to Himself and far deeper than that of all the rest, put together. In the elder son the Lord vividly portrays the self- righteous, the murmurers against grace such as the Pharisees and scribes; and they are many in every age, especially where scripture is current and men boast of religion. As he is represented returning from the fields and approaching the house, the music and dancing there struck his ear offensively, when he learnt from a servant that it was his father's joy over his returned brother (Luke 15:25-27). He was angry and would not go in (Luke 15:28). And when his father went out and entreated (for what will not grace do?), he answers with self-complacency that insulted his father and the object of his compassion as much as it exalted himself. "Lo these many years do I slave for thee, and never transgressed thy commandments; yet never didst thou give me a kid to make merry with my friends. But when this thy son came that devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf" (Luke 15:29-30). What an answer of patient love the father's! "Child, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and came to life again, was lost and is found" (Luke 15:31-32). It is the day of grace, not judgment. He who despises grace will be judged another day.

11 The Prudent Steward

Luke 16:1-13.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 102-103. Gospel No. 7-11.) This parable, though addressed by the Lord to His disciples, is a word of warning and instruction to all. It shows, not the way to the heavenly dwellings, but the character of those who get there.

"There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and he was accused to him as wasting his goods. And having called him, he said to him, What [is] this I hear of thee? Render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst no longer be steward. And the steward said to himself, What shall I do? because my lord is taking the stewardship from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I am resolved what I will do that when I have been removed from the stewardship, I may he received into their houses. And having called to him each one of the debtors of his own lord, he said to the first, How much owest thou to my lord? And he said, A hundred baths of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill [writings], and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another And thou, how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred cors of wheat. He saith to him, Take thy bill [writings], and write eighty. And the lord praised the steward of unrighteousness, because he did prudently. For the sons of this age are for their own generation more prudent than the sons of light. And I say to you, Make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness that, when it shall fail, ye may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. The faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and the unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye were not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true? And if ye were not faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two lords; for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:1-13). In a general way man, especially the Jew, has wasted the goods entrusted to him, and forfeited his place. But grace gives him the opportunity of turning

these earthly things to everlasting account. It is sheer folly to hold fast the brief present, regardless of the unending future. The Lord praises not the past waste any more than the selfish unrighteousness, but the prudence that sacrifices time and its passing interests in view of the unseen eternity and heavenly glory.

Christ by His infinite sufferings for sin and sinners has made this possible. The first man brought in ruin by sin; Israel made bad worse and earned a curse by his transgression and apostasy. Grace and truth came not by law but by Jesus Christ Whom God made sin for us as He bore the curse, that the guiltiest might through the faith of Him go free. He Whose grace opens the way into blessing beyond all thought has been wronged and plundered without measure. It is not the aim of this parable to show the way in which He is vindicated, and the evils of the sinner are blotted out, and His own righteousness by faith takes the place of man's righteousness sought no matter how assiduously, but always in vain. Thus it comes to pass that no flesh can glory, but he that glories truly must glory in the Lord.

It is Christ alone Who, heard in faith, gives a divinely sound judgment of ourselves and of things around us. Conscience alone is powerless to cope with temptation and blinding wiles of the enemy, ever alluring by what is in sight, seemingly fair and desirable. Without faith it is impossible to please God. To believe in Christ, the Word become flesh and dying for us, the Propitiation for our sins, that we might live of His life, how blessed for us! and how worthy of God! This is grace, this is truth. It centres in Christ, the object of faith; Who gives new eyesight to discern, and decision to abandon the sin-stained present, for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in the heavens for the faithful.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Are you setting your mind on earthly things? cleaving to the dust in quest of the unrighteous mammon, instead of making friends out of it that you may be received, when it shall have failed, into the everlasting tabernacles?

Every thing like Judaism is on God's part now obsolete. It is no longer a system of earthly rewards or punishments, of a worldly sanctuary, of present ease, honour, or advantage. Heavenly things are revealed by Him Who was then rejected on earth and is now glorified on high. There alone are the true riches. The bait of Satan is the mammon of unrighteousness. This may procure the pleasures of sin for a season, and present results on the earth. But what will the end be? where must go those who in contempt of Christ lived only for that which is to fail? The steward's prudence is a lesson for disciples. See the promptness of his course and his careful consideration of the debtors, the generosity too which gave right and left. This, and this alone in the unscrupulous steward, is commended for our imitation. What men call ours is really another's (Luke 16:12). It is easy to be generous with another's goods; and so faith would consider them. Such is Christ's yoke; and His yoke is easy, His burden light. To accumulate and keep or use for self Is unbelief and covetousness. Faith gives freely, makes friends with what is but mammon, and turns it to everlasting account, when, faithful in a very little, we shall have much. The true riches then shall indeed be ours: for with Christ, His own Son, God will also freely give us all things. We are but stewards now, and are exhorted by the Master to the generosity of grace. It is vain, it is impossible, to serve God and mammon.

12 The Rich man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 117-118. Gospel No. 7-12.) In the second half of this chapter the Lord still makes known the truth which came into evidence through His rejection. The light of eternal and heavenly things is let in on the present state and life on earth. The first man is fallen, evil and lost. If the Jew pre-eminently had been God's steward, he was unjust, and his occupation gone. Prosperity was no test of divine favour. That which is exalted among men is. abomination in the sight of God. Since John, the Kingdom of God is preached: it is therefore an urgent question of pressing into it, and this on the part of "every one"; for grace opens the door to any. His death was at hand, which gives the believer even from the tribe of Judah or of Levi righteous deliverance from the law; so that there is no adultery, when one 'belongs to Another raised up from the dead, in order to bear fruit unto God, as the apostle wrote to the Roman saints.

How solemn and momentous the issues in the unseen world!

"Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, making good cheer splendidly day by day. And a certain pauper by name Lazarus was laid at his gate-way, full of sores and desiring to be filled with the things that fell from the table of the rich man; nay, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the pauper died and was carried away by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. And the rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades lifting up his eyes being in torments, he seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And calling he said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Child, remember that thou in thy lifetime didst fully receive thy good things, and Lazarus likewise evil things; but now here he is comforted and thou art in anguish. And besides all these things, between us and you a great chasm is fixed, so that those desiring to pass hence unto you cannot, nor those from that side may cross unto us. And he said, I beseech thee then, father, that thou wouldest send him unto the house of my father (for I have five brothers), that he may thoroughly testify to them, lest they too come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith [to him], They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one from the dead go unto them, they will repent. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, not even if one rise out of the dead will they be persuaded" (Luke 16:19-31). The Saviour depicts a man easy and luxurious in a world of misery, without faith in a world of sin, morally decent, outwardly religious, but living to self and practically infidel. Who did not know it in Israel? Who is not familiar with it in Christendom? Lazarus represents the contrast of the pious beggar laid hard by with none to pity his bodily sores but the. dogs. The Conqueror of death lifts the veil. Then appears the truth for eternity: Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, the rich man that enjoyed himself in torments! What mattered the funeral pomp? or if the poor man had not even a grave? The angels carried the godly soul to the bosom of God's friend; the rich man left the vain and transient show of this world, and opened his eyes in the flame of Hades, aggravated by the sight of the blessed afar off — yea, of him there who on earth awakened only his disgust. Now he implores of his father Abraham that Lazarus might allay his burning tongue with the merciful touch of water at the tip of the finger!

It is not a picture of resurrection to come, but of what instantly follows death, though expressed in figures drawn from the body through which we now derive our sensations. The believer once

wretched is comforted, the godless is in anguish. Like the parable before, it reveals not the means of salvation, but the character and end, whether of the saved or of the lost. Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. If we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with Him. To try to reign now is a danger and delusion: if we endure, we shall also reign together. Even Christ is not reigning yet, but rejected by man He is waiting on the Father's throne. The latter verses (Luke 16:27-31) bring out the all-importance of faith; as the Jew, long favoured, is now the standing witness of ruin through unbelief. The testimony of God in His word, O.T. or N., is the ground of faith. Even a Lazarus sent from the grave would not avail to convince those who do not listen believingly to Moses and the prophets. In fact another Lazarus was raised by the Lord Jesus not long after; but instead of convincing the Jews, he only provoked the murderous nature of the chief priests and the Pharisees (John 11:47-53). The carnal mind is enmity against God, and rises, proudly and most of all, against His grace in Christ. Yet by grace only are any saved through faith. Hence it is by hearing the word of truth; and this is now in the richest form and fulness, the gospel of our salvation, as the apostle calls it. For God has gone beyond all thoughts and wishes of man in raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who, as He was delivered for our offences, was raised for our justification.

It is Christ's death and resurrection which alone could save. Therefore is it God's righteousness, not man's, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.

There is no other way, no other salvation.. To the poor is the gospel preached; but it had not been God's gospel, unless it were equally open to and reliable for the rich. For the truth of Christ is mighty to make the lowly boast in his elevation, and the rich in his humiliation. To Him be the praise and the glory now and evermore. Amen.

Assuredly for you, my readers, no great gulf is fixed between God and you. Christ is still speaking from heaven as a Saviour that you may believe; and as faith comes by a report, so the report is by the word of God. Your guilty conscience may well dread an impassable gulf; but there is a perfect way, a safe bridge fixed between God and you; and Christ is that way. Oh! take it now, this way to the Father in the Son; for the Holy Spirit deigns and loves to proclaim the glad news to you.

05.10. Gospel Words - Eighth Series

Gospel Words — Eighth Series A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 Unprofitable Bondmen 2 The Persistent Widow 3 The Pharisee and the Tax-Gatherer 4 Christ returning to Reign 5 The Shepherd of the sheep

6 The Door 7 The Good Shepherd

8 Feet-washing

9 The vine 10 Christ the Bread of Life 11 Eating Christ's flesh, and drinking His blood 12 Christ the corn of Wheat 1 Unprofitable Bondmen

Luke 17:7-10.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 133-134. Gospel No. 8-1.)

One needs to be saved by Christ before one can serve Him. Salvation is of grace and by faith. It was Christ Who alone bore the burden. We contributed the sins, and nothing else; but awakened by the word and Spirit of God we repented and believed the gospel. How is it with you, dear reader? Beware of going on in dark uncertainty. The true light already shines since the Son of God came. Turn not your back on Him, lest the true character of yourself and your works should be shown as they are. Be honest Godward. Confess yourself a sinner, and your deeds evil. Receive Jesus as the one divine Saviour, expressly sent by and from God to save the lost. We were indeed bondmen of sin; but set free from sin by the Saviour, we would henceforth yield our members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness, each the Lord's freedman, now Christ's bondman.

We are in a world of snares, pitfalls, and evils. Christ is not only the Saviour but the sole path of safety. Hence an exercised conscience, and a spirit of compassion become those who confess Christ and are saved by grace. Self- judgment is the fruit, a careful walk, and readiness to forgive. As we may not weary of well doing, so neither should we of pardoning. Stumbling-blocks abound and work mischief; woe to him through whom they come! A terrible death were better than to cause one to the least disciple. Our Lord's call is, "Take heed to yourselves." Let fidelity to God rebuke sin; let grace forgive it to the repentant, were it seven times in the day. Do we not know it without limit in Christ? It is the kingdom and patience now. By-and-by it will be power and glory, when He reigns. No wonder that the apostles said, "Lord, increase our faith." All things are possible to him that believes. Were their faith minute as a grain of mustard, He would have it count on God's power that answers the call for His glory, which roots up a tree, say this mulberry, and plants it in the sea obediently. Man may be weakness itself; yet is it God's purpose in and through man to glorify Himself. Is not the Lord Jesus the sure pledge and the manifest proof of it?

Bought with a price (and what a price!) we are here to obey in all lowliness and meekness. God loves to work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. While faith is encouraged to the

utmost, self-complacency is absolutely condemned and excluded. Brokenness of spirit is the fitting preparation for the energy of faith. The Christian here is simply witnessing Him Who is not here, his Lord and the Lord of all. We are not fellow-workers with God, but under Him. We are His fellow-workers, but in entire subjection to Him, in no way on a level with Him. The wording in the A, and R. Versions of 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 2 Corinthians 6:1 is equivocal and dangerous; if interpreted as it often has been to put God and His servants on a common plane, it is evil and presumptuous. This, scripture repudiates and the new nature surely resents. The parable which follows reduces such a claim to dust.

"But which of you, having a bondman ploughing or keeping sheep, will say to him when come in from the field, Come in straightway and recline at meat? But will he not say to him, Make ready what I shall sup on, and gird thyself and serve me that I may eat and drink; and after that thou shalt eat and drink? Is he thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? I judge not. Thus ye also, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bondmen are we; we have done what we were bound to do" (Luke 17:7-10).

It is a shameful perversion of serving Christ to make it either a ground of acceptance with God, or a measure of ease or rank among men. Bring in the Master, and behold every such plea exposed as evil and vanishing away. Even Christ pleased not Himself, but according as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. And the great apostle of the Gentiles loved to style himself "bondman of Jesus Christ." What an overthrow of human feeling and worldly pride for him, the free-born citizen of Rome, so to introduce himself to all that were in Rome beloved of God, saints by calling! So indeed to the utmost was it with the Lord of all, Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman’s form, becoming in likeness of men, and being found in figure as man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of [the] cross.

Here the Lord lays down the servant’s place, so readily slipping out of our light hearts. He had shown what faith ever so small can do through God’s power. Here He would remind us that we are His bondmen. A great honour it is for us, yet a great reality. It is fellowship with Him in what His love led Him to become.

Time was when we were enemies of God. Death and judgment were then our sure and appointed lot. He interposed and by His sacrifice changed all for those that believe. His love that made Him a bondman constrains us to the same service of love. Whatever our privileges, this is our place: servants not only of Him but for His sake. Has not grace made us debtors to all, to saints and to sinners, to countrymen and to foreigners, to wise and to unintelligent? But pre-eminently and unalienably and always are we Christ’s bondmen. In this let us not forget that he who loveth his life shall lose it, and that he who hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Let us remember that the rule for anyone who may serve Christ is to follow Him, and the issue will be that where He is, there also shall His servant be, and honoured of His Father.

Assuredly the Lord owes us no thanks. It is our privilege as our duty to serve Him in all things great or small, day and night, sick or well. We are His altogether and evermore. Is a master "thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bondmen are we; we have done what we were bound to do." Never did man speak like this Man, our Master. Others without an exception have thought, that it

was enough to confess ourselves unprofitable when we fail to do our duty; He teaches us to say it, when we shall have done all the things ordered us.

How completely His word destroys the vain and unbelieving dream of works of supererogation! Not a single saint was other than His bondman; not a single right work done by anyone of them but was his duty to do. They were God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before-prepared that they should walk in them. What short-coming themselves found in what others deemed the best! Whatever they were, they had only done what they owed to Him.

2 The Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 149-150. Gospel No. 8-2.) The closing verses of Luke 17:1-37 are occupied with the appearing of the Lord, when He comes in His kingdom and executes judgment on the quick. Hence the comparison is with the days of Noah and of Lot. It is not the heavenly hope dawning, as in Luke 12:32-38; but "the day that the Son of man is revealed" (2 Thessalonians 1:1-12), when the birds of prey are gathered together over the corpse. In moral connection with His coming in personal judgment of the earth the Lord intimates the urgent value of prayer.

"And he spake also a parable to them that they must always pray and not faint, saying, There was in a certain city a certain judge, not fearing God and not regarding man; and there was a widow in that city and she kept coming unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he refused for a while; but afterward he said in himself, If even I fear not God and regard not man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me I will avenge her, that she by forever coming may not worry me. And the Lord said, Hear what the judge of unrighteousness speaketh. And shall God in no wise avenge his own elect that cry to him by day and night, and he is long suffering over them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8). As God's call is the warrant of faith, so faith is exercised in prayer, and rests always on the unseen in the midst of seen experience. And when things are most trying through the prevalence of evil, those that believe are encouraged the more to cry, How long, O Lord? He puts faith to the proof; He can never deny Himself, nor disappoint His people. But endurance is to have a perfect work, that they may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. The figures employed were the best possible to encourage: on the one hand a judge of unrighteousness neither fearing God nor respecting man, on the other a widow wronged by an adversary near enough to inflict so much the greater evil, because he should have been her protector. Yet her persevering cry wore out the judge's indifference. He could not stand her continual appeal, and, to escape the annoyance, he let her have justice. The Lord reveals the thoughts and motives of the judge's heart, and draws the believer's attention to the way in which even now God's providential ways act in the most reckless and unprincipled on behalf of the oppressed. But how much more will it be when God rises up in judgment of the world, as He surely will in the person of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age Then will He shine forth as the Judge of the earth: and the elect will have their cry by day and night at length heard, and the wicked triumph no more. They speak arrogantly now, they boast themselves. They will slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. But Jehovah will not cut off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance. For judgment, instead of diverging to the right or the left, shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. So it will be in the day of the Lord's appearing. She who

had long played Him false and sought many lovers will take by repentance ’the place of the desolate widow, and shall forget the shame of her youth, and the reproach of her widowhood shall He remember no more. For her Maker is her husband in that bright day; and the Holy One of Israel is her Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall He be called, as indeed He is, and she shall know. He may be long suffering over His own elect in their tribulation; but He will avenge them speedily in that day. For in His hand is a cup, and the wine foameth; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same, Surely the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them; and the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up when those of the wicked also shall be cut off. But it will be a dark hour, not only in the land but elsewhere, and faith seems then extinct as regards public profession up to that mighty intervention.

O my reader, forget not that you still hear the gospel. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in Him. Such is His testimony to you. It is not a promise or a hope; it is the most wondrous of all facts in the grace of God; and you, if you have not already believed God as to it, are now called to believe on Christ Whom He gave and sent that you might be saved. To Him and His work of redemption does the Holy Spirit now bear witness in the gospel, which is God’s glad tidings to every one that believes. Trifle not with grace so unparalleled. To put it off is to trifle with the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Can there be more glaring or guilty unbelief?

Why do you now delay? The atoning work is done. Be it known to you therefore, that through Christ is preached to you forgiveness of sins; and in virtue of Him every one that believes is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. This was no defect of His law, which indeed was God’s law and must condemn, not justify, the sinner. But the gospel is from God the good news of Jesus the Lord His Son, the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost. Beware then, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe if one declare it to you.

3 The Pharisee and the Tax-Gatherer

Luke 18:9-14.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 164-166. Gospel No. 8-3.) From the widow’s pertinacity prevailing over the injustice of the wicked judge the Lord drew the assurance of God’s avenging at length the cry of the elect. Here He turns to God’s pitiful estimate of a contrite spirit despised by haughty self-righteousness. What an encouragement to the poor self-judging one! What a warning to such as presume on their own fancied superiority! Both parables illustrate the moral light here cast on man as he is by the Son of man. They are characteristic of Luke who alone gives them.

"And he spoke also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all the rest at nought. Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus to himself, O God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, rapacious, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain. And the taxgatherer standing afar off would not lift up even his eyes unto heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, the sinner. 1 tall you,

this [man] went down unto his house justified rather than that; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

How deeply "Jesus Christ, the Righteous," resented the spuriousness of a sinner claiming righteousness! how He pitied the soul that really felt its sinfulness before God! He is the Saviour of all that believe the gospel, the Judge of all that disbelieve. Simple yet graphic is the scene, and the sentence sound, sure, and conclusive. But in the haze that overhung the temple the Pharisee had as high a repute as the tax-gatherer had none.

There the Pharisee took a position and poured out his complacency in himself. "O God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men." Not a word about his sins or even his need. Not a suspicion of his guilt and ruin. He is lifted up with the sense that he was not this or that, extortionate, unjust, adulterous, "or even as this tax-gatherer." Nor that only; for he boasts his religion. "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain." It was another Cain. Oh, the many that go in the way of Cain! They come before God as they are; they offer their fasts and their tithes, as they feel assured they are better than the rest of men. What have they done to offend God? Why should they doubt His acceptance of them? So it is that men still deceive themselves, or even make God a liar, as the apostle expresses it. They cloak their own sins; they denounce other people's sins; but God is not mocked. His word is that all sinned, and do come short of His glory. But Abel bowed and brought his sacrifice. Fruits of the ground man laboured on could not avail for sin. Death must come between God and the sinner. So Cain righteous in his own eyes had no right sense of his ruin; Abel who was righteous duly felt and owned ruin in his offering, whereas Gain's denied it. In a word Gain trusted to self, Abel to Another. Sin or death was nothing to Gain, but great to Abel's faith that looked for the Saviour. And what of the tax-gatherer? He, standing afar off, would not lift up even his eyes to heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, the sinner. It was his evil that pressed on his spirit, as he cried to God. Not a thought had he of good deeds done, of bad ones avoided. He did not dream of hiding himself in a crowd of sinners or a vague confession. He singled himself as the sinner if ever there was one. What did he know of others? or, even if he had a sight knowledge, he knew himself far better and overwhelmingly. "O God, be merciful to me, the sinner." His light from God might be small, but it was real; and as it disclosed his own sinfulness, he owned himself the sinner. He looked out of himself to God about his condition, without a word of self-commendation, or of comparison with others, or of excuse. No, he was the sinner, and before God he lays himself as he is. On God, a God of grace, he relies in simple real acknowledgement of his ruin.

It was the fear of God, and the beginning of wisdom; and the Lord recognises it accordingly. "I tell you, this man went down unto his house justified rather than that." Hence the general principle follows, "because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It was not "justified by faith" so as to have peace with God. The Lord does not describe one who had heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. There was not, nor could be yet, the presentation of the great work of grace, Christ's work. God's righteousness in Him had yet to be manifested. But the tax-gatherer was brought where all the godly in Israel had been before him, to look away from himself to God's mercy; he was believingly taught as a sinner, where the godly outside Israel were taught to renounce self- dependence. See a saint like Job thus broken through

severe discipline for his greater blessing: "I have heard of thee by the hearing. of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). For sinners or saints repentance there is and must be. Even he whom Jehovah commended as a perfect and upright man, that feared God and eschewed evil, needed it, as He alone turned the fiery trial to that good end. For Job thought too well and much of what grace enabled him to do, and exalted himself in consequence. The enemy failed wholly to shake him. Jehovah touched the weak point through his friends (more ignorant of God and of themselves than Job), who at length humbled himself deeply and was exalted in due time. This was when he prayed in a spirit of grace for his proud and harshly judging friends. What a contrast with the Pharisee! There the tax-gatherer was led in his measure, a case of true repentance, if not so deep as that of Job: both precious in the Lord's eyes. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than that." In justification through Christ's blood are found no degrees. By Him all that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13:39). Here it was faith and repentance, and hence a state morally right before God (which the Pharisee's was not), though short of the clearance and liberty which faith in the gospel brings.

4 Christ returning to Reign

Luke 19:12-27.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 180-181. Gospel No. 8-4.) The disciples, little knowing God's mind, were impatient for His kingdom. They thought it was immediately to be manifested. They forgot that "first must He suffer many things" and enter into His glory. They overlooked reconciliation by blood as the basis of all: how else could God he glorified or man be saved? The Lord said therefore,

"A certain man of high birth went unto a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And having called his own ten bondmen, he gave them ten pounds (minae), and said to them, Trade till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this [man] reign over us. And it came to pass on his coming back again, having received the kingdom, that he bade these bondmen to whom he gave the money to be called to him, in order that he might know what each gained by trading. And the first came up, saying, Lord, thy pound made ten pounds more. And he said to him, Well [done], good bondman; because in a very little thou wast faithful, be in authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound made five pounds. And he said also to him, And be thou over five cities. And the other came, saying, Lord, behold, thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and reapest what thou didst not sow. He saith to him, Out of thy mouth will I judge thee, wicked bondman. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping what I did not sow; and why didst thou not give my money into a bank, and I on coming should have got it with interest? And to the bystanders he said, Take from him the pound and give [it] to him that hath the ten pounds. (And they said to him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not even what he hath shall be taken from him. Howbeit those my enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before me" (Luke 19:12-27).

Redemption by Christ's death must be first, and heaven be opened for the redeemed where He is exalted as its answer. He would receive the kingdom as all things not from man but from God. But

He will surely return, having received the kingdom. Then will He take account of their service to whom He gave gifts for trading in responsibility to Him during His absence. For we are here in view, not of His receiving His own to Himself for the Father's house, but of His appearing and His kingdom. And they are rewarded according to their fidelity, one more, and another less. It is not gifts differing according to God's sovereignty, but all alike entering their Lord's joy as in Matthew 25:1-46; but here each receives alike a pound and is rewarded respectively according to the different result of their work. The two Gospels present the two sides, but are both true. Both show us also the "evil bondman," without a particle of faithfulness. And why? Because he had no faith in his Lord's grace. On the contrary, he insulted Him Who is full of grace and truth as "an austere man," selfish and dishonest as his own heart; and his end is accordingly.

There is reward then for work that pleases the Master, Who will be no man's debtor, but surely requites all in the coming day. Each bondman shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. But there is a foundation requisite for every one who thus builds; and other foundation can none lay than that laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is and must be faith in His grace for any one to serve Him truly. This the faithful bondmen had, and in the faith of Him they were devoted to His service. This faith the wicked bondman had not, and therefore he served not. He cared only for himself, he wronged his Master and gave the lie to His grace. But he could not escape righteous judgment, and out of his own mouth he was condemned: as those who believed in the Lord's grace receive a righteous reward in the kingdom of glory for their good works.

Take notice, my reader, that it is no question here of heathen but of professing Christians, of the service due to the absent Lord before He appears in His kingdom. Faith in Him, faith in His grace, can alone avail you. Alike is the turning-point for every soul that hears His word; it is the spring of acceptable service, no less than of salvation. How could it be otherwise? The Lord is the Son of man Who came to save the lost at all cost for Himself. God will not tolerate slighting His own Son. Not to believe on Him at God's word is to dishonour both the Father and the Son; and as men thus receive not life eternal, they must come into judgment, and hence inevitably into the second death. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." O unbeliever, what bliss do you not lose? what woe do you not gain?

Then the Lord speaks of another guilty class; not the wicked servant, but His citizens sent an embassy after Him when He went on high, saying, We will not have this man reign over us. They are the Jews that hate Him, instead of professing to serve Him. When the true servants shine in the honours of the kingdom, what will be their portion, His open enemies that would not have Him, Messiah their king, reign over them? Those who repent not will fall under His destructive judgment. Bring them hither, says He in the parable, and slay them before Me. For when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be marvelled at in all them that believed, there will also be the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Jews that hate and Gentiles that despise the Saviour must suffer the due reward of their rebellious unbelief and their evil deeds. How would it be, how is it, with you that read these words? Do not assume that God is indifferent, like you.

5 The Shepherd of the sheep

John 10:1-6.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 198-199. Gospel No. 8-5.) The similitudes of the Fourth Gospel differ from the parables of the other three, and have another name. They are sayings by the way or proverbial allegories, and like all the doings and sayings of John's Gospel, they set out the Lord personally, the grace and truth which came by Him. Here is the first of the cluster.

"Verily, verily I say to you, He that entereth not, by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up elsewhere, he is a thief and a robber; but he that entereth by the door is shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. And a stranger they will in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. This proverb (or, allegory) spoke Jesus to them; but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them" (John 10:1-6). With the solemn formula that occurs so often in his Gospel, the Lord introduces His description, not of the shepherd of the sheep, but of a thief and a robber. He does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up elsewhere. God distinguished the door by plain marks that the sheep might discern the Shepherd, Who came from and was sent by Himself. For they were precious to Him no less than to the Son. And the Son was zealous for the Father's house and would enter by the appointed way and none other. He, the mighty God, deigned to be the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, and so to become the Seed of Abraham, the son of David, and born of the Virgin. Through Micah (Micah 5:2) Jehovah named Bethlehem as the place of His birth. Out of it should He come forth unto Him that was to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Nor was the time left vague. Through Daniel He fixed it by weeks (of years) to elapse, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus), after which Messiah should be (not born nor manifested nor reigning, but) "cut off and have nothing." So also He does not fail to announce in this chapter as in John 3:14 too.

Others sought their own things by craft or violence. He came in a love unmistakably of God, in an obedience that left nothing to desire, always doing in an evil world the things that pleased the Father. Prophecy pointed Him out no more plainly than the grace and truth which came by Him, or the signs of beneficent power which studded the path of light that could not be hid. He entered by the door, and "to him the porter openeth." The Spirit of God deigned to work in this as in all others to glorify the Lord. Notably we perceive this by the testimony of Simeon, and of Anna a prophetess in early days, but above all by John the Baptist the divinely appointed herald of the Messiah, when the time drew near for His public ministry.

It was for him who was but "a voice of one crying in the wilderness" to say, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Nor was it in vain for those given to see according to God. For "the sheep hear his voice;" and as He said in John 5:25, "they that hear shall live." There was faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and with faith life. For life was in Him from everlasting to everlasting. It belonged to His eternal person as the Word and the Son (John 1:3, 1 John 5:11); and when He took the place of man, as the Sent One, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, yet not for Himself simply, but that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal, and this in hearing His voice (John 5:24-25). It might not yet be life in resurrection, but it was life eternal; for it was in the Son, and the Son has none other for the believer. Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth on Me hath life eternal (John 6:47). There is no exception. A robber just converted, and an apostle behind none, have just the same life.

Christ lived in both; and He is the true God and the eternal life. But what tender care in the Shepherd! "He calleth his own sheep by name." His love is in the fullest way personal. His interest is in each personally, and He would have all to know it. What could evince it more than His calling His own sheep by name? So the apostle wrote, for those who believe as well as himself, He loved me, and gave Himself for me. A change is next announced of great moment, especially for Jews. He "leadeth them out." God had given His ancient people much advantage every way. But they had received not His Son, the Shepherd of Israel, hating Him to the utmost, and about to cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him. And He, knowing the end from the beginning, leadeth His sheep out of the fold, more and more the den of thieves and robbers, already the seat of His enemies. It might be done through the violence of others, as when the blind now seeing was cast out by the reviling Jews. But in effect He leadeth them out, as would be true for all His own in due time. But there is more; and it is of transcendent importance. "When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice." Later in the chapter He explains how this was to be. He would give Himself for them. It would be by nothing less than His death and resurrection: such was His love, and such their need. Thus only could they be secured, or fitted for the new place of blessing. For even Caiaphas soon after prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:51-52) — a yet larger view than John 10:4 presents, and needing John 10:16 to supplement it. And what a safeguard for their difficulties and dangers grace provides the sheep! "They know his voice." This enables them to "follow him," as it preserves them from misleaders.

"And a stranger they will in nowise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers." So the Lord lays down the truth for His own. He does not here state the possible wandering of any sheep, but presents the only way of life. Others might occupy themselves with errors and evils, a pursuit not without danger of defilement, The wisdom of the Christian is to he content with His voice which gave him life from the first, and to delight increasingly in Christ to the last fleeing from a stranger and knowing not the voice of such.

It was a deep allegory, and looked on to that which was not yet accomplished. We need not, then, wonder that as yet the Saviour’s words were not understood.

6 The Door

John 10:7-10.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 212-214. Gospel No. 8-6.) In the previous verses our Lord speaks of Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep entering the fold of Israel by the door or God-appointed means.

Here, for the best reasons and the fuller display of the grace and truth which came by Him, He presents Himself as the Door of the sheep, rather than of the fold.

"Jesus therefore said to them again, Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture. The thief cometh not but that he may steal and slay and destroy; I came that they might have life, and have [it] abundantly" (John 10:7-10). The fold is here left aside. What could Judaism avail for the saints any more than sinners? Christ is the door of the sheep. They might be

cast out like the blind man whom He caused to see. Where were they to turn, and whither go? "I am the door of the sheep." He is the entrance to the new and abiding blessings of God for His own, the entrance to the God that blessed them, yea, to the Father, as they learn in due time. He is the object of faith now more clearly than ever; as He had been truly, if dimly, since sin came into the world. All believers looked to Him that was coming, the Messiah; but now He is revealed as incomparably more. Had any claimed the sheep? "All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." For God protects His own. They might boast and say that they were somebody, like Theudas; they might draw after them a people in revolt like Judas of Galilee. But they were thieves and robbers; and none followed whom the Son made free, only Abraham's seed but not his children. In John 10:9 He describes Himself in fewer words which convey far more, "I am the door." It is not merely "of the sheep"; it is for any. "I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture." Can words be more precise or more full? Can blessing for a needy soul be more suited, rich, and secure? He is the door absolutely, away from all evil into all good.

It is Christianity in contrast with Judaism or any other earthly religion. To enter through the door is to believe on Jesus the Son of God. He that does is on His word assured of salvation; "he shall be saved." This, mark it well, is given to him that enters through Christ. No such assurance attends another than the Son of God. He is the Saviour, and none else. The church consists of the saved, but cannot save: only Christ can and does. A false church may set up to save; the true church repudiates such a pretension as a lie and a blasphemy. She is but the body, He is the Head; she is the bride, He the Bridegroom. She, being true, is jealous of His honour; she rejects with horror all thought of setting herself in His place as of Satan. She has the Spirit now, as He had when here; but the Spirit does not glorify her but Him. All her privileges are in virtue of Him, and are rightly turned but to His praise.

Salvation then, as it is of God's grace, is through Christ. "Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved." It is not for the Jew only but for the Gentile also; it is for "any one." But he must enter through Christ. Through Me if any one enter, he shall be saved. He may be baptised and be lost; he may take the Lord's Supper, and be lost. If any one enter through Christ, he shall be saved. This He declares; and His words shall endure when heaven and earth pass away.

O my reader, do you believe His words? Do you believe on Himself? Unless He were what He is, unless He were Who He is, neither you nor any other sinner could be saved. But being the Son and becoming the sacrifice for sin, salvation is now open to the poorest of sinners who believes on Him. "Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved." He is the door; and He tells you so. Have you heard Him and entered? Have you taken Him at His word? This is to believe. Do you then believe on the Son of God? Nor is salvation all that He is now giving. He gives liberty: or as He says here of "any one" that enters through Him, "he shall go in and shall go out." It is in contrast with the penned-up condition of the sheep under Judaism. The law genders bondage; it could not confer freedom. Only the truth, the Son, makes free; and "if the Son therefore makes you free, ye shall be free indeed." So here "he shall go in and shall go out." This is divine emancipation, to us without money or price, to God at the cost of His Son.

There is yet more. For we need now, not salvation nor freedom only, but food; and this He next guarantees. He that enters through Christ "shall find pasture." As He had before taught, the best

food is Himself not incarnate only, but dead for us, so that by faith we eat His flesh and drink His blood. This is what most nourishes the soul, communion with His death.

O my reader, turn not a deaf ear to God’s glad tidings. Fear to treat such a Saviour with indifference. Beware of putting off to a more convenient season. God is not mocked. To slight God’s law was bad; to neglect His gospel is a great deal worse. The enemy is busy and near. "The thief cometh not but to steal and slay and destroy." This Satan loves, and his servants are many. "I came," says the Lord, "that they [believers] might have life, and have it abundantly." Here He makes a brief transition to His death and resurrection, that the saved might enjoy life, as they do now, in the power of His resurrection.

7 The Good Shepherd

John 10:11-18.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 230-231. Gospel No. 8-7.)

Very direct are these words of the Lord. What blessing to receive them in faith! what guilt and ruin to despise Him and them!

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf seizeth them and scattereth. Now the hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall be one flock, one shepherd. On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again: this commandment I received of my Father" (John 10:11-18). In Isaiah 40:11, of the Lord Jehovah it is said, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom — shall gently lead those that give suck." Here He Himself goes much farther. He proves Himself the Good Shepherd by laying down His life for the sheep: none other would, nor, if any other be conceived, could it avail with God or for man.

Rejected He was, with hatred for His love; but nothing turned Him from His purpose of grace. He was the Good Shepherd; and as such He lays down His life for the sheep. Such love bespoke itself divine; it characterised His person and God’s nature, but in man, which alone made it possible. Beyond doubt only thus could they be, only thus were they, reconciled to God; but here His laying down His life is the evidence and acme of devoted love in Him, Who acts freely and never was more consciously God than in His atoning death.

What a contrast with him who is a hireling and not a shepherd; whose own the sheep are not! Beholding the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees, while the wolf seizes and scatters them; And so it is, because a hireling he is and careth not for the sheep. But Jesus only is the Good Shepherd here. Others there have been who love the sheep in their measure, and so feed and tend them. But here where He is thus introduced, they have no mention but mush vanish away. They were not entitled to call theirs the sheep, which in fact are "the flock of God." The

sheep were Christ's own. Even if the wolf should catch any, not even the wolf shall catch them (the same word) out of Christ's hand. To kill the wolf would have been incomparably easier than to lay down life for them; and this He did, Who had no sin but love, no fear any more than selfish object, Who always did the things pleasing to His Father. And as the Good Shepherd He could say, "I know mine own, and mine own know me; even as my Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." It is the fullest evidence of His devotedness in love for them. His knowledge of them, and theirs of Him, He compared with the Father's knowing Him and His knowing the Father. What can be conceived so satisfying and perfect?

Gracious and powerful is the love the O.T. reveals in Messiah for His flock, "His beautiful flock" as it will surely be. But what is even that to a loving and mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep, so intimate that it could only be matched by the Father's and the Son's knowledge of one another! In this case is absolute and intrinsic excellence beyond thought or question; in the other, oh! what and how many faults on our side! But love in Him never fails; and we are entitled to count on it in our knowledge of Him as in His of us. This is grace divine, superior to all that it finds, and everlasting.

Such is the depth of the Good Shepherd's love; but He intimates a width far beyond His disciples' thoughts. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring [or, lead], and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become [or, be] one flock, one shepherd."

Thus He points to the call of Gentiles by the gospel. If most of the Jews turned a deaf ear, many Gentiles have heard and do hear. For no criterion is truer than this. As He deigns to lead them also, "they shall hear my voice."

O my reader, how is this with you? His voice is not of one crying in the wilderness like His herald. He, when here, frequented not the wilderness only but the hillside, and the riverside, and the villages, and the towns, and the cities. He preached the gospel to the poor emphatically; and when His work here was done, He charged His servants to preach the gospel to all the nations, the whole creation. Had Jerusalem been most guilty? To all, said He, "beginning with Jerusalem." Is not this glad tidings to you, whoever you are, whatever you may have been? Redemption depends on the Redeemer, not on the redeemed, save that they "hear His voice." Oh! then repent and believe the gospel. Never can you truly worship or serve Him, till you receive Him, believing on His name. In vain is every other resource; nay, to trust any ordinance, in order to reconciliation with God, dishonours both the Father and the Son. When you have Him as your life, they find their place. Of one great added privilege the Saviour speaks here. "They shall (Jews and Gentiles) be one flock, one Shepherd." It was a quite new thing from God: "one flock" (not "fold" as formerly), "one Shepherd." Oh, how sad the change man has made! and how guilty the excuse to cloak it as one flock consisting of many folds! Why do Christians thus defraud the Lord, disguise or corrupt the word, and forfeit their own fidelity and their own fuller blessing? Not so. To set up a fold now is no better than Judaising. There is, as the Lord's will and truth, but one flock, as there is but one Shepherd in the supreme sense. And every Christian is bound to own this One and no other rival. In Him all the fulness dwells. But let us hear also His own wondrous words. On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." Christ here omits "for the sheep" and presents His death as in itself furnishing a motive to the Father's love. None but He could; none but His divine person. As such He declares, "no one taketh it from Me, but I lay it

down of Myself. I have power [or, title] to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." None but the One Who is both God and man in one person could thus speak; and so while He speaks as divine, He does not fail to remember the place of sent One and servant He had taken. "This commandment I received from my Father."

8 Feet-washing

John 13:1-15.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 244-246. Gospel No. 8-8.) The Lord was going on high. Of this He treats henceforth till the closing scenes on earth. It was an immense surprise to the disciples, who looked for His restoring the Kingdom to Israel at that time. His departure to the Father would begin that new order of things which we know as Christianity.

"Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son] to betray him, [Jesus] knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel girded himself; then he poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and saith to him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt come to know hereafter. Peter saith to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; on this account he said, Ye are not all clean. When therefore he washed their feet and took his garments, reclining again he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord; and ye say well, for I am. If I therefore the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For gave you an example, that ye should do even as I also did to you" (John 13:1-15).

It was a new and profound testimony to His love-love to the uttermost: not in His work on the cross in suffering once for their sins, but in His provision for His beloved ones against every defilement by the way. In this act of washing the disciples' feet we have mystically His advocacy with the Father if any one should have sinned. Was the devil then goading on the traitor? Our Lord Jesus shows what His love would do in heaven for His failing ones. He would fulfil all the meaning of stooping to wash their feet. The glory conferred on Him, the infinite purity that returned to God as unstained as when He came out from Him, only attested His grace and adequacy to their need and what was due to divine majesty. It was a question of restoring communion interrupted by defilement; and the Lord met it by a way as unfailing for the saint, as His atoning death for the sinner. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ."

Here it is not blood but water. As His blood alone could cleanse us from all sin before God, so do we need what the water typifies. According to His mercy God: saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Thus are we bathed or washed all over, a new

creation in Christ. But this does not dispense with the need of washing for the feet, soiled by walking through this miry world. Only Christ could effect either; and He does effect both through the Holy Spirit and the word. He is the Advocate with the Father.

Saints are apt to misunderstand this, as we see Peter did; and the Lord corrected his hasty thoughts. How much had Peter to learn! how much have you? The Lord's gracious work in heaven is as indispensable as His work once for all on the cross. Not that regeneration is repeated. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." Peter, who understood little as yet, soon learnt what it is to defile his feet, and what it is for the Saviour to wash them. For indeed He prayed that Peter's faith should not fail, though his faithfulness did deeply. But His grace restored him, and made him afterwards such a strengthener of his brethren as he never was before. When Peter reached the lowest point of the mire, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord." What a witness to this service which the Lord now carries on above for His failing ones on earth! It is the washing of water by the word, which applies for our regeneration at the start, and for our restoration at every occasion of need. It it were not so, one could have no part with Christ; but this He secures by His constant love in washing our feet when defiled.

O my reader, are you then bathed? Are you regenerate and renewed by the Spirit? If not, there is but one door, but one way. Jesus alone can avail you. Believe God's word concerning Him. This is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. All things, says He, are possible to him that believes. Such are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Otherwise you are still in your sins. If you only profess the Lord's name, but believe not in your heart, so much the more awful is your case.

Abide no longer under the wrath of God, as you do if not subject but disobedient to His Son. He is as willing as He is able. Turn not from His grace. He refuses none, but accepts every one who comes to Him, and will raise him up at the last day. From first to last the Lord Jesus undertakes for the believer. His sheep, as He declares, shall not perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand.

How wonderful it is that we who believe are called to like grace with one another! Christ would have us wash one another's feet. Is this our way, or our desire, before our God and Father? It is vain, unless we be spiritual. Such alone can restore a fallen brother in a spirit of meekness. Be it ours thus to seek grace from our God.

9 The vine

John 15:1-27.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 261-262. Gospel No. 8-9.) The disciples were used to regard Israel as the vine of Jehovah's planting. He brought it out of Egypt and planted it in the land on which His eyes rested. But the Psalm (Psalms 80:1-19), which tells us so, mourns its actual devastation by the wild beasts of the field, and beseeches Him to visit this vine, as He will by the Son of man. Here the Lord meanwhile sets aside Israel altogether, and substitutes Himself for that empty vine. Christ is the True Vine, and His Father is the Husbandman. This is clearly, not His office in heaven as Advocate (John 13:1-38), nor His coming as our Hope to place us with Himself in the Father's house (John 14:1-31), but His relation to His own on earth for fruit-bearing. Christ is all.

Hence we see throughout that it is the responsibility of the disciple to depend on Christ, to cleave to Him, to refer all to Him. Thus only is fruit borne to His praise, and the Father glorified. Throughout our abiding has the first place, and it is a question of "if." The very reverse appears invariably where God presents salvation by grace.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean on account of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you: even as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither ye unless ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, he beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing. Unless one abide in me, he is cast forth as the branch and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask whatever ye will, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples to me" (John 15:1-8).

Luminous as these words are, bias has misunderstood them, Calvinists and Arminians wresting them, each to his scheme. Both start with the assumption that the figurative language means union with Christ, or membership of His body. But His body is never taught in our Gospel nor indeed by any but the apostle Paul; and though union is elsewhere, it is not here, but communion. Union is a settled fact in the spiritual realm, on the basis of Christ's death (John 11:52) and by the given Spirit's power (John 17:11; John 17:21-23). But communion is conditional, and hence may or may not be, as it depends on abiding in Christ. For this reason it is not a question here of believing on Christ to life eternal, but of abiding in Him and bearing fruit. Man's will for this wholly fails; the chosen people have no power more than others; the law is in vain; and so is the church. Angels, saints living or departed, the Virgin, are but sinking sand. Christ is the True Vine, Christ only. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself; apart from Him it can do nothing.

It is the responsible position of all that call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. All such have left Gentilism or Judaism for Christ. It may be a heart or a lip confession of Christ; but those that confess Him are all branches in the Vine. He is the True Vine; but they may not be true branches. If they abide in Him, they bear fruit; if they do not, they are sooner or later taken away. They may leave Him, or, if put away, they may never be restored either inwardly or outwardly. So we read (John 6:66) that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. So it was going to be manifest in Judas, one of the Twelve. They were branches in the Vine; they confessed His name. But if they did not abide, they hence bore no fruit for His Father, The truest branch needs pruning, or cleansing, by the Father, that it may bear more fruit; but every branch that is true bears fruit. Those that are untrue prove it by not abiding in Christ, and hence by bearing no fruit, self-confident and active though they may be. The Lord Jesus is life eternal to those that believe on Him. This however is not the subject which is here treated of. It is rather how to bear fruit; and abiding in Christ is its source and way. He is not only life, but the rule of life; and as He is absolutely what He also speaks, His word expresses it fully. By His word were they begotten afresh; on account of it they were already clean. To abide in Him, and have His words abiding in them, draws out in suited prayer and ensures the answer. There is thus much fruit to the glory of the Father, and Christ is not ashamed of them as His disciples. Not to abide in Him, after knowing and confessing Him, is worse than never to have heard, and leaves those who abandon Him as

dried up branches of the Vine, only fit for the burning. Such souls never had life in the Son.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Do you yearn after fruit acceptable to God the Father? Is it in your heart to serve the Lord Jesus? You cannot, unless you abide in Him. If you strive to abide in Him in order to service and fruit-bearing, it will be a failure. And the Lord here solemnly warns of failure, as He explains the secret of realising. Begin with taking the place of a guilty and lost sinner that you may be saved through grace by believing on Christ. Thus only is life eternal given. "Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth hath life eternal." "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life eternal." The responsibility of bearing fruit attaches to all who confess Christ. If you believe on Him at God's word, you have life in Him, and will respond to His call of abiding in Him; if it be but confessing Him on evidence satisfactory to your own mind, you will play fast and loose, and turn away on pressure or to please yourself. This is the reverse of abiding in Him, and it is the prelude to everlasting judgment.

10 Christ the Bread of Life

John 6:35-51.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 277-278. Gospel No. 8-10.) From the sign of the miraculously multiplied bread the Lord turns those who sought Him to the true bread which the Father gives out of heaven. They had been of a mind by force to make him King; He would receive the kingdom only in due time from His Father. He therefore goes up on high meanwhile to pray. But now on the other side He explains that during Israel's unbelief it is no question of accomplishing their hope now, but of receiving life eternal for resurrection and the heaven to which He was going. It is Christianity in short, and not yet the kingdom restored to Israel.

"Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh unto me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that ye have both seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out; because I am come down from heaven, not to do my will but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me that of all 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 everyone that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him should have life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:35-40). The Bread of life is not a rite or a sacrament, but the Incarnate Word. He is the object of faith presented, that needy, famishing, souls may have life eternal. The manna in the wilderness was a witness to Him, little as they knew who ate of it and died there. The Lord Jesus is the Bread of God that comes down out of heaven and gives life not to Israel only but to the world. Him the Father God sealed. But so it was the right time to unfold a higher and larger work as the Son of man, rejected by the Jews. Faith receives in Him this rich gift, life eternal. The unbelief of man, yea of the chosen people, only brings out more grace from God the Father in the Son. But the blessing is only to faith. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Nothing but coming to Himself by faith can avail. Those who saw Him without believing were no better for it but the worse. Those who resort to images of Him find only a blind. Those who lean for life eternal on any ordinance, even of Him, set up a rival to their shame. He is the object of faith for life eternal. "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent Him." And the Father's will is that all honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: if they honour Him not by faith unto life eternal, they must in His judgment of them to everlasting

perdition.

It is beautiful to see how perfectly the Son of the Highest becomes His Servant, now to save, as by-and-by to administer the glory. He chooses none for saving; He leaves all with Him Who sent Him. "All which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." On the one hand is the security of the children; on the other is the free grace of the gospel. For this has Christ come down out of heaven, Who alone could give either effect according to the Father's will, that none of that He had given should be lost, and that every one who believeth on the Son should have life eternal, Christ raising all up in the last day. For He brings to view not the present power of the kingdom on earth, but life for the soul now, and for the body resurrection. When the Jews murmured incredulously, the Lord urges the more the need of the Father's drawing those He Himself should raise in the last day, and cites the prophets accordingly. Then He sums up with His solemn asseveration. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath life eternal. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and died. This is the bread that cometh down out of heaven that one may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven: if one eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:47-51). The Incarnate Saviour thus stands before us, the food of faith in the wilderness world. Have you, dear reader, gone to Him? For He is thus revealed in the written word that you might come to Him and believe on Him. Life is in Him for sinful man, in Him only for him that believes on earth, in Him life eternal for the most guilty, untoward, and proud. So He assures us without hesitation or condition, save that we believe on Him. And this is the one thing the sinner does most of all pleasing to the Father, jealous as He is for His glory Whom man despised for His grace. "Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father either; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." All that is good follows faith through grace. May this be your present and everlasting portion!

11 Eating Christ's flesh, and drinking His blood

John 6:53-58.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 293-294. Gospel No. 8-11.)

There is a marked change in our Lord's discourse. He turns from His incarnation to His death. In both cases He speaks of eating. It is the well-known figure of scripture for appropriation or communion. He was not only the Living Bread that came down out of heaven, that one might eat and live for ever. He would give His flesh for the life not of Jews only but of mankind, or as He says "for the life of the world." But not a trace of ordinances is in either. It is a question of Himself, first living, then dead. He only was entitled to speak of giving life to the world. He through Whom the world came into being, He could quicken the dead; and such was and is the moral condition of all through sin (John 5:24-25). He, the new Man, is the object of faith giving life. And it is for any, for the Gentile as well as the Jew. Baptism and the Lord's supper have their place by the Lord's institution till He come; but scripture attributes quickening to Him, not to them. In Him, not in them, was life. It is a falsehood of Christendom to claim an attribute which is His for a rite in the hands of men who thereby arrogate a dignity not only unreal but profane. All through this discourse, as in all other scripture, notably in John's Gospel at large and in his great Epistle, life is in the Son; so that he who believes has the Son and has life, as he that has not the Son of God has not life.

Only now He insists on faith in Him dead. This was yet more repulsive to unbelief than faith in Him living. But the Lord did not soften the truth to make it more palatable. He presents it in pointedly strong terms, peremptorily demanding its reception. Did the Jews contend with one another, saying, How can a man give us his flesh to eat? "Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, he also that eateth me, he too shall live because of me. This is the bread that came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:53-58).

Till His death there was no atonement. Sin was not yet judged in an adequate sacrifice, nor was God vindicated, still less glorified. In the cross He was; and remission of sins could be proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ. Whosoever called on the name of the Lord should be saved. Hence faith in the Incarnate Word, wherever real, received the wondrous tidings of His death, as alone reconciling a sinful soul to God. Fallen man had no title to life eternal; and He Who was eternal life died for sin and to bear the sins of all who believed, that they might have that life without the sins blotted out by His blood. Therefore did all, who received Him incarnate from God, welcome the more deeply Him that died for sins and to sin, that every inconsistency with the new and divine life might be cancelled. How thankfully did they eat His flesh and drink His blood! Those who stumbled at Him thus dead, refusing to eat His flesh and drink His blood, proved thereby that they had no due sense of His grace nor of their own ruin by sin. Their professed faith in Him incarnate was unreal; had it been true, they would have hailed with deeper satisfaction His going down into death to do away with every effect of sin. From this they revolted, because they had no such conviction of their own evil, no such assurance of His love, even God’s love. But the Lord intimates more, and lets us know that if one has eaten His flesh and drunk His blood, he will not be content with once partaking of Him; he will continue to find in Him that best food. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day." For His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink (as some of the best MSS. here say). "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." To have thus partaken of Him dead is life eternal, but more than this: to make Him dead our habitual spiritual food is to ensure the communion of His love to the uttermost. Thus does one abide in Him and He in him; and one lives, not only through Him but on account of Him, as He lived on account of the Father, the motive and reason of being.

We may observe too how carefully the Lord in verse 58 binds together the incarnation and His death. This is quite inconsistent with a rite; it is His person living and dead, the one source of life eternal to the believer. If a rite be fancied here, it would involve the twofold and fatal error: that none who failed to partake of the Lord’s supper could have life; and that he who does partake of His supper has life eternal and must rise in the resurrection of the just.

O my reader, be not deceived. The Lord’s supper indeed refers to Christ’s death, to which this portion of John 6:1-71 refers. But He speaks only of faith in Him Who died for sin and sinners, that they believing on Him may have life. Therefore not to the communicant as such, but to the believer is the Lord’s assurance of life eternal. Turn away therefore from every substitute for Himself, Who is the only Saviour, the one substitute for your sins. Sacraments are admirable signs, but ruinous

when they displace Christ and faith in Him.

12 Christ the corn of Wheat

John 12:24.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 308-309. Gospel No. 8-12.) A very characteristic truth in the Gospel of John is the Son of God come, the Word become flesh, Who is life eternal and gives it to the believer. But nowhere have we a fuller witness to the efficacy of His death. His work is for us as necessary and as blessed in itself and in its effect as His person: God's glory is concerned most nearly in both (John 1:29; John 3:14; John 3:16; John 6:51-58; John 8:28; John 10:9-11; John 10:15-18; John 11:51-52; John 12:32). At this point of the Gospel testimony is rendered to Him in three aspects: first, as marked out Son of God in power by resurrection, in John 11:1-57; secondly, as Messiah, King of Israel, David's Son and David's Lord, in John 12:12-16; and lastly, as Son of man with rights over all flesh, yet (as we see in our text) about to die to have others sharing His blessedness and glory. Let us consider this last particular a little more fully. The Son of God was in the world which He had made; yet the world, boasting of its knowledge, knew Him not, the highest, best, most momentous of all knowledge. He came to His own things, for He was also Messiah, "the born King of the Jews"; yet His own people, if not so ignorant, were more guilty still than the world, and received Him not. Hence, when certain Greeks, of those coming up to worship at the feast of Passover, made known through disciples their desire to see Jesus, He answered, saying, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say to you, Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The entire vista of His humiliation unto death and of its blessed result opens before Him and receives suited expression in these wondrous word. Have you then heard Him in faith? Are you not nearly and deeply concerned? The rejection of the Son, Who is also Messiah, leads in marvellous grace to the fulfilment and disclosure of God's counsels. The Jews and the world at large were verily evil, openly proved enemies. His speaking to them as He did left them without excuse for their sin; His working among them as none other had done made other sin as nothing in comparison: for, as things were, they had both seen and hated both Him and His Father. Did the Jews by hand of lawless Gentiles crucify and slay the Lord of glory? It was by the grace of God He tasted death for every one. The greatest wrong of man confronted the love of God; which triumphed over sin and Satan in effecting redemption by His blood. Then, in being raised from the dead, He only and now is the Second man and Last Adam, by Whom all that believe are justified. Thereon, when the Jews refused the gospel of Him dead and risen, the word of salvation was sent to the nations or Gentiles. It is here for you now. He came to do God's will in His death as the perfect offering and sacrifice, which sums up yet surpasses all others. And again it is God's will that the glad tidings of remission of sins and life eternal should come to you. "Hear, and your soul shall live." Did not God say, even of old looking onward to Him. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"? Be reconciled to God. Where man saw in the cross shame, and the deepest shame, the Saviour saw glory. If this was moral glory, heavenly glory is its answer: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him." "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." So we read in Psalms 8:1-9. If the rejected Messiah of Psalms 2:1-12; Psalms 8:1-9 go down into death (compare Hebrews 1:1-14; Hebrews 2:1-18), He is the Son of man also crowned with glory and honour on high, though now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we by faith see Him in heaven, the pledge that they shall be. This will be when at His coming He raises those that are His to reign with

Him, as 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 declares. And it Agrees with what He Himself here says, "Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." That the victims of sin might be delivered, sin itself judged, Satan vanquished for eternity, God Himself glorified in man, and His love free to bless perfectly, He, the true grain of wheat, fell into the earth and died. Without that atoning death the glory had been His alone. But now what abundant "fruit"! They that are His are cleansed whiter than snow by His blood; they live of His life; they are children of God, and shall never perish. They are sealed by the Spirit. Through Christ they have the entry by one Spirit unto the Father; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The Greeks, like all Gentiles indeed, were apart from Christ, having no hope, and godless in the world; and it would soon be proved that the Jews, notwithstanding their great privileges, were no better but guiltier and therefore worse: all alike children of wrath. Neither living grace nor almighty power in Jesus could meet the desperate need. Nothing short of atoning death could avail. Without death He abode alone; but dying He bears much fruit in resurrection. And how scripture teems with testimony to this truth!

Oh, is it not a great thing to he part of His much fruit"? How blind, wretched, and sinful, to despise Him Who alone makes it good? What must it be to wake up to the awful evil of unbelief, when it is irretrievable?

05.11. Gospel Words - Ninth Series.

Gospel Words — Ninth Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Demoniac Mute 2 The Withered Hand healed 3 The Blind and Dumb 4 The Five Thousand fed 5 Jesus walking on the sea 6 The Canaanite woman 7 The Four Thousand Fed 8 The Transfiguration 9 The Lunatic Son 10 The Fish, and the Temple-tax 11 The Deaf and stammering man 12 The Blind Man of Bethsaida 1 The Demoniac Mute Matthew 9:32-34.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 326-327. Gospel No. 9-1.) This chapter as a whole shows us not only divine power in goodness displayed in Jesus as in Matthew 8:1-34; but how it was received by those who had religious reputation among the Jews. The more He wrought in grace, the less acceptable was the Messiah. Did He forgive the sins of the paralytic? Scribes within themselves resented it as blasphemy. But He who read their hearts answered their wicked unbelief by bidding the man arise, take up his couch, and retire to his house. So the call of the tax-gatherer to follow Him, and the defence of the disciples to the fault-finding followers of John and the Pharisees, vindicated God's grace. New wine needs new skins. The condition of God's ancient people was, like that of the ruler's daughter, one. of death; but He Who went to raise her up, and at length did so, was open to the touch of faith which got healing at once. Two blind men that appealed to His mercy as Son of David received their sight at His hand and word. These were but samples of what He could and would do for Israel, if there had been faith; but the leaders were increasingly hostile, whatever might be the marvel of the crowds, and His fame spread in all that land.

There remained a final proof. "But as these were going out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed by a demon. And the demon having been cast out, the dumb spoke; and the crowds wondered, saying, It was never seen thus in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out the demons by [or, in the power of] the prince of the demons" (Matthew 9:32-34).

Nothing slackened the gracious dealing of our Lord, so long as the door was open. The blind who now saw were no sooner going out, than men brought to him a man not only dumb but a demoniac. Luke 11:14 presents the awful peculiarity of the case yet more precisely: "And he was casting out a demon, and it was dumb." It was not simply the human infirmity: a dumb demon possessed the man. This made it altogether beyond ordinary resource. A spirit evil or good has power that man cannot resist. As with the unhappy man, so with the unhappy people and especially their religious chiefs. At length the people had not a true word to utter of their divine Messiah. His great grace, and their great need, drew out first from the leaders the imputation of blasphemy. Now it reaches a lower depth still opening to devour them. For what can be more heinous than to impute to the Holy One the power of the wicked one? Blasphemers themselves they charge blasphemy against Him, and under Satan's power they impute it to the energy of the prince of demons that He cast out the demons.

Before they were carried to Babylon, Israel had totally failed as Jehovah's servant. Their witness was not to Him but to graven and molten images, to which they said, Ye are our gods. Who so blind and deaf as they to whom Jehovah had laid bare His mighty arm and from the heavens made them hear His voice as no other people ever did? And therefore Jehovah gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers. Now they had Jehovah Messiah present in their midst in the power of beneficent goodness, and in a grace which anticipated the kingdom; and their alienation became yet more deadly. The same unbelief which sought after strange gods (only not nonentities because they were demons), rejected and blasphemed their Anointed, Who was in truth Jehovah. Where not thus active, the people were just as the demoniac mute. Under the power of the enemy they were dumb for Him Whose praise fills the heavens as it will the earth and all the creation.

How is it with you, dear reader? Are you confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus? Blessed is it, when also the heart believes on Him to righteousness; for then, and not otherwise, is confession made to salvation. He Who created man is Lord and Redeemer. God calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus shall you be saved — thus only; for there is none other name under heaven to save. Other refuge is vain. Other means are a snare and a lie. He is the true God, and eternal life. For the sinner, under Satan's power, only He can avail; but He avails at once and unfailingly. It is true that He is not here, but risen. It is true that the Jews slew Him, hanging Him on a tree; but God exalted Him by His right hand as Leader and Saviour, accepting His death as sacrifice, the only efficacious sacrifice, for sins. The grace now shown exceeds; it reigns through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you speak of your subjection to Satan's power? Looking to Jesus, life is given. He also Himself likewise took part in blood and flesh, that through death He might annul him that hath the might of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who in fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In His name, then, resist the devil; and he will flee from you. He is a conquered enemy through Him Who bore your sins and brings you every spiritual good.

Believing in Him, how immense is the change! As living stones, you are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood (which Aaron's sons were only in outward form), to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What is the worth to God now of sheep or oxen? of incense, or of first-fruits? All such things had their place before He came Who makes us to see that they are no more than the beggarly elements of the world, and that the body is of Christ. The Christian is a true worshipper, he only. They all can worship the Father in spirit and truth in the hour that now is. The multitude keeping holiday, without knowing the Father, without faith in the truth, without having the Spirit, are spurious and in the dark. The true worshippers the Father seeks at this time, who must worship God in spirit and truth, for they alone walk in the light as He is in the light. Assuredly they are no longer dumb. Does any among them suffer evil? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. May this be your lot! Grace alone can make it yours, the saving grace of God which appeared in our Lord Jesus, and blesses through faith in Him.

2 The Withered Hand healed Matthew 12:9-14.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 341-342. Gospel No. 9-2.) The sabbath like everything else was turned by Jewish unbelief against the Messiah. But like everything else the sabbath only told to His glory against man's sin, shame, selfishness, and pride. At that time (Matthew 12:1) the Lord went through the

cornfields on the sabbath, and His disciples, being hungry, began to pluck and eat. Seeing this the Pharisees reproached Him, but He vindicated them by David's act in 1 Samuel 21:1-15 generally, and in particular by the priests who do their work in the temple blamelessly on the sabbaths. What value had the show-bread if the anointed of Jehovah and his men were hunted for their life? Yet says He, "a greater thing than the temple is here." Had they known too what Hosea 6:6 means, they would not have condemned the guiltless. "For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." The rejected Christ is the Son of man about to come from heaven in judgment. They were guilty not only of transgressing the law, but of refusing Jehovah's Anointed. So He enters on a higher and larger glory which supersedes their boasts and judges their sins. On a subsequent sabbath he exposes their evil state, hypocritical and murderous.

"And when departed thence he went into their synagogue; and, behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath? that they might accuse him. And he said to them, What man of you shall there be who shall have one sheep; and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath, will he not lay hold and raise it up? How much then doth a man exceed a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful on the sabbath to do well. Then he saith to the man, Stretch out thy hand, and he stretched it out; and it was restored sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him" (Matthew 12:9-14).

Here it is not the authority of His person in which He will judge not the Jews only but all the nations; it is the character of Him Who is good and doeth good, let His people be as false and faulty as they may to their ruin. In vain for His people to plead the sabbath against Him Who is lord of it; still more vain to forbid on that day His active goodness for needy suffering man. The poorest Jew was not debarred by the sabbath from extricating his sheep from the pit. God had compassion, if they had none, for their brother fallen under a worse calamity; and here was He anointed of Jehovah to bind up the broken-hearted, let Pharisees rage and plot as they might. "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God."

Mark presents the scene yet more vividly; for he tells us that the Saviour directed the man to "Stand up" before He uttered His fuller and withering questions: "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" And when they held their peace but with malice to the uttermost, He looked round about on them with anger, distressed at the hardening of their heart. What right had selfish murderous men against God's grace? Such they showed themselves; for they went out of the synagogue to plot, Pharisees and Herodians, deadly enemies of each other, against the Son of God, His servant among sinful and suffering men, to minister as none else could, to save souls as well as life.

Oh! how is it with you who read these lines? Is not your case still more deplorable than his of the withered hand? Is not your heart withered Godward? Is it not active only as the source of uncleanness in every kind which defiles you? Do you love your own will and way? and what is this but sin, hateful to God and destructive to you? Yet for you Jesus, the Son of God, came; for you He died. And He died not for any imaginary good in you, but for your sins, too many and too real. Fear not then to commit yourself, just as you are to the Saviour. Hide not any thing of your evil from the eyes of your heart; let your conscience confess all out to God: Christ is the only meeting-place between the sinner and Him. He is all-embracing for such as come as sinners; and as surely a Saviour as they are lost.

Therefore of God’s word doubt not, but look to Jesus in your guilt and unworthiness. Seek only to be in the truth of your sins before God; and you will find Christ in the truth of divine grace toward your soul.

If it be so with you, this is true repentance toward God, and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The merit, the grace, the efficacy, the power are in Him. The pardon and peace, the life and blessing, are yours on believing the glad tidings of God about His Son. Till you believe on Him for life and salvation, you have nothing to do with practical love and holiness, incumbent as they are on the Christian. First be settled in faith.

3 The Blind and Dumb Matthew 12:22-30.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 357-358. Gospel No. 9-3.)

Sometimes demoniacs met the Lord, as in Matthew 8:28; sometimes as here and in Matthew 9:32 one was brought. This made no difference to the Saviour’s gracious power: He cast the demons out. In the case before he was dumb; now it is one blind and dumb, who was healed all the same.

"Then was brought to him a demoniac blind and dumb; and he healed him, so that the blind [man] spoke and saw. And all the crowds were amazed and said, Is this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard, they said, This [man] doth not cast out the demons but by Beelzebub, prince of the demons. And knowing their thoughts he said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand. And if I by Beelzebub cast out the demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if by God’s Spirit I cast out the demons, then hath come upon you the kingdom of God. Or how can one enter into the house of the strong [man], and plunder his goods, unless first he bind the strong [man], and then he will plunder his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Matthew 12:22-30).

Aggravated as the malady was, it only furnished the fuller occasion for the Lord Jesus. The growing rejection by Israel, and especially by their chiefs, made more clear Who He was, and what they were. It is hard at first to learn that God’s people on earth may be slaves of Satan, spiritually as blind and dumb as the demoniac brought to the Lord. But He that healed the man in circumstances so desperate is yet more willing as He is able to deliver from the still deeper and worse captivity through sin and Satan’s power.

"All the crowd" were amazed and said timidly, It is not the Son of David, is it? But the Pharisees repeated yet more strongly the deadly slander which they had uttered before (Matthew 9:34), "This man doth not cast out the demons but by Beelzebub, prince of the demons." It was not unbelief only, but its darker form, when the beneficent power of God cannot be disputed, and is imputed to the evil one as its source. Such is the inevitable lot of such as enjoy religious reputation as orthodox and righteous without living faith. If they encounter Christ, as here, they must either be subject to the testimony given to His person, or attribute the power of God’s Spirit He wields to the arch-enemy. The more people know of divine things, the more fatally they sin against the truth if they brazen out in unbelief; for it then takes the shape of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which shall not be forgiven either in this age or in that which is to come.

Here the Lord pronounces the mind of God. Consciously knowing their thoughts He exposes their malicious absurdity. Whether for kingdom, city, or house, to divide against itself is ruin. If Satan therefore casts out Satan, as they said, he is divided against himself: how then shall his kingdom stand? But as no Jew doubted for a moment its subsisting till Messiah come in power and glory to judge and destroy it, such a plea refutes itself as untenably inconsistent and false. The Lord did not anticipate that glorious day, but was then bearing witness that He is the destined vanquisher of Satan by this sample of the powers of the age to come. When it comes, Satan will be cast into the abyss, as he will be into the lake of fire and brimstone when it ends. But Jesus proves Himself always opposed and superior, though it be only as then in the day of witness.

Further, the Lord appeals to the evidence of God's power in opposition to Satan in Israel; for never has He left Himself without witness. By what power did they act? "If I in [the power of] Beelzebub cast out the demons, in whose [power] do your sons cast them out? Wherefore they shall be your judges." Their folly was as clear as their malice. Were they now and definitively to become God's enemies? "But if I in [power of] God's Spirit cast out the demons, then hath come upon you the kingdom of God. Or how can one enter into the strong one's house and plunder his goods, unless first he bind the strong one? and then he will plunder his house."

Thus all turns on our relation to Christ. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." Jesus is the standard. If I am not with Him as God's object and centre for me, I am against Him. He is not only Messiah but God and Jehovah, yet man. Such a One could not be here below without testing all that saw or heard of Him. If I receive Him, it is salvation, for He came to seek and save the lost; and as saved by grace, I am bound to serve Him all the more, His willing bondman yet His freedman. But He is no less the centre for all one seeks to gather. If it be not to Him in our service, we lack the divine centre. We may be earnest and busy; but the result is only "scattering" in God's estimate, which ought surely to be ours as believers.

How is it then with your soul, dear reader? Are you with Christ? Have you heard His voice, and do you follow Him? Blessed are you if you have thus received Him. It is life eternal, as He declares.

Take care then that you have Him as your centre, God's centre, not only for your soul but for your work. It is on God's part for gathering to, as well as for saving. No other name but His is revealed of God for both purposes, which indeed meet in Him.

4 The Five Thousand fed Matthew 14:14-21.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 372-373. Gospel No. 9-4.)

Only one Gospel connects our Lord's retirement with tidings of John the Baptist's death. The herald's lot only precedes that of Jehovah Messiah's Whose time was not yet come. In the Gospel of Mark (Mark 6:30-31) He would give a little rest apart with Himself to His sent workmen. Those who serve Him need not look for better things. In Luke there is no such account, but the fact of John's execution alluded to, as the effect of the report which reached Herod of the Saviour's gracious power. But Jesus was the same in the desert as in the city, the compassionate healer of the sick. Nor this only; for when the disciples at evening would dismiss the crowd to buy themselves food, He says to them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat. But looking not to Him they were powerless.

"And they say to him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. And he said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the crowd to recline on the grass, took the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven, and blessed; and having broken he gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. And they all ate and were filled; and they took up what was over of the fragments, twelve baskets full. And the eaters were about five thousand, apart from women and children" (Matthew 14:17-21).

He was the true Solomon, though Israel did not yet sing the son. of Ascent. Yet He was there, and not David's Son only, but Jehovah Who chose Zion and will there dwell. Was He not in their low estate giving the manifest testimony that He would abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread? Their unbelief might and did put off the kingdom; nevertheless He was there, the King, and no failure in Him of grace or power. How little those nearest to Him drew on either by faith! How promptly He met the need beyond all thought of men or saints! This however is revealed for you, my reader, as it was then shown to the needy, that they and you might look to Him and be saved. Beyond doubt the soul is more than the food; and none ever pressed this so much as Himself. None warned as He to fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. But who like Him assured guilty man that God so loved the world as to give His beloved Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have life eternal? The day comes fast when He will make good every promise, as He will also inflict the judgment which in every form the Father committed to Him, because He is Son of man. As such He was despised and rejected; as such He suffered to the utmost and is exalted on high. But if His sufferings will bring vengeance on His foes, they do also bring salvation to those who believe, and none the less, because they like all others were lost till they believed.

It is not yet the day when He will ask nations for an inheritance, and break them with iron sceptre, as a potter his vessel. Then shall His name be excellent in all the earth, as well as His majesty above the heavens. But it is given now among men, and none other under heaven, wherein we must be saved. He alone is worthy; He is God as well as Jesus Christ the righteous Man. The Word became flesh to glorify His Father and God, Son of man to save the lost. Such a sign as He then wrought was proper to show His compassion to the needy and distressed in Israel. Was it not meant to let you know who read or hear the word, that He pities your deeper need, and is no less ready to bless you with the bread of God, in order that you, believing on Him, may never hunger or thirst more?

This, His discourse to the crowd that followed after Him, as we read in John 6:1, clearly points out. It is His express application of it to you who read now as to those who then heard. Why then should you doubt that He will make good His word? He declares that the believer has life eternal; He declares elsewhere that His sheep shall never perish, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. He and the Father are not more one in divine nature than in divine love, to keep His sheep, however exposed in this world to the enemy's malice. The grace of Christ is sufficient for you, great as is your weakness; indeed it is made perfect in weakness. Fear not therefore to trust in Him. Believe God Who sent Him, that those who receive Him may live eternally, and that those who believe not may be judged everlastingly. He is the giver of life because He is Son of God; He is the executor of judgment because He is Son of man. One or other must be your portion. He gives you life if you believe; He will judge you if you reject Him. It is unwise, it is full of danger, it is in the highest degree sinful, to reject the gracious and saving message of God in Christ to your

soul.

5 Jesus walking on the sea Matthew 14:23-33.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 4-5. Gospel No. 9-5.)

Bright was the witness, as it is still, to the rejected Messiah. This glory is great, but He is greater still, Immanuel and Jehovah; and it shines out the more that men despise Him.

"And having dismissed the crowds, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone. But the ship [or boat] was already in the midst of the sea, tossed by the waves for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea; and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear. But Jesus immediately spoke unto them. saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answering him said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come; and Peter, going down from the ship, walked on the water to come unto Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught hold of him, and saith to him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they had gone up into the ship, the wind ceased. And those in the ship came and paid homage to him, saying, Truly thou art God's Son" (Matthew 14:23-33).

Whatever His own title, and it was truly divine, our Lord had become man, and loyally maintained His dependence on God, of which prayer is a signal expression. It is peculiarly prominent in the Gospel of Luke where His humanity is most brought before us in all its lowliness and sympathy, in all its piety and obedience. And it has its due place in Mark's Gospel of His service. But the disciples on the tempest-tossed sea were as distressed as their boat, and the wind was contrary, so that they toiled in vain at the oar. He waited long enough for them to realise their danger and their powerlessness, and came unto them, walking on the sea. Troubled at what they thought an apparition, they cried for fear, but immediately He bade them take courage. "It is I: be not afraid."

Reader, have you never heard His voice? It sounds in the written word in His own tones of love and compassion. It is for you to hear and live by believing them. The blessing is expressly for faith to receive. When you, judging yourself for your sins, look to Jesus at God's warrant, remission is yours. You are reconciled to God and justified by faith. You are called thenceforth to walk as a child of God and sealed by His Spirit till the day of redemption, when your bodies will have the power of Christ's life, as your souls have now (John 5:1-47). All other ways and means are a delusion. Baptism and the Lord's supper are His institutions, most expressive of His death, and of your blessing thereby. But faith is by hearing, and this by God's word. He is best honoured in His Son's honour. No doubt the enemy stirs up storms of every kind to alarm and endanger the disciples; but what of that, if the Lord sees all with watchful eye and fails not to give His guardian presence? This will be true and sure for His Jewish remnant in days to come as well as then when He was on earth; so is it assured to the Christian and the Christian assembly now, however few they may be. He, Who has His way in the whirlwind and in the tempest, with the clouds as the dust of His feet, was there in the person of Jesus walking the waves to say, Be courageous. It is I: fear not. They ought to have known already that winds and waves obey Him, their Creator.

Peter yields a little intimation of what was at hand. He quits the boat at the word of the Lord, and goes to meet Jesus on the sea; as the church did gathered to His name, apart from the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 10:32). But he quickly displays the instability of his faith. To the Christian also Christ is all. If we look away from Him, we begin to sink as he did. What, if the storm raged and the waves rose ever so high? Had the sea been smooth instead of rough, could Peter have walked across it? But he saw the wind strong and began to sink, with the cry, Lord, save me. And the Lord's outstretched hand was the answer, though there was the loving reproof, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Such is He to us now, faithful, gracious, and superior to all circumstances. But we have to walk by faith, not by sight. Yet if our faith fail, He does not fail to deliver.

By-and-by He will rejoin His Jewish disciples in their unequalled trouble at the end of the age, bespeak a calm which is not the church's portion while on earth, and bring at once the old ship into the desired haven. . . For heaven and for the earth, for the church as for Israel, Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

6 The Canaanite woman Matthew 15:21-28.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 20-21. Gospel No. 9-6.)

It is in the First Gospel we find this most instructive incident, which reveals the Lord, not merely as minister of circumcision for God's truth, but as the display of His sovereign grace where God's curse lay, and Satan's power.

"And Jesus going forth hence retired into the parts of Tyre and Sidon; and, behold, a Canaanite woman coming out from those borders cried out, saying, Pity me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously possessed by a demon. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and asked him, saying, Dismiss her, for she crieth out after us. But he said in answer, I was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house. And she came and paid him homage, saying, Lord, help me. But he said in answer, It is not good to take the children's bread and cast [it] to the dogs. But she said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus in answer said to her, O woman, great [is] thy faith: be it done to thee as thou willest. And her daughter was healed from that hour" (Matthew 15:21-28). The Lord withdrew from the proud religionists of Jerusalem, who made void the law of God for the sake of their tradition. He also laid bare to the disciples that only the plants of His Father take root, while all that issues from man's heart is defiled and defiling. The sinner needs God's grace to save him. This is shown in the otherwise desperate case of the Canaanite, and her daughter sorely possessed of a demon.

Here may many a soul learn why the Lord does not accede to its appeal. Hers was deep and earnest; yet He answered her not a word. What claims on the Son of David had a Canaanite woman? When He reigns, there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts (Zechariah 14:21). When the two blind cried early or late, saying, Pity us, Son of David, He touched their eyes, which were then opened according to their faith (Matthew 9:27-30; Matthew 20:30-34). But repentance has its place as truly as faith; and God will have the soul to judge itself aright. "Cursed be Canaan" is the word from of old; and yet was she not now asking His pity Who is to avenge and deliver Israel!

How many today have said the words, "Father, . . . forgive us our sins"! Yet they too have received no answer; nor would they assert, any more than they believe, that their sins are forgiven. They have gone on ground wholly untenable. They are not His sons by faith in Christ. They are not born of water and Spirit. They stand on law, supplemented by ordinances. They are unrenewed, serving divers lusts and pleasures, a prey to the power of darkness. They do not cry to God in the truth of their estate, but imitate the language of disciples, which they might own they are not in heart, Have we not experienced it ourselves? Our state was below the Canaanite's. The woman of Canaan evidently knew that no Israelite ever appealed to Christ in vain. She had faith in Him; but she had overlooked her own dismal position. Theirs were "the promises"; but what had she? Not promise, but curse. And He Who is the truth would have her feel it. Not so the disciples; they would have Him dismiss her. This was far from His heart. They disliked the discredit of her importunity, and wished to be rid of her. He meant to bless her; but it must be in the truth as well as the grace of God. For this He waited, and she as yet had no answer; but He answered them, "I was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house."

Now faith where real perseveres; and the woman came and did Him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He is indeed Lord of all: this is truth without assumption of privilege. To such an appeal He does reply, "It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

Thus does His grace help her to see where she was lacking. The light of God shines into her heart; and she bows at once. For she said, "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." She apprehends where and what she really was, and takes her true place before God. She had forgotten that she was not a "sheep" to claim the succour of Israel's Shepherd. She was truly a "dog" before Him, no better than a little dog or whelp. Yet while no longer hiding this from her soul but confessing it freely, she rejoins, "Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters."

Oh what refreshment did such faith give to our Lord Jesus! She savoured the things of God. She appreciated, believed, enjoyed the grace of which she was the object. And the Lord owned her "great faith," and gave her all she wished.

How is it with you, dear reader? Have you learnt that you are no better than a dog before Him? Or are you, while in your sins, claiming to be His sheep? Own yourself a sinner, and Him the only Saviour, that you may be saved. He is the same Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him. Why should you stand without? A better voice than Laban's invites you to come in and be blessed. All depends on Him; but it is not yours save by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Till then we have no known divine answer to our cry.

7 The Four Thousand Fed Matthew 15:32-39.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 37-38. Gospel No. 9-7.) The miracle here does not merely attest again the divine Messiah's presence and power on behalf of His needy people. Each has its own characteristics for our instruction. Both prove His ready and almighty resources. Had each miracle appeared in a different Gospel only, the sceptics would have insisted on discrepant accounts; but God has cut off such an objection, because Matthew and Mark record both, Luke and John only the first of them. The miracle wrought twice signifies, if one may apply Joseph's interpretation (Genesis 41:32), that the thing is established by God, whatever be man's unbelief. The distinctions are marked, but in no

way favour those of old who imagined a reference in the former to the Jew, in the latter to the Gentile. Both express Messiah's grace to the chosen people.

What then is the true difference? It is defined in detail, as well as in broad features. There were five loaves and two fishes in the first, seven loaves and a few fishes in the last, five thousand fed in one, and four thousand in the other; the surplus then filled twelve baskets, now seven. The very baskets employed had in each instance a differing appellation, meaning respectively a hand-basket and a creel, as expressed without confusion in each account, and maintained in our Lord's recall of both in Matthew 16:1-28. The larger distinction will appear presently, though it may here be added that the first was in the spring when the grass was green, the second some months later; and that in the second the crowd had stayed three days, whereas in the first we do not hear of more than one day.

"And Jesus, having called his disciples unto him, said, I have compassion on the crowd, because they continue with me already three days and have nothing to eat; and I would not let them go fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say to him, Whence should we [have] in a wilderness so many loaves as to fill so great a crowd? And Jesus saith to them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few small fishes. And he commanded the crowds to lie down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves and the fishes he gave thanks and broke, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the crowd. And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was over of the broken pieces, seven baskets full. And those that ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And having let go the crowds he went on board the ship and came over into the borders of Magadan" (Matthew 15:32-39). On the first occasion the disciples took the initiative, and proposed the dismissal of the crowds to buy themselves food in the villages. Their faith was weak indeed. How sad to overlook His presence who was pledged to satisfy Zion's poor with bread! Even His call that they should give them to eat failed to awaken any sense of His fulness. So He took the provision they despised, and abundantly blessed it to the five thousand, and more; yet there remained over of the broken pieces twelve baskets full. Now this answers to the twelve apostles, being the number of full administration by or in man. But it was only a sign in His rejected testimony to Israel; and sending His disciples to go before Him to the other side, on dismissal of the crowds, He went up into the mountain apart to pray, the figure of His priestly place on high. After this comes the wondrous scene of Peter leaving the ship to join Jesus on the water, which is peculiar to Matthew, as alone expressive of the divine design by that Gospel, and having nothing like it on the second occasion.

Here it is the Messiah yearning over His famished people. They were guilty; but He commiserated their distressful state, and gave His disciples a fresh opportunity of drawing on Him by faith. Alas! they were slow to learn. "Whence should we have in a wilderness so many loaves as to fill so great a crowd?" He was there, and full of compassion; but unbelief, even in believers, is ever blind. The seven loaves which He took and distributed through His disciples, and the surplus in the seven baskets here named, point to spiritual, not to administrative fulness. All was ordered of God, all is meant to teach man, if he has cars to hear. It is Jehovah-Messiah acting in His own perfection. Here there is no going on high to pray; nor is there a rejoining the disciples for the other side, when and where all who once rejected Him welcome Him and His beneficent power, as will be in the consummation of the age.

How is it with you, dear reader? Whatever engrosses you, whatever interests you, the first and deepest of all questions is, How are you treating Jesus? He is the Lord of glory, the Son of God Who became man to die for you. How do you regard Him? It concerns you now, and for all eternity. He died to save sinners; but the blessing is for those that believe. If you believe not who have heard His name, you are far more guilty than heathen who have not heard. God the Father resents all dishonour done to His beloved Son, and has given all judgment into His hands, because He is Son of man (John 5:1-47), to punish all men who despise Him. Is it not then of incalculable moment that you bow to Him Who will be your Judge by-and-by, if you refuse Him now as Saviour? Remember that His judgment is eternal. Yet how righteous is it also! For the unbeliever in the gospel is not impenitent only but despises God's grace. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

8 The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-9.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 53-54. Gospel No. 9-8.) In the midst of His service of humiliation our Lord was for a little transfigured. It was not like Moses whose face shone from his nearness to the divine Presence. Our Lord was with His own here below. A week before He prepared them for seeing the Son of man coming in His kingdom. After it He takes with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain apart. "And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. And, behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with them." It is a miniature of His kingdom wherein will be the risen and changed saints with others in their natural bodies, and the Lord the centre of all.

Yet it would seem that the divine aim of Moses and Elijah being there was to mark the surpassing glory of the Lord before Whom the chief representative of the law and the most honoured of the prophets gave place and vanished away. The personal glory of Jesus is most conspicuous as elsewhere in this Gospel. He is Son of God and Son of man.

Peter counted it a great thing to see His Master with saints so renowned and glorious. "Lord," said he to Jesus, "It is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He made the natural but fatal mistake of equalising all three. Yet he who had only so short a time before confessed His Master to be not only the Messiah, but the Son of the living God, ought not to have so erred. So easy is it to forget what flesh and blood never truly knows, what is revealed by the Father; just as then too he could not bear to think of His going to Jerusalem, suffering many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and being killed but raised the third day.

Here it was not the withering rebuke of the Lord Who knew that all blessing for man and glory for God, in a ruined world, hung on His rejection. It was the Father's voice out of the excellent glory. "While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son in Whom I found my delight: hear ye him." The Father then displayed His jealousy for the honour of His Son. He would not allow the law-giver or the law-restorer to be put on such a level. They were servants and to be honoured in the place He set them. But His beloved Son! — there were His delights; and if Christ went down in love infinite to suffer as man, and as man to be exalted, the glory of the eternal Son was precious beyond all

thought of man in His Father’s eyes.

It is the Son Whom we are to hear. See how the great truth is attested in the Epistle to the Hebrews, both in Hebrews 1:2, and in Hebrews 12:25. Equally explicit is John 5:25 for quickening, and in John 10:1-42 for every day; and not only for the sheep led out of the Jewish fold but for other sheep, Gentiles, not of this fold. Dear reader, does not this reach to you? If the blessing is immense, what is the loss? And what must be the fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries and the indifferent? For Himself has said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give to them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." On the other hand "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." When the disciples heard the Father’s voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. They were far from knowing yet His love; but He, Who brought it in His own person, was at hand to strengthen their hearts. "And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid." Not less now but more does Jesus cause His word to come home in the power of redemption to those that believe. And the God Who sent Him would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we way abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. Is it thus with your souls? Can you. say that you have heard the voice of Jesus by faith, and that you are "not afraid"? This is His will, not only for the three who then heard, but for all that believe the gospel of God. Perfect love casts; out the fear that has torment, and creates the fear of reverence. It is the effort of the enemy to work on the conscious guilt of man that he may distrust the words of Jesus; it is the work of the Spirit from the beginning to efface it all. The entrance of that word dispels darkness before the light of God to the soul, and enables the heart to receive "Be not afraid."

"Lifting up their eyes, they saw no one save Jesus only." Visions were always rare; such a vision is unique. But for the heart’s comfort, and the right direction of the eye, there is nothing to compare with having Jesus the Son of God to hear. So has God the Father ruled: "hear Him." And He abides the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. May we by faith look to "Jesus only." It is not only at first that the soul may be saved by faith, but for every day and hour after we do believe. For the only right walk is by faith, and the fight of faith is the only good fight, in which Jesus is the one unfailing Captain. Other fights we may have to our shame, where flesh is not judged, and Satan gains advantage for the moment. To Jesus then may we ever look, to "Jesus only."

9 The Lunatic Son

Mark 9:17-27.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 69-70. Gospel No. 9-9.)

What a contrast with the manifestation of the excellent glory on the mountain was the actual state of man even in the favoured people here below! Jesus the Son of God was there; yet that the disciples knew not so by faith, as to avail themselves of His victory over the enemy!

"And one of the crowd answered and said, Teacher, I brought unto thee my son having a dumb spirit; and whensoever it taketh him, it teareth him, and he foameth and gnasheth his teeth, and is withering away. And I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. And answering them He saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto Him; and when He saw him,

straightway the spirit tore him, and falling on the ground he wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long time is it that this hath come to him? And he said, From a child. And often it cast him both into fire and into waters to destroy him; but if thou hast any power, help us in thy pitifulness toward us. But Jesus said to him, If thou hast power (is) to believe: all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said, I believe: help mine unbelief. And Jesus, seeing that a crowd was running up together, rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, Dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And having cried out and torn [him] much, it came out, and he became as if dead, so that the most said, He is dead. But Jesus laying hold of him by the hand raised him up; and he stood up" (Mark 9:17-27).

It was indeed a mighty deed: and so it fell to our Gospel above the others to give most details. There are differences in the evil spirits; and only to prayer and fasting did the kind in question yield. The lack in that respect was grievous in the Lord's eyes. The distressed parent did not despair, and turned from the failing disciples to Him Who never fails. How humbling when believers thus dishonour their Lord! "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" This was the overwhelming fact. That the crowd, that the scribes, should have no faith, was bad enough after such ample witness of the gracious power of God in His Son, servant of all need in man, marked out from the first in doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. Did He not give the twelve, and more than the twelve, authority over the unclean spirits? How was it then that these put shame on His name by failing to draw on Him?

"Bring him unto Me" says the Saviour. Even so, He lets all see the depth of the child's need, the malicious power of the enemy. He manifests His interest in all that dismays the heart of man. He enquires, not as if He did not know the reins and the heart, but that the tried soul may learn the reality of His compassion. He teaches the feeble suppliant that the question of power turns on faith; for faith God will have, whatever may be His own grace. What possible good morally could power insure without believing? On the other hand, all things are possible to him that believes. So even the disciples had to learn; and the father, through his necessities believing the lesson at once, tends to the right way under the Lord's guidance. "I believe: help mine unbelief." How wholesome for the believer to feel and own his unbelief!

How is it with you that read these words? Have you found out what a deadly thing is unbelief? Have you received the declaration from God that you till brought to Him live in the lusts of your flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are by nature children of wrath, even as the rest of mankind? Judaism did not hinder this of old, whatever its great privileges; nor does Christendom now with its still greater advantages. And has Satan no power over such as are dead in trespasses and sins? Do not such walk according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience? If men but saw by faith, they would discern themselves thus in a plight more appalling than that of the lunatic child under the power of the dumb and deaf spirit. For in itself it was for the life that now is; whereas Ephesians 2:1-3 describes for both time and eternity. But the Lord, as He wrought in power then, is also the Deliverer according to the rich mercy of God and the great love wherewith He loves. God is now showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, as He assures us He will in the ages to come. Let me, following the apostle, entreat that you receive not the grace of God in vain; for vain it undoubtedly is, if you have not faith in God

through our Lord Jesus for your own soul as a guilty sinner, powerless in yourself before Him. But He hearkens to the cry of need and distress; yea He sends His word and works in manifold ways to make souls sensible of their ruin, that they may cry and He may answer in the glad tidings of His gospel. Now too it is a day of salvation; and the casting away of Israel is the world's reconciliation. For their fall is our wealth, their loss is our rich gain.

How awful then for men in Christendom to live only for present enjoyment, money, ease, honour, power, like the heathen who know not God! He Who for sins suffered unutterably, not from man only, but from God's judgment on the cross, is the Author of everlasting salvation to all those that obey Him; and faith in God's testimony to Him is the beginning of that blessing which shall never end. Oh, take heed, and put not off the call of grace, which you may not hear again! The spirits, now in prison and awaiting, not another deluge, but everlasting judgment in the resurrection of the unjust, once heard the Spirit of Christ in Noah's preaching while the ark was in preparation. Beware lest you, who have heard a far fuller expression of divine mercy in the gospel of Christ, frustrate the counsel of God against yourselves. For God is not mocked in the end, however men cheat themselves in thinking that He heeds not their words and ways now. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, throughout the day of the temptation in the wilderness.

10 The Fish, and the Temple-tax Matthew 17:24-27.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 85-86. Gospel No. 9-10.)

What had the Lord said in John 8:1-59? It is the Son only Who, being free in the highest sense, sets free those who are His disciples abiding in His word. All else, however boastful, are but slaves of sin, the lowest of all slavery. The slave passes; the son abides for ever; but this he derives solely from the eternal Son, though not without faith in the truth which He in grace tells out, as indeed He was it and came that we might hear and receive it. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." So here what ineffable grace! "Lest we cause them to stumble, go unto the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and having opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel: that take and give to them for me and thee."

Now it is His omnipotence that is proved; for what else could make itself forthwith obeyed by a fish passing through the paths of the sea? Who but God in man could or would have caused it to rise to Peter's hook with a silverling in its mouth of the exact amount for the temple? Whom but the Son did it befit to say in His grace, lest we cause them to stumble" . . . give to them for me and for thee"? The grand truth is breaking through the clouds of a self-destroying Israel and Judaism, that the Son was emptying and humbling Himself not only to rescue, but to associate with Himself every one that believes in Him. What grace! This association, as the gospel tells, is based not only on the divine glory of His person, but on the accomplishment of an everlasting redemption. This He found, as Hebrews 9:1-28 declares, by His own blood. And as it is attested by His ascension glory, so it is the glad message sent to you, my dear reader, if you have not already received it unto salvation. This, and no less, it bears, and, on God's authority and in His love, assures to every sinner who repents and believes the gospel. God is thus honouring His Son, as well He may; for He and He alone perfectly glorified Him, even as to sin on the cross, as before in all respects.

Oh! persevere not in that unbelief which is the most radical and hateful of all evils. Listen no more to the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan: why die the second death? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: are you so infatuated as to prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, and make shipwreck for eternity? Can it be that you turn a deaf ear to Him Who suffered once for all for sins, and will not come to Him that you may have life? The New Testament presents no miracle more striking and instructive than the one before us. Its place too in the First Gospel and there only is precisely appropriate, if the Holy Spirit meant here to bring out the divine glory of Christ, along with His grace in associating the believer with Himself; when, rejected as He is by the Jews, the church and the kingdom of the heavens should replace the things even promised by new things.

"And when they came unto Capernaum, those that receive the half-shekels came to Peter and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekels? He saith, Yea. And when he entered into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons or from other folk? He (or, Peter) saith to him, From other folk. Jesus said to him, Well then the sons are free. But lest we cause them to stumble, go unto the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and having, opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel: that take and give to them for me and thee" (Matthew 17:24-27).

Peter, like most disciples and like all naturally, was slow to distrust himself and to wait on the Lord and His word. He was quick, being zealous for the law, to assure those who took the redemption money (not the tax-gatherers so repulsive to Jewish feeling) that his Master was the same. He did not when questioned bear in mind, either what the Father had revealed to Him of the Lord's personal dignity (Matthew 16:1-28), or of the glory conferred on Him for the coming kingdom (Matthew 17:1-27): Jesus was too good an Israelite to neglect the heave-offering to Jehovah, the atonement for the soul! Peter forgot that Jesus was the true temple of God and the true God of the temple; he knew not yet that the visible temple was doomed, as ready to vanish away. He still savoured the things that are of men. The Lord therefore anticipated him on entering the house by the question, From whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? from their sons, or from other folk? He could not but answer, From other folk; and the Lord rejoined that therefore the sons are free. The Lord had just shown His omniscience, as He showed every creature subject to Him. He proved to Peter that He knew what had not reached His ear. He graciously corrects His servant's mistake and leads him once more into the truth. He was God, the Son, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit; but He speaks and acts in perfect grace; as indeed otherwise where could Peter or we be? He says, Then are the sons free. On Him, Who alone is the Son eternally in personal right and title, depends the blessedness of the sons. We are by grace sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, not Peter only but now, once Jews or Gentiles, all God's sons, all one in Christ Jesus; and because sons, God sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that each can hear, Thou art no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

11 The Deaf and stammering man

Mark 7:32-37.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 100-101. Gospel No. 9-11.) This is one of the two miracles peculiar to the gospel of Mark, the other being the cure of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22). They both illustrate

the prophetic service of the Son of God. He had come to the lake of Galilee. And they bring to him [one] deaf and hardly speaking, and they beseech him to lay his hand on him. And having taken him away from the crowd apart, he put his fingers to his ears; and he spit and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven he groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aright. And he charged them that they should tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more abundantly were they publishing [it]. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well; he maketh both the deaf to hear and the speechless to speak" (Mark 7:32-37). The minute accuracy of the Holy Spirit in recounting Christ's miracles is admirable. This case differs from others, in that the sufferer is not said to have been absolutely mute, but to have had an impediment of speech, or speaking with difficulty, as well as deaf. Nevertheless the Lord takes especial pains with him. The manner reveals the divine Servant's grace. There was no question of His power. Ordinarily He healed all that needed it in a moment, no matter how extreme, as when an unclean spirit was the cause of the dumbness rather than physical inability or defect. Here He was pleased to manifest His tender interest in detail, and His compassionate love no less than His power to heal. He does much more than what those besought who brought the patient to Him. Putting the hand on the needy one was the usual sign of blessing; and less than this, a word, would have been enough, if so the obedient Lord had seen fit to God's glory. But He took him aside from the crowd apart. For here it is not the crowd He thinks of, any more than the haughty scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. Just before He had met the desperate need of the Syro-phoenician on behalf of her demoniac daughter on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Now He had come through the midst of the borders of Decapolis, where, as the prophet had long before predicted, light was to shine for a despised remnant when darkness brooded over the mass with city and temple dead to the rejected Messiah (Isaiah 9:1-2). So apart from the crowd He took the deaf man, and put His fingers unto, if not into (as the preposition may mean according to the sense required), his ears. But more than this; having spit, He touched the tongue of the stammerer.

He marked in both acts how all depended on bringing Himself personally to bear on the actual wants. He who wrought was man, but no less was He God, the Son incarnate and on earth, in His pitiful love serving God and man. It was not only that He applied what came from within Himself to the man's tongue, but looking up to heaven He groaned, and saith to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. Power truly went out of Him, and love was its spring in devotedness to God Who is as truly light in His nature as love is the character of its energy, which His own service was manifesting. And thus, if He deigned to touch the man so intimately, He looked up to heaven whence He came in a love that abides unchanging and above all evil, yet groaned in deep sense of it, whilst He said to him, Be opened. The afflicted man was but an emblem of the state of Israel, unwilling alas! and unable through unbelief to hear God, or to speak out their own misery and His praise. But as brought to Him he set forth the remnant on whom light dawned in a region and shadow of death. And "straightway" (a word so characteristic in the Gospel of His service) his ears were opened, and the bond or tie of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke aright. If the unbelief of the people and its chiefs made their blessing impossible, the poor of the flock prove the all-suffering of His gracious power, and reap the great blessing of faith, be it ever so small. And the love which so wrought will encourage a remnant in a future day, who will re-commence the Jewish history in the land, till it become a strong nation in that faithfulness which is unwearied and will

never forget the promise. For the present all was vain; and He charged them to tell no one, but the more He did, the more a great deal were they its publishers. Yet, true as it might be in word, it was not faith in the heart, but rather extreme astonishment. Even so what a comment on Christ's service! "He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and speechless to speak." But how is it with you who now read God's testimony to Jesus His Son? Have you heard His voice? For He still speaks in His word; and they live who hear Him; and they follow Him, for they know His voice. Amidst the Babel tongues of Christendom they know it, and there is none like it; for it reveals to their souls God, and God as Father in quite a new way proper not to man even innocent but to the Son already come Who has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true. Truth is in none other; but He is not only the truth, but the way and the life. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." His word cannot deceive, His word only; and what he has done is according to the same perfection; above all is that work which He wrought on the cross, by which we that believe have now received the reconciliation.

12 The Blind Man of Bethsaida

Mark 8:22-26.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 117-118. Gospel No. 9-12.) This is the later of the two miracles peculiar to the Gospel of Mark. As in the former the Lord led away the deaf man, who could not speak aright, from the crowd apart, so here He took hold of the blind man's hand and conducted him out of the village. The mass of the Jews had already had ample signs in testimony of Who and what He was. It was but for greater hardening of their hearts to see more. They might get their sick healed, they might eat of the loaves He made and be filled; but even the most orthodox sought from Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him; so that He could only groan in His spirit and say, Why doth this generation seek a sign? Had He not given them countless signs? In the sense of their unbelief, which a Syro-Phoenician woman's faith rebuked, the Lord leads aside from the multitude, though He still acts in compassionate grace. This could not fail where they bring distressful need before Him, the Servant not more righteous than gracious.

"And they bring him a blind man, and beseech him that he might touch him. And taking hold of the blind man's hand, he led him forth out of the village, and having spit on his eyes, he laid his hands on him, and asked him if he beheld anything. And having looked up he said, I behold men, for I see [them] as trees, walking. Then he laid his hands again on his eyes, and he saw distinctly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And he sent him to his house, saying, Neither enter into the village, nor tell [it] to any one in the village" (Mark 8:22-26).

It is the gospel of His service; and here, at; throughout, we are made to behold the perfect manner in which His mighty works were done. It is not only the power of God ever ready to heal the sick and those oppressed by the devil. The way in which He answered every such appeal was worthy of the Son of God become servant to glorify God and win man. He put His fingers to the deaf man's ears, He touched the ill-speaking tongue. He laid His hands upon the blind man outside Bethsaida. There was no necessity for any such actions. He had but to speak, and it was done. But love is far beyond power; and when man has power to wield it in ever so limited a range, how little he thinks of love! Least of all does he, conscious however scantily of his sinfulness, look for love from the God he slights and dreads. The Lord in the way He wields divine power manifests divine love, and as Man in the midst of men. Nor is there the smallest ostentation but its marked

absence: all is done in genuine simplicity as well as tenderness.

We may notice too that in the two miracles the Lord uses His own spittle, as He did also in the cure of the man born blind (told us in John 9:1-41). Whatever the reality and lowliness of the humanity He had taken up in His grace, there was divine efficacy in His person; and the sign of this He applies in all three cases, each having its own distinction. When He touched the tongue, He looked up to heaven with a groan, and says to the man, Be opened; and immediately the happy result follows. When He mixed clay with what came of Himself and anointed the born-blind man's eyes, He told him to go to Siloam and wash; and only then did he come seeing. Here the very intent was to mark by the twofold act of laying His hands on his eyes that the Lord would not have the cure partial. It was much to behold men, like trees, but walking. Yet the Lord would not let him go thus; He would give him to see distinctly. He therefore laid His hands upon his eyes, so that he was restored and saw all things distinctly. It was simply the way of love that the blind man might know the deep interest of His heart Who might have dispensed with any or all of these circumstances, and have effected the perfect cure with a word. But what a blank for the man and for our hearts, if it had been only so!

Indeed the instruction was great for the disciples who were then in a measure learning of His ways with Whom they were, and learnt far more when He was gone and the Holy Spirit come. The former was no unmeet emblem of Israel's state, and had a sample of the powers of the world to come when the weak remnant shall become a strong nation, with ears opened and tongue loosed to speak Jehovah's praise. The latter in the partial cure might well remind the disciples that they during His earthly ministry did not see more clearly than the man when His hands were laid on him once. How different when God raised Him up from the dead whereof they were witnesses! Then, He being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit, how great the blessing! Faith needs to have its perfect work, as well as patience. How often men stop short!

How is it with you who read these words? How are you treating Him, His words, and His works? You have to do with Him, whether you will or not. For the hour now is, when the dead have the voice of the Son of God sounding in their ears, and they that hear live. For this He when here prepared men. If He be the rejected Messiah, He is the Son of man and thus the destined Judge of mankind. How would it be with you if the hour of His judgment were come? Could you stand unabashed and unscathed before Him Whose eyes will be then as a flame of fire? Who searches the reins and hearts? Who will reward each according to his works?

What thanks shall one render, when one believes that the same Jesus is the Son of God, not only the true God but eternal life, ready and willing to give life eternal to you who can find it no where else? This is the way, the best way for a saint, the only way for a sinner, to honour the Son. It is to believe on Him; for indeed He is the way, the truth, and the life. Thus believing you do not come into condemnation, but even now have passed from death unto life. So He declares; so may you believe, and never be confounded.

05.12. Gospel Words -Tenth Series.

Gospel Words — Tenth Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Widow's Son raised 2 The Unclean Demon cast out 3 The woman with a spirit of Infirmity 4 The Dropsical Man Cured 5 The Ten Lepers 6 The Lord at Bethesda 7 The Blind at Siloam 8 Lazarus Raised 9 Blind Bartimaeus 10 The Power and the Grace of the Name 11 Malchus healed 12 The Unbroken Net 1 The Widow's Son raised

Luke 7:11-17.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 134-135. Gospel No. 10-1.) As this is a miracle peculiar to the Gospel of Luke, it strikingly illustrates God's design therein. Luke alone tells us of the penitent woman sent away in peace, of the good Samaritan, of the tax-gatherer in the parable self-judging and contrasted with the self-righteous Pharisee, of the prodigal son, of Zacchaeus, of the converted robber: all of them cases of overflowing grace. So it is here where the gracious power of God manifested itself, and this in the man Christ Jesus, and with marked commiseration of human grief. All this and more was in the Saviour, as God would have all men know.

"And it came to pass the day after that he went to a city called Nain, and there went with him his disciples, and a great crowd. Now, as he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out dead, an only son of his mother, and she a widow, and a considerable crowd of the city was with her. And the Lord seeing her had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And coming up he touched the bier (or, open coffin), and the bearers stopped. And he said, Youth, I say to thee, Awake. And the dead sat up and began to speak; and he gave him to his mother. And fear visited all; and they were glorifying God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us, and God visited his people. And this report about him went out in the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding country" (Luke 7:11-17). The power in which the grace of Christ acted was not limited to sickness, even so extreme as leprosy or paralysis. It was not confined to Israel: faith drew it out mightily in answer to Gentile appeal. Here without an appeal we see it supreme over the ravages of death, and with exquisite tenderness toward sorrow otherwise hopeless. Outside the gate of Nain, still called Nein, and mounting the steep declivity of Jebel Duhy, or Little Hermon, with its many sepulchral caves, the Lord and His disciples, with a great crowd following, met another great crowd drawn together by the funeral of a young man, a widow's only son. With a heart full of pity He said to the mother, "Weep not." They were words in vain from other lips. To men it is appointed once to die; and the young man was really dead, as the inspired physician attests. Man born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. There is hope of a tree, even if it wax old and the stock die in the ground; through the scent of water it will bud and put forth boughs. But man dies and is prostrate; yea, man expires, and where is he? The waters retire from the lake, and the river water dries up; so man lies down and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they awake not, nor are raised out of their sleep. But now the Second Man was here, the last Adam. The Kinsman-Redeemer was hard by, and uttered words of hope to the widowed mother, stricken

afresh and without hope. The strong one fully armed, who had the might of death, thought to keep his own credit and his goods in peace; but a stronger than he had come upon him and overcome him, and would take from him his whole armour wherein he trusted and divide his spoils. As a sample of this the Lord touched the bier, and the bearers stood still; and His voice was again heard. This time He spoke to the corpse, Youth, I say to thee, Awake.

Never was such a call uttered or heard before. The great prophet Elijah prayed and stretched himself over and over again on another widow's child; and Jehovah hearkened to Elijah's importunate supplication (1 Kings 17:1-24). He too that asked and received a double portion of Elijah's spirit with no less prayer and urgent effort laboured for another dead child, and was heard for his faith. So in later N.T. days Peter ventured not to say to the body of the deceased disciple, Tabitha, Arise, till he had knelt down and prayed, any more than Paul when he fell on the dead Eutychus and enfolded him in his arms.

How different His bearing Who alone is the Resurrection and the Life! "Youth, I say to thee, Awake." Yet He Who by the act thus done was marked out Son of God in power by resurrection of a dead man, habitually called Himself the Son of man, as it is carefully shown in John 3:1-36. And He Who subsisting in the form of God counted it not rapine (or, prize to be clutched) to be on equality with God, in the perfection of human affection gave the youth (no longer dead but sitting up and speaking) to his mother. How able, how willing, is He to help the tried! How suited and ready to sympathise with our infirmities! Do you, my reader, answer that this was a miracle, and therefore exceptional? Learn then that, though true miracles, His miracles, like His words were written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name. Be assured then of a love in a human heart infinitely beyond man's, even the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. His voice now appeals to you in the gospel. For the hour now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. O you that read, hear Him and live. Why should you die? Why despise grace and truth in not bearing them? Listen to Him again: "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

2 The Unclean Demon cast out Mark 1:23-28; Luke 4:33-36.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 148-150. Gospel No. 10-2.) This miracle which Mark records as well as Luke may be noticed as the first wrought publicly on one a demoniac. Indeed it has a striking place in the opening of our Lord's service in the second Gospel, which is devoted to that display of its exercise. What truths are more needful for man to hear than that he is in one way or another under the thraldom of Satan? and that the name of Jesus alone avails to deliver him? Only it is as beautiful as it is blessed to see that the third Gospel depicts from the vision of Isaiah the grace and power in which He came, before manifesting man's wretched subjection to the enemy. It was given to Luke only to tell us of that matchless scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, before the solemn lesson that soon followed at Capernaum. How quickly men turn from wonder at grace in God and His Son to the wrath and hatred of their own offended pride! How slow to allow that their own will opens the door for their slavery to Satan!

"And there was in the synagogue a man having a spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried with a loud voice, Eh! what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Didst thou come to destroy us? I

know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out from him. And the demon, having thrown him down in the midst, came out from him, without injuring him. And amazement came upon all, and they spoke together one with another, saying, What [is] this word? because with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:33-36). No doubt this case like others in the Gospels exhibits the aggravated fact of possession. It was not derangement here, but Satan's command of mind and body. Yet it is also observable that what is ordinary and presents none of the humiliating horrors of possession may be really more ruinous eternally. So we may infer from the Gadarenes, who were not drawn to Jesus by the deliverance of him that had the legion, but on the contrary besought Him to depart from their borders. In any way, how awful is the subjection! How gladly should men hail the true tidings God sends of a Deliverer in Jesus! Only believe on Him; believe God about His Son. Do you not need Him desperately? None less, none other, than Jesus can defeat Satan or save your soul.

Think of the fearful identification of the unclean spirit with the man, which his language reveals. "Eh! what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Didst Thou come to destroy us?" There is no creature in the universe which affords a lair so congenial for a demon as a sinful human heart. As long as you are far from the Lord, you are near and open to the power or wiles of the spirit of evil. He is your great enemy; the Lord Jesus is your greater friend. Reject not the Saviour to your ruin. Be assured that He will receive you; if you cast your soul on Him, He will in no wise reject you. He came to seek and save the lost. If you own yourself lost, as indeed you are, He is just the Saviour for you.

There is another notable word. "I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Yes, He was and is "holy," even as God is, the Holy One of Israel. And this most appals these unclean spirits, a Man, yet the Holy One of God! No wonder, that they believe and shudder. How portentous that sinful man when he hears neither believes nor shudders! yea, yet worse, that he believes after a sort without a shudder even at his own state and sure doom, if he abides as he is in his sins, neglecting so great salvation. But "Jesus rebuked him," refusing a demon's testimony; as the apostle did at a later day. God testifies by His word, as He was then testifying in Jesus, His Son and Servant; and the Holy Spirit is now sent forth to bear witness of Jesus, that you may believe on Him and be saved. Not content with rebuking the demon, He commanded him to hold his peace and come out from the man he had made his prey. And the demon was compelled to obey. If he threw the man in the midst, as evidence of the powerful spirit, he came out from the man without doing him hurt, to the praise of the Lord Jesus. It was not "word" only, to which they were used; but this word was with authority and power in Jehovah's servant, His chosen. Amazement came on all then; but for a sinner to believe is far better still.

Oh! is not this the Saviour that you want? He that died to annul him that had the power of death, He died for you, that your sins might be blotted out and yourself justified by faith in His name. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Such was the due time with God: why is it not your due time? What could God do more to meet your danger and your need? How could He better assure you of His deep compassion? No other sign could match what He has already given in the Crucified? Why should you ask or look for any other? Be sure God gave the very best.

3 The woman with a spirit of Infirmity

Luke 13:10-17.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 167-168. Gospel No. 10-3.) This is a miracle which fell to Luke alone to record; and it sets before us the Man Who was Jehovah's fellow accomplishing His mission of grace in the midst of a race not only indifferent or hostile to God but hypocritical. Their perverse iniquity leads on those who ought to be intercessors to become adversaries.

"And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, a woman having a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and she was bowed together and wholly unable to hold her head up. And Jesus, seeing her, addressed and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her; and immediately she was made straight, and was glorifying God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus healed on the sabbath, said in answer to the crowd, There are six days in which one ought to work; in these therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath. The Lord therefore answered him and said, Hypocrites! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and leading it away water [it]? And this [woman], Abraham's daughter as she is, whom Satan bound, behold, eighteen years, ought she not to be loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath? And as he said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were being done by him" (Luke 13:10-17). The sabbath had often furnished occasion to prove the evil state of the people, especially of those in repute among men, as in Luke 6:2; Luke 6:7; Luke 6:11. Here the Holy Spirit introduces the grace of our Lord, where the context tells of God's moral judgment of Israel, tested and aggravated by His presence, Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. But what was God and His grace to such as sought no glory but their own? They were only provoked by a love which condemned their ungodly self-seeking. Their heart was far from Him, and its deceits were veiled from themselves by religious forms. It is not the righteous, still less the self-righteous, but sinners whom our Saviour calls.

While teaching in a synagogue one sabbath, the Lord beheld a woman, so long bowed down that she could not look up, and yet coming to hear God's word. Without an appeal from her or any other, He addressed her with words of wonder-working compassion. "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Not content with what had fully sufficed, "He laid his hands upon her; and immediately she was made straight, and was glorifying God." He had vanquished the strong one, and would take from him all his panoply wherein he trusted, and would divide his spoils. The Lord was entitled to proclaim release to the captives, and to set at liberty those who were bound. The ruler of the synagogue, instead of owning and blessing God for His manifested goodness and power, was "indignant," hating the grace which he could not deny, and thus proving himself to be under a deeper slavery to Satan than the delivered woman. His wickedness was all the worse for the zeal, in his answer to the crowd, he affected for the sabbath. "There are six days in which one ought, to work; in these therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath." It was God Who had wrought in and by His Son; and would he shut one out from His mercy on that day? to say nothing of her lying in the bitter bondage of the enemy so many years.

"The Lord therefore answered him and said, Ye hypocrites! [for he had not a few who shared his half-hearted unbelief] doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead it off to watering? and this [woman], Abraham's daughter as she is, whom Satan

bound, behold, eighteen years, ought she not to be loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath?" It was irresistible for the conscience; and hearts were gladdened by grace as evident as the truth. "All his adversaries were ashamed; and all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were being done by him."

He, the Lord, has done a far greater and more enduring work. He has given His life a ransom for many. He has suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, to bring you to God, Who points you to Him for a greater deliverance, even redemption for the body with glory on high. Acknowledge then your desperate need; for you too are so bowed down by Satan through your iniquities, that you cannot truly look up. To your guilt and misery add not the hypocrisy of pleading religious obligations, when God proclaims in your ears the glad tidings of His Son, the Rescuer from the wrath to come. Neither working on the six days, nor rest on the seventh, can efface your sins; nor can the synagogue avail, nor saints or Virgin more than yourself, but "Jesus only." He is the "one Mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5). "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31). "In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." So said Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit to the rulers of the people and elders (Acts 4:12). So say not those who falsely claim to be his successors or their abettors.

4 The Dropsical Man Cured

Luke 14:1-6.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 187-188. Gospel No. 10-4.)

It is plain that the Spirit is in this context setting out the moral ruin of men who flattered themselves, as far as possible from believing that the kingdom of God was to be taken from them, and given to such as should bring forth the fruits thereof. The various incidents of the chapter bring to light man in his evil confronted by the grace of God in Christ. So it is in the opening scene.

"And it came to pass, when he went into the house of a certain one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on a sabbath, that they were watching him. And, behold, there was a certain dropsical man before him. And Jesus answering spoke unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not? But they were quiet. And he took, healed, and let him go. And [answering] he said unto them, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on the sabbath day? And they were unable to answer again unto these things" (Luke 14:1-6).

Neither love nor truth animated these religious chiefs. Under the cover of hospitality, they were hostile. They sought evil, but only proved it in their own ill-will. The dropsical man there present gave the Lord occasion to assert God’s title to do good. Had not Jehovah said before the law, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, wilt give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26). Yet what was the witness of the dropsical man before the Lord and before them? And what meant all manner of disease and of sickness in the land of Israel, as it were crowding round Him to be healed? And why from all Syria brought they all that were sick, suffering under various distempers and torments, and those possessed by demons, with lunatics and paralytics? It was not

Jehovah-Rophi who had failed, but man generally and Israel in particular. If the sabbath was a sign between Him and them, how came it, in shining, to disclose such misery and suffering? Why with an object before all eyes to draw out pity and humiliation, were these chiefs, Pharisees, doctors of the law, blind to His glory Who was the Son of God, blind to His grace Who went about doing good and healing all that were overpowered by the devil, for God was with Him? Yea, God was in Him, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences; and they were watching Him with eyes fuller of hatred to Him than to the Gentiles they most despised! Was this then their sabbath honour? The sabbath was a precious sign from the beginning, and, filling the very centre of the law, the sure pledge of what God would accomplish in due time. But what of man's ways before the law, and under the law? What had he been to God during all the six days? What were his works before Him, and what his life? Did he love Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might? Did not the presence of His Son, a man among man, prove the very reverse? Alas! man, sinful man, cannot enter God's rest. His works are evil. There is judgment, not rest, for him; death, and judgment. The Lord therefore made a special point of healing on a sabbath. All the Gospels attest it, and repeatedly (Matthew 12:9; Mark 1:21; Mark 3:1; Luke 13:10; John 5:9; John 9:14). Here, as in Luke 13:1-35 cases are special to Luke as displaying divine grace, hateful to the self-righteous. The incurably sick man was the true testimony to man's state. Christ answers the selfish and unbelieving rancour of their hearts by His question. They were abashed and afraid to speak; but their will remained unbroken. And He laid hold of the man, who had not even appealed to Him (that the grace of God might all the more appear), healed him, and let him go. But He added a withering word to those hard and self-complacent sinners, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on the sabbath day"? This was notorious. And had God no interest in healing a sufferer or in saving a sinner? This they virtually denied, and hated Him Who came to give it effect. And you, dear reader, if you believe not on Him, are in worse case than the dropsical man. Are you not a lost soul? Face your actual state before God; do not palliate; do not forget. In vain the medicine-man; in vain yourself or others; in vain, the saints, the angels, or the virgin. But "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." So He said Who is the truth. It is God's word; believe Him, and receive the blessing, even peace and joy in believing. Own the truth of your sins: this is repentance. Own the truth of His grace; this is faith, It is the way of Christ to the Father; and there is no other way from God and to God for a sinner.

5 The Ten Lepers

Luke 17:11-19.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 201-202. Gospel No. 10-5.) The Lord in this miracle sets forth the grace, which was soon to supersede the law publicly, as even faith might in a measure enjoy personally. So this Gospel shows the Lord preparing the way in word and deed for the Christianity that was at hand, when Judaism died in His death. The miracle was striking in its breadth and in its originality, if one may so say. It was not now a single leper prostrate at His feet, and His hand touching him in gracious power as Jehovah-Messiah. Ten leprous men together appealed as they stood afar off, calling aloud for His compassion, and not in vain before Him who came to save that which was lost. But let us hear the instructive account of divine pity and much more here only recorded.

"And it came to pass as He was on the way into Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten leprous men who stood afar off; and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And on seeing He said to them, Go your way, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they departed they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus in answer, said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where [are] the nine? Were none found to return and give glory to God save this stranger? And He said to him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:11-19).

Faith was put to the test. While still uncleansed, they were told to go and show themselves to the priests. The solitary leper in earlier days was first cleansed, and then sent; but the ten were to go as they were. Assured of His power and unfailing compassion Who never wrecked the hope of the wretched, they acted on His word; and as they withdrew they were cleansed. What could the priests do but pronounce on the cure by the Master, and perform their prescribed ritual? One infinitely greater and better than they had wrought on ruined men to God's glory. And this truth had spoken in growing faith to one heart among them where it might least have been expected; for he was a Samaritan. How apt even believers are to settle down contented with the needed blessing, and stop short of the Blesser! But one rose above letter and self; but one of them recognised the new responsibility created by grace; but one of the ten felt the immediate and paramount duty of returning to give glory to God, and of honouring the Man, His image and Son, even as the Father is honoured.

Yes, the despised Samaritan alone turned back when he saw that he was healed. The nine might argue and blame the faith that outgrew theirs. "What! you going back to Jesus! Did He not tell us all to go and show ourselves to the priests?" It was plausible to reason, which cleaves to letter; but above letter is spirit, which cannot be satisfied with aught but God's mind; and He is not truly honoured apart from Jesus. The nine remained Jews as they were, relieved bodily by divine power, but the heart in the old precincts of law, neither purified by faith nor enlarged by grace. Not so the Samaritan who turned to the Source and honoured with the deepest homage Him Who is the Channel too of divine goodness.

It was indeed a living sample of Judaism, the refuge now of mere lettered ritual, soon to give place to grace and truth in and by Jesus, the Christianity of the gospel, and the church, believing man being brought to God reconciled and rejoicing. The first becomes last, and the last first. How the Lord fathomed and felt it all! "Were not the ten cleansed? but where the nine? Were none found to return and give glory to God save this stranger?" Truly their loss is the riches of the Gentiles; their casting away is the world's reconciling, as the apostle announced in Romans 11:1-36. Nor is this all. The Lord instantly proclaims to the grateful Samaritan that liberty which is so essential to the Christian and is now preached to all that believe the gospel. "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole (or, saved thee)." The cleansing, marvellous as it was, was but a figure of a deeper cure, even of soul-salvation. God in Christ came out to man in his sins, and man justified can now go in to God, even in the holiest. Earthly priests and temple, sacrifices and rites of law, are all gone in presence of Jesus dead, risen, and ascended. But how is it with you, my reader? Many Jewish and more Gentile eyes that scan these pages know how true is the gospel to their present and everlasting deliverance. Are you one of those who say that to believe on Christ is one

thing, but to realise and appropriate to yourself is another? God says not so; only your human dogma, or your unjudged unbelief, cherishes these churlish thoughts of God. He is better than the strongest faith apprehends; He has declared himself to you in Jesus, full of grace and truth. Believe Him about His Son given for you and testified to you, that you too by grace may be saved through faith.

6 The Lord at Bethesda

John 5:1-47.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 215-216. Gospel No. 10-6.)

Throughout this Gospel, and especially these early chapters the Lord is shown eclipsing and superseding all the old objects of honour and trust. The Pool of Bethesda bore witness even then to Jehovah as healing Israel (Exodus 15:1-27). Not merely was it occasional only, but incomplete and conditional; like the law, it required strength enough to avail oneself of it. He that was quite powerless lay there in vain. Another stept in before he could be put into the water when troubled by the angel. To will was present with him, but not to do. "O wretched man that I am!" was all he could feel. He needed the only One Who could speak the effectual word, "Arise, take up thy couch, and walk"; then he did so immediately, sabbath as it was. What was an angel's act in comparison?

Such a sight aroused Jewish enmity; for with seared conscience they exaggerated and idolised every form. They disliked the healing power of the True God on a sabbath. The man did not profit by the warning given him of worse than sickness, but learning who it was that healed him, went and told it to the Jews, who persecuted Jesus. His answer was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." How overwhelming for their evil and pride! how glorifying to God! how full of blessing to every man who truly owns his sin and misery!

It is the revelation of the Father and the Son, Who works as man in the midst of men. This is the truth, yea grace and truth come through Jesus Christ. Let the Jews vainly boast of the law given by Moses, which they kept not, it could not but be a ministration of death and condemnation. But the veil of unbelief was lying on their heart; and they neither judged themselves nor believed on Him Who did indeed say that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God. And therefore those blindly religious yet wicked men sought the more to kill Him.

O my reader, flatter not yourself. You ware not so tried. You are no less guilty and lost. You may pay homage with the lip; but are you in heart and life slighting Him Who came and died for you? Are you not neglecting so great salvation? Do you not annul the gospel, as if God's proclamation were but a fair and kindly form, and not a message of life and peace to the believer? Does not God pronounce His wrath to abide on him who is not subject to the Son? If you are believing on Him, God's word is that you have life eternal in His Son. So the Lord then declared that the Son loyally takes as man the place of entire subjection, and does nothing of Himself, save what He saw the Father doing. He emptied Himself of glory, taking the form of a bondman; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death of a cross. From what a height, and to what a depth, that God might be perfectly and at all cost glorified even about sin and ruin! And so He is. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him.

Here the Lord opens the great truth, starting from the sign on the sick man, and going on to His giving life eternal to those who believe, and His executing judgment on those who, not believing, do evil. Thus it is that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father. The Son quickens whom He will, in communion with the Father who raises the dead and quickens. But He alone of Godhead became man, and suffered man's contempt and hatred even to the Cross. He therefore has all judgment given to Him, for in that full and final sense He alone judges. Bodily healing was but a sign. The real question is between life eternal and future judgment.

Hence we have the solemnly blessed message: "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath life eternal and cometh not into judgment, but hath (or, is) passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). All turns on hearing Christ's word and believing Him that sent the Saviour Son of God. If one hear and believe, he has life eternal, and does not come into judgment which is no less everlasting, but has passed out of death as it was into life as now given in Him. Life eternal is in contrast with judgment which awaits those who here below only dishonoured the Son, but must honour Him to their own perdition in that judgment.

Next is shown on one side man's real state, not infirm only but "dead " before God; and even now the voice of His Son for men that have heard to live. "Verily, verily, I say to you, An hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard shall live" (John 5:25). For the Son was come, and as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself. Being man, He receives all from the Father, jealous to honour Him alone, as man's only right place. Thus He quickens now, as at the end He will execute judgment, according to the authority given Him, because He is Son of man.

None should wonder at this. An hour cometh which will demonstrate both His giving life as Son of God, and His executing judgment as Son of man. It is an hour, ,when all that are in the tombs [distinguishing these from the spiritually dead of John 5:25] shall hear his voice, and shall go forth: they that wrought the good things unto a resurrection of life; and they that committed the worthless unto a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). There are thus two resurrections of opposed character (not a general one as the unbelief of Christendom feigns). They answer to life and good fruit now had by faith in God's Son, and to the unbelief with its unremoved death and corrupt ways. The Revelation which the Lord gave John adds the fresh light of the kingdom over the earth and all things, in which the changed saints reign with Him for a thousand years, and a little more, before the judgment of the wicked dead and their consignment to the lake of fire. It is a book of times and seasons, which the Gospel of John is not: but both thoroughly agree as to a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment.

O my reader, can any words of man add to the Lord's solemn call? Hear the voice of God's Son now, that you may have life in Him and may not come into that judgment which is woe for ever.

7 The Blind at Siloam

John 9:1-41.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 231-232. Gospel No. 10-07.) On no healing of the blind has the Holy Spirit dwelt so long and impressively as on this. But it is evidently in furtherance of His design in the Gospel of John: to set forth the Son's person as incarnate, but rejected in His work here, as in His word just before (John 8:1-59). How blind are all who can now read or hear God's written testimony, and fail

to recognise His signature in the address to their souls, that believing in the name of Jesus they may have life eternal!

It was indeed a desperate case, "And as he passed on, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifested in him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: night cometh when none can work. When I am in the world, I am light of the world. Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is interpreted, Sent). He went off therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and those that used to see him before that he was a beggar said, Is not this he that used to sit and beg? Some said, It is he, and others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am [he]. They said therefore to him, How then were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man called Jesus made clay, and smeared mine eyes, and said to me, Go to Siloam and wash; and having gone off and washed, I received sight. And they said to him, Where is he? He saith, I know not" (John 9:1-12). The Lord put aside questions, and presents God's working in grace by Himself here, as Light of the world to give it effect. In an action which figured His incarnation in Whom was life, He besmeared the blind man's eyes with that which would have hindered sight, till he washed in the pool (Sent). The humiliation of Christ enables none to see, unless by the word and Spirit they apprehend Him sent of God the Father to do His will; by which will (as Hebrews 10:1-39 tells us) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The word was thus mixed with faith in him who heard. To confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is by the Spirit of God. Thus only do we, blind by nature, receive the Light of life. Christ becomes all to us, who before had nothing but sins and darkness and death. Till then uncertainty reigns, as we see here among the neighbours. The man is clear as to himself and confesses the Lord more as he learns more. The self-righteous oppose, and seize on the sabbath when the sign was wrought, as proof against the Saviour. The Jews believe not and summon the parents in vain to set it aside. But the great fact remains: Jesus gave the blind to see. Human affection may shirk the confession of the truth. Human religion may frown, revile, and persecute. But grace and truth only shine the more brightly. "One thing I know," the beggar that was answers, "that whereas I was blind, now see" (John 9:25). Is not this characteristic of the gospel? It is the glad tidings, not only proclaimed in the name of Jesus, but known and enjoyed by the believer. "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12). So it is not only that the believer has life eternal, but "these things I write to you, that ye may know that ye have life eternal, to you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). Christendom in its unbelief falls back behind the veil of Judaism, and denies to the Christian the happy certainty of what grace has wrought and now gives freely. The priest and his rites would cloud all peace and joy in believing. They may be disciples of Moses; they are not disciples of Jesus. They claim a sacrifice for ever, continuously offered, instead of confessing that He sat down in perpetuity, because His one accepted sacrifice is so efficacious that God will remember our sins and iniquities no more. To unbelief it is always a-doing, never done.

Faith made the seeing man bold. To the perverse reasoning of unbelief, which refused the evidence of God's gracious power and rejected Him Who alone makes the Father truly known, he replies, "Since the world began it was never heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born

blind. If this man [Jesus] were not from God, he could do nothing." Impotent and incensed, they could only hiss in answer, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out" (John 9:34).

"Jesus finding him said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe; and he worshipped Him" (John 9:35-37). May this be your portion, dear reader. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and the one means of receiving Him is faith. Believe God's testimony to Him; and He is yours. This will enable you to judge yourself truly and confess your sins honestly; without it, you will only render a fair show in flesh. All other things, important as they may be, are subordinate to receiving Jesus. But He once received makes all else an easy yoke and a light burden.

8 Lazarus Raised

John 11:1-57.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 250-252. Gospel No. 10-8.) The Lord Jesus manifested His glory by His "signs"; for such they were, and not wonders only or powers. Here the signs which He did reached a climax in testifying to Him as Son of God. For as the Father raises the dead and quickens them, so the Son also quickens whom He will. This testimony He gave in raising the young daughter of Jairus (as recorded in the three synoptic Gospels), and in raising the widow's son of Nain whilst being carried out for burial. But now, quite close to Jerusalem, a still more glorious sign was seen in raising up Lazarus not only dead but buried. It is also in exact keeping with the special design of the fourth Gospel, and divinely seasonable too at that moment. The Lord did not come to the sick man at the appeal of the sisters, however truly He loved them all, but abode two days where He was. "This sickness is not unto death (said He) but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." He waited as ever for divine direction. After this He goes, though the disciples warn of danger, and He intimates that Lazarus was dead, as they failed to catch the meaning of His words. He knew the end from the beginning.

Martha went and met Him, but Mary sat still in the house. Yet the faith of Martha rose no higher than that He was Messiah, and that God would give Him whatsoever He should ask. When Jesus said, Thy brother shall rise again, she only speaks of the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he have died, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die. Believest thou this? Martha's answer was quite vague and not to the purpose: "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that cometh into the world." And having said this, she went and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is here, and calleth thee. And she, when she heard it, rises quickly and comes to Him. Yet when she arrived and fell at His feet, she says like her sister, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. The power of death lay on both, on all their hearts; and Mary wept, and the Jews that came with her. Jesus was deeply pained in His spirit, and was troubled, and wept. It was not only sympathy in love, but profoundly feeling trouble at death's power over not man only but saints. At the grave He speaks and acts in divine power over death, in communion with the Father. Martha's unbelief only draws out the expression of it. He is the resurrection and the life; and with His eyes lifted on high, He says, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but for the sake of the crowd that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that

Thou didst send Me. And having thus said, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And the dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith to them, Loose him and let him go. With this Lord and Saviour you, my reader, have to do now. You are called on by God to honour Him whom man rejected and crucified. You are enjoined to believe on Him. You need Him as much as Lazarus, nay even more; for Lazarus already believed on Him and was beloved by Him. Can you say that you believe on Him? Do you receive Him as the Lord and Saviour sent by God that you may have in Him life eternal? To receive Him thus on God's testimony is to believe on His name. His coming again will prove the power and blessedness of life in Him; for then it is that the sleeping saints shall be raised, and the living saints shall not sleep but be changed. It is the full result of His being the resurrection and the life, of which the raising of Lazarus was the pledge on a small scale. It accords with Christ's own words to Martha, "he that believeth on me, though he should have died, shall live; and every one, that liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

Martha did not enter into this blessed truth, though she believed on Him. She thought she knew all of moment in believing Him to be the Christ, the Son of God, that was to come into the world. And there are many saints who lose much joy and power by like vagueness. But she did believe on Him. And this let me press on you who read these lines, and yet cannot say that you believe on Him. Oh, if He is, as He says, the resurrection and the life, why do you hesitate to rest on such a revelation of Himself? It goes far beyond raising up the dead and buried man to renewed life in this world. It suffices for heaven and for eternity. It was not said only for that occasion; it is written by the Holy Spirit for you, and for every other who reads or hears these wondrous words now. Do not then aggravate your guilt and state of spiritual death by slighting either the grace of God that appeals to you in the words of the Lord Jesus, or the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that hold fast the truth in unrighteousness. Such may differ greatly in outward seeming; neither class have life, because they believe not on Him. They are both alike in that they will not come unto Christ, that they may have life. But without Christ, as life and propitiation also, happiness is as impossible as holiness. Life is the first want of one dead in sins. Christ is the only giver of life; and He gives it to all that believe on Him.

9 Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46-52.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 266-267. Gospel No. 10-9.) No sight was more characteristic of our Lord's ministry than His grace to the blind. It has the first place given to it in the answer to John the Baptist's message. A special case is presented in Matthew 9:27, another in Mark 8:22, and the more general fact in Luke 7:21 with other cures, but the most marked of all in John 9:1-41. Yet there is this striking circumstance common to the three earlier Gospels, that the final testimony which the Lord offers to the Jews in or near Jerusalem opens with the healing of the blind man near Jericho. Only Matthew, as his manner is, tells us of two (compare Matthew 8:28; Matthew 9:27). Mark and Luke were led to dwell on what was for other reasons the more remarkable of them. It is idle to conceive separate occasions, one on entering and the other in quitting Jericho. For Matthew and Mark are express that the miracle was wrought on going out from the town. The phrase of Luke is so indeterminate as to fall in with that statement. He does not say, "as he drew nigh" or "when he came near" to Jericho; but while in the neighbourhood. This was as true when

He went out as when He came in.*

* Nor is there real difficulty in the account of Zacchaeus being placed after the miracle; for Luke puts things in moral order, where required as here, not chronologically. This explains the purposely general language of the third Gospel which called for the incident about Zacchaeus later.

"And they come to Jericho, and as he was going out from Jericho and his disciples and a considerable crowd, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus the blind, was sitting by the wayside begging. And having heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, O Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me. And many were rebuking him that he might be silent, but he cried out so much the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still and said that he should be called. And they call the blind, saying to him, Be of good courage, rise: he calleth thee. And, throwing away his garment, he sprang up and came unto Jesus. And Jesus in answer said to him, What wilt thou that I should do to thee? And the blind said, Teacher (Rabboni), that I may receive sight. And Jesus said to him, Go thy way; thy faith hath healed (saved) thee. And immediately he received sight, and followed him in the way" (Mark 10:46-52).

Observe how the blind Israelites at the beginning of our Lord's ministry appeal to Him as Son of David. It was a matter of revealed promise that Messiah should open their eyes; and as they believed with their heart, they confessed with their mouth, and got the blessing. It was not so with the Canaanite, though she too believed, and with rare faith. But like many a believer, she at first applied on a wrong ground; from which the Lord led her into the right and true, that she might all the better enjoy the grace that awaited her. Here the call on the Son of David exactly suits the ways of God, when Christ finally presented Himself to the people, about to consummate His rejection to their own utter ruin for the present. It is the starting-point for His last Messianic offer to Jerusalem, where the blind that cried in faith were made to see, and those who said they saw were made blind for their unbelief and enmity.

O my reader, call on the Lord, like the once blind Bartimaeus. Hitherto you have been blind, and have followed blind leaders into the ditch. But Jesus still waits to heal and extricate you. Fear not. Be of good courage, if now you feel your need, and believe that all authority and power are His. Does He not call you as truly as He did the son of Timaeus? Read not His words so unbelievingly. These things are written that you may believe unto life and salvation. Profit by the lesson of his earnest importunity. Many, who felt not their own need any more than his, kept rebuking him. It was not decorum — in their view who were travelling at ease to perdition. Such cries might be well on the sabbath perhaps, and no doubt on a dying bed; but they were wholly objectionable by the wayside and before a crowd. The Lord heard as He ever does the call of distress and of faith, took His stand, and bade him be brought before Him. And how graphic the sketch, and instructive the eagerness of the blind man casting away his cloak that he might get to the Lord! Poor as he was, he must lay aside every hindrance and go to Him at once. And Jesus answered his heart, and drew out its desire: "Great Teacher, that I may receive sight." And immediately was it given; he also followed Jesus in the way. For this His sheep do. It is their instinct of life in Him; as it is His word to them, that they may be kept in a world of evil, snares, and danger. But the Lord Jesus guides and guards His own, yet not without their hearing His voice and following Him all the way through. And a stranger will they not follow, as the rule (the only right and safe rule), but will flee

from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. Can you say, dear reader, that you have received sight from Jesus? If not, be assured that you are blind as well as in your sins. You are trusting baptism or religious observances or your clergyman in vain, if you suppose that any or all these can give you sight, or life, or propitiation for your sins. Only Jesus avails in answer to your faith, and even Jesus can give you all only by His death for you a guilty sinner. Look to Him, and be saved.

10 The Power and the Grace of the Name

John 18:1-9.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 280-281. Gospel No. 10-10.)

How strikingly the divine design of the Fourth Gospel differs from the three Synoptics, as seen in their reports of Gethsemane on the night of the betrayal! Who left to his own feelings would have so dwelt on his Master's agony as the beloved disciple? Yet he says not one word about it, though he alone of the Evangelists was chosen to be near the Lord in that affecting and mysterious scene, when He repaired again and again to them and found them sleeping. It fell to the others to record His exceeding sorrow in realising the depths into which He was just about to enter; because it bore directly on the rejection of the Messiah, on the work the Righteous Servant had in hand, and on the Son of man, as perfectly dependent on His Father in the hour of woe as in all the activities of power in loving service.

Here shines out the glory of His person. Had we only the witness of John, rich as it is, what should we know of His anguish in anticipation of all before Him as He prayed to His Father, and of His entire submission whatever it cost? If most appropriately Luke alone mentions an angel strengthening Him and His sweat as clots of blood, here we see and hear the Son of the Father, to Whom He had commended His own in John 17:1-26.

"Jesus having said these things went out with his disciples over the winter-torrent Kidron, where was a garden into which he entered, he and his disciples. And Judas also that betrayed him knew. the place; because Jesus often resorted thither with his disciples. Judas therefore, having received the band and officials from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered, Jesus the Nazaraean. He said to them, I am [he]. And Judas that betrayed him stood with them. When therefore he said, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore he asked them, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus the Nazaraean. Jesus answered, I told you that I am [he]: if therefore ye seek me, let these go away; that the word might be fulfilled which he said, Of those whom thou hast given me, I lost not one" (John 18:1-9).

What communion with the Father, what prayer, what intercession, what tender care for the feeble disciples, what self-sacrificing interest on their behalf, what vigilant love of the good Shepherd, what pity for Israel, what outgoing of heart for the sheep not of this fold, had not been known in that garden! Yes, Judas knew it, and took his measures accordingly under Satan to gratify the chief priests and Pharisees. Thither he led the band with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Men who do not know the Lord talk of His "limitations," and forget that He is God, the Word become flesh, but no more ceasing to be God than a man can cease to be man. Jesus knew all things that were coming on Him, the same Jesus Who had gone through all in the profoundest grief yet dependence on the Father, for He was as truly man, the perfect man. Now when horrors began to thicken, what calm pervaded His every word and act! He went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered, Jesus the Nazaraean; and on His reply, I am [He], they went backward and fell to the ground.

God indeed attested what was due to that Name; for He too was God no less than the Father and the Holy Spirit. Nor was there ever a moment more befitting. So Judas the betrayer stood with them, and he too with them fell to the ground. What a testimony to their conscience, as well as to His glory! When the wicked Ahaziah sent a captain with his fifty to take the Tishbite prophet as he sat alone on a hill, again and again came fire down from heaven to consume the captains and their fifties. Jesus full of grace and truth came to save the lost. Not a word more did He utter. He owned Himself Jesus the Nazaraean. It was enough. In His name shall bow all beings heavenly, earthly, and infernal, and every tongue confess Him Lord to God the Father's glory. It was but a witness then to that glory; but how blessed and suited and eloquent, if they had not had deaf ears, seared consciences, and hearts harder than stone! He Whose name laid them prostrate could have in a moment consigned them to death for everlasting judgment. But no! He came that God might be glorified in His death for sin, to set free every sinner that believes in Him. And so it was of His grace that, after the manifestation of power, He asked them again, Whom seek ye? As they gave the same reply, He answered, I told you that I am [He]; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go away. O what grace now manifested on behalf of His own, so unworthy of His love, yet loved unto the end, loved though He knew all would forsake Him and flee, and that one who ventured nearer in that night of desertion would there thrice deny that he knew Him! It was a fulfilment of John 17:12; but great as it was, how little compared with all that those words mean and guarantee! And indeed such is His love that it covers all things great and small.

How are you who read these lines treating Him and His love? He, the Son of God and Lord of glory, was nothing to Judas and the Jews, but for the one to sell and the other to buy; and He submitted to be the willing prisoner, and the willing sacrifice, that you might hear and live. You have heard, but cannot live without faith in Him Who is the life eternal — life now that you may live of Him now — life evermore that you may have Him your life for the body and heaven as well as now for your soul on earth. But forget not that to hear and not believe on Him leaves you worse unspeakably than if you had never heard. Oh then hear, believe, and live.

11 Malchus healed Luke 22:50-51; John 18:10-11.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 295-296. Gospel No. 10-11.) The moral perfection of the Lord shone only the more brightly in His new and last trial. Satan, foiled in his effort to tempt Him out of His path of obedience, came now to kill Him in it. But nothing moved Him out of that way, nothing provoked Him, even when the disciples slept instead of praying, unable (even Peter and James and John) to watch one hour with Him. When the crowd of men with swords and staves laid hold on and seized Him, Peter (too hasty to await the answer to the appeal, Lord, shall we smite with sword?) drew his, and smote the high priest's bondman, and took off his ear. This the Lord rebuked: "Return thy sword to its place; for all that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Or thinkest thou, that I

cannot now call on my Father, and he will furnish me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?"

He abides the righteous Servant. He came to suffer for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God, and fit the children of God to share His glory on high when He takes all the creation heavenly and earthly, and reigns over Israel and the nations on earth in His day. Those who believe now are called to suffer with Him, as the Lord had taught His own when correcting their thoughts and desires about His kingdom. "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and the great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be thus among you; but whosoever will be great among you, he shall be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your bondman; as indeed the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28). But Peter, ever rash as yet, thought of nothing but his Master's danger; and, in fleshly zeal seeking to defend Him, he stood reproved. It was human nature, but contrary to Christ and His word. If carried out, it would have made redemption impossible, like his warm and hasty error in Matthew 16:22, for which the Lord bade him, Get away behind me, Satan, and added, Thou art an offence to me; for thy mind is not on the things of God but on the things of men. Peter failed not only to appreciate Christ's death, but to apprehend that the Christian must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Him. He did in his measure and spirit what the Lord told Pilate was not for His servants to do, because His kingdom is not of this world. It is of heaven, and of no worldly source. In the Gospel of Luke (Luke 22:51) we first hear that Jesus said in answer, Suffer ye thus far, and with a touch He healed the cut-off ear. Even at such a crisis as this He is thus presented as the gracious Son of man, anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. If He was no longer going about doing good and healing all that were under the devil's power, because God was with Him, He was just as ready to heal one wounded by His thoughtless follower.

John lets us know particularly the names, not only of His follower but of the wounded man. And here the healing has its significance, like every other word and fact in this Gospel as illustrating His personal dignity. As the mention of His name hurled to the ground the band which came to capture Him, and to which He thereon gave Himself up, with the words, Let these go away; so now the answer to Peter spoke His glory and His grace in a way peculiar to the last Gospel. "Put the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

Blessed Saviour, as Thou in Thy love and light and lowliness art alone in Thy perfection, so art Thou in the ineffable sufferings which were in that cup for Thee to drink! And Thou didst drain it, that God might be glorified, and we who believe might be saved worthily of God. Yet do we rejoice also that as God was glorified in Thee, and in Thy death especially and infinitely, so did He glorify Thee in Himself, and this immediately in heaven, before the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ come, who shall reign unto the ages of the ages. Nor need poor souls who are in their sins wait for that displayed kingdom. While Jesus is glorified on high is just the time during which the Holy Spirit is sent forth, not only to dwell in the church, but to proclaim the gospel, the glad tidings of God to guilty and perishing man. Doubt not then but believe the witness God bears to the Lord Jesus, His Only-begotten Son. Great as is your need, many as are your sins, His grace is far greater. It is as infinite as His person. Come as you are that you may find Him as He is, full of grace and truth. Does not this suit you who have nothing but sins? Receive of His fulness: it is open to all who believe. Then will you live to Him.

12 The Unbroken Net

John 21:1-14.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 313-314. Gospel No. 10-12.)

We have seen in Luke 5:1-39 the remarkable manner in which the Lord called Simon Peter and his companions, already disciples, to be fishers of men. There was then a miracle wrought, which acted powerfully not on the mind only or the affections, but on the conscience. After a night's toil in which they caught nothing, the Master spoke, and at His word they let down the nets. This done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; but their nets were breaking, and their partners came to help them, and filled both their boats, so that they began to sink. It was the beautiful picture of the gospel work to which they were thenceforward called, where they apart from Him could do nothing, and His power wrought. But yet He allowed the weakness of human responsibility to be felt; for the nets were breaking and the boats sinking under the weight of the very blessing given.

Here at the sea of Tiberias after His resurrection we see them at Peter's instance again fishing; and this night too they took nothing. "But when morn was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach. The disciples however knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore saith to them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith to Peter, It is the Lord. Simon Peter therefore, having heard that it was the Lord, girded his overcoat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea; and the other disciples came in the small boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net of fishes. When therefore they went out on the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus saith to them, Bring of the fishes ye have now taken. Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to the land full of great fishes a hundred and fifty- three; and though they were so many, the net was not rent. Jesus saith to them, Come, dine. But none of the disciples dared enquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus cometh and taketh the bread and giveth it to them, and the fish in like manner. This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested to the disciples, being risen from the dead" (John 21:4-14). This was not a miracle only but a sign, as indeed is ever the case in the fourth Gospel, and in special connection with the two fore-going manifestations of the risen Lord, which give the key to what has just been cited. The first was when the Lord made Himself known to the disciples gathered on the first day of the week, His own very resurrection day, when He breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. It was His risen life communicated in the power and character of His resurrection, His blood already shed, peace now given, and themselves sent on a mission of peace. It is the type of the Christian and the church.

Eight days after was the second manifestation, when Thomas, who had been absent before but was now present, was convicted of unbelief; as the Lord took up his words of doubt and bade him reach here his finger and see His hands, and put his hand into His side, and be not faithless but believing. The slow disciple could only answer, My Lord and my God! just as the converted Jews will say at the end of this age. Indeed the Lord intimated the same thing when He said to him, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed [as Israel will do by-and-by]: blessed are they who have not seen and believed"; which is the proper faith of the Christian now. The third manifestation is equally notable. "After these things Jesus was manifested again to his disciples"

in Galilee of the Gentiles. It is not said to be on the first day of the week, nor eight days after; but simply after what foreshadowed His work in bringing Israel out of their unbelief. Now He sets forth Himself for their millennial work of bringing to Him from the sea of the nations, in which converted Israel will be honoured by His grace. Here there is no breaking of the nets, no sinking of the boats. The net is drawn to land full of great fishes, as becomes the type of that vast ingathering. Whatever be the ruin of the Gentiles deceived by Satan at the end, there will be no failure among the blessed among the nations any more than in Israel. This is no small contrast with all that has been seen since Pentecost. And it is not without a bearing on that new day for the earth, that they found a fire of coals already there, and fish on it and bread. Those, who are used of grace for bringing in of the Gentiles on a great scale, learn that the Lord has wrought a work before them, and that they are invited to enter into the communion of His love in that previously hidden work; for eating here as elsewhere is its well-known figure. They partook of the fish ashore before what they had just caught on a larger scale. Is not Jesus a wondrous and unwearied Saviour? Think of it in all these three manifestations of Himself after He rose. What was it to the disciples who forsook Him and fled? What was it to Thomas so gloomily denying the good tidings? What will it be to a Gentile remnant, and to all the nations in the future day? And are you, my reader, to be left out of the blessing? It can only be because you harden your soul against casting yourself on Him now. If you are poor, He is rich; if you have no merit, and sins only, He is All-worthy, and died for you. Is not His death all that God values on your behalf? Believing on Him, you are justified. His work claims it, and God delights to prove that it is not in vain. Therein is his righteousness. He owes it to the cross of Christ; and it is yours if you believe. But beware of slighting the divine message. Put not His word of grace from you, nor thus judge yourselves unworthy of life eternal. God is not mocked in the end. Despise Him not now to your own ruin both now and for ever. It is "the hour when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." Is any case too desperate?

05.13. Gospel Words - Eleventh Series.

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4 The Salt and the Light 5 The Beatitudes 6 Prayer for Disciples 7 Grace in Practice

8 Treasures?

9 Christ come to fulfil 10 The Father in secret 11 The Lamp of the Body 12 Be not anxious.

1 Two Masters

Matthew 6:25.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 329-330. Gospel No. 11-1.) When man fell, he abandoned God as Master; he gained by sin another master, even Satan, the great rebel against the true God. The race followed the fallen parents. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Such is the moral history of man, recorded in Genesis, there summarised, here reasoned on by the apostle. So vain, so blind, is every man, that he is apt to go no higher than himself in accounting for sin. But it is not so: neither Jew nor Gentile originated sin. It began with the head of the race, long before those distinctions. It was an innocent man too, though Adam was not deceived, but the woman being quite deceived was involved in transgression (1 Timothy 2:14). Sin became the state of all, while each added his own sins also. Satan thus became master in fact of the race; and from the first the guilty pair hid away from God’s presence, before "He drove out the man."

Henceforth all for good turned on another, the Second man, the Last Adam. Sinful man can neither atone for sins nor get rid of sin. And from the fall Jehovah Elohim clearly intimated the great truth that deliverance can come only from the woman’s Seed, who, Himself bruised, should bruise the Serpent’s head, that is, destroy the mysterious enemy, Jesus, the Son of God, born of the virgin, alone answers to this earliest oracle, and to every other in scripture. How many besides His incarnation converge in Him and can apply to no other, in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension! Above all He was to suffer once for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us who believe to God. For no external rite could adequately meet the dire need. It was not purifying only, but atonement there must be by One who, being God and man in one person, suited and alone could suit God and man, the Holy One whom God made sin for us, that we might become His righteousness in Christ. Hence repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, must be in man.

There is thus faith-obedience, the root of all other obedience in practice. It is not mere outward separateness by circumcision or any thing akin. The sanctification of the Spirit is thereby secured in a new life imparted to the believer for Christ’s obedience as well as His blood-sprinkling. We

thenceforth obey as He did, not as slaves under law like Israel with the solemn sanction of the victim's blood on them and on the book of the law, threatening death on disobedience; we obey as sons, on whom grace rests, and as we are begotten of God, so have we Christ's blood that cleanseth from every sin. As we were in baptism buried with Christ unto His death (for nothing short could suffice even as a starting-point), so we also, as He was raised from the dead, should walk in newness of life. What then? Shall we sin because, even if once Jews, we are no longer under law but under grace? Away with it. Know we not that to whom we yield ourselves bondmen for obedience, we are bondmen to him whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Through Christ and His work set free from sin, and become bondmen to God, we have our fruit unto holiness and the end life eternal.

Thus it is that sin shall not have dominion over us. Not law but grace gives power; and grace and truth came through Jesus, as John 1:1-51 expressly declares in contrast with law, which however good in itself could only slay one in whom sin was and worked. For sinful man salvation hangs on Him. Without His blood is no remission; in virtue of it He washed us from our sins, and in newness of life (His life as risen from among the dead), we are fitted to walk worthily and please God. But Satan ever seeks to mislead. And no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. "Ye cannot," said our Lord, "serve God and mammon." This tests those who bear His name. Never was mammon more widely sought in Christendom than now. How is it with your own soul? Are you, a professing Christian, a slave to mammon? A divided heart is a disloyal one. No one can serve two masters. Think of the young ruler who in sorrow turned away from following Christ, because he loved his possessions. Think of the apostle who for a paltry sum sold his Master. How true it is that, hating the one, we love the other, or holding to the one, we despise the other! Mammon commands the world; and if we love the world, or the things in the world, we serve mammon. But what does a man profit if he should gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Ye cannot serve two masters, God and mammon.

2 The Prudent builder, … and the foolish.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 343-344. Gospel No. 11-2.)

"Other foundation can no one lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ," says the apostle (1 Corinthians 3:11). Have you Him as your foundation, dear reader? If it be of faith, you will not doubt of His sufficiency. "He is the Rock; His work is perfect; for all His ways are righteousness." So an Israelite could say of Jehovah; and Jesus is Jehovah. But He is more, and now more is revealed, especially since He the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth. Nor this only: "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

He is the One for your soul, for your guilt, for your sins. If the Son of God became the Lamb of God, and you believe on Him, surely you need not, you cannot rightly, question that He avails perfectly for you. Yea, you are bound, if you believe Who He is, to receive without hesitation what God's word declares He undertook and has done. The atoning work is done; it is not future for you; nor is it a-doing either, but is done; and its efficacy is perfect for every soul that believes God about Jesus, His Son. His blood cleanseth from all sin. You who say that you believe do God wrong, if you receive not His word and rest not with confidence on the foundation that is laid. There is none other: Jesus is the one foundation for lost sinners.

God commends His love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ died for us. Do we ask more? We being still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. We had nothing but sins: He gives all the good we want, having suffered for all the bad that was in us. Such is the Saviour of sinners. None that is pretended even resembles Him. The Virgin mother needed Him for her soul, as did every other saint. All men need grace to save them through faith; for all are sinners. Neither angels nor the archangel can avail in any degree; they are but upheld by the word of His power. Nor will God save a sinner but through faith in His Son Who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, to glorify God and to suffer for sins, Just for unjust. Whoever denieth the Son hath not the Father either; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also (1 John 2:1-29). But in our text, which closes the sermon on the Mount, it is another truth: not redemption (which was not there the object) but the absolute necessity of obedience in all who call Jesus Lord. To say Lord, Lord, without doing His Father's will, is worthless. Many shall say in the future day of account, Have we not prophesied through Thy name, and through Thy name cast out demons, and through Thy name done many works of power? But He will answer, I never knew you: depart from Me, workers of lawlessness. It was hollow profession, whatever the works of power, which only aggravated the guilt and will add to the endless remorse. There was no life possessed in Christ, and consequently no obedience, to which every believer is sanctified (1 Peter 1:2). Without holiness none shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:11). The point is here that obedience is indispensable from each one that bears His name.

Hence the Lord concludes, "Whoever therefore heareth these my words and doeth them, I will liken him to a prudent man which built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it fell not; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it fell, and its fall was great" (Matthew 7:24-27).

It is not redemption only that sinful man needs, but life eternal. In Jesus only are both found, and the believer receives both. Many there are who profess His name, and boast of redemption in Him, the forgiveness of offences, but never think of present life in Him. Alas! they deceive themselves. To the defiled and unbelieving, whatever they profess, nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works deny Him. They say, Lord, Lord; but they are false to His name. Had they believed, they would have had life in His name, and brought forth fruit of righteousness. But not having Christ as their life, they had no fruit unto holiness, and never grew because they had no true knowledge of God. Life, life eternal, as a present ground for serving God in obedience, is as essential as redemption. Woe is to such as have neither. Still more bitter is the woe of such as deny either: they are enemies of the truth.

3 The ways, N. and W. The Narrow and the Wide Ways.

Matthew 7:13-14.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 357-358. Gospel No. 11-3.) The Lord sets before those who heard Him the energy requisite for entering the kingdom. When man was unfallen, he had only to abide where Jehovah Elohim set him. A single restriction was laid on him as a test of the obedience that was due. He might freely eat of every other tree in paradise, pleasant to the sight and good for food;

but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden on pain of death. The divine Creator was also the moral Governor; and man, to abide blessed, must bow to His word in grateful subjection, assured that His will was good no less than wise. That He forbade was enough. To disobey Him was sin and death. And so man learnt to his sorrow, shame, and ruin, when following the woman deceived by the serpent, he violated the plain commandment and fell.

Since then the race broke more and more into sin. Lawlessness prevailed; till at length Jehovah 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. The end of all flesh came before God; for it was not only that all flesh had corrupted its way here below, but that the earth was filled with violence. Nor was it only Noah finding grace in Jehovah's eyes through faith, but a deliverance from the deluge was granted to him and his house, and a preservation of enough of the creatures in the ark to renew the post-diluvial earth. There the dispensed ways of God were to be displayed, man fully convicted after the most patient trial, and Himself revealed in His Son, but first on the ground of responsibility, till sovereign grace displace all evil, and righteousness reign to His glory; finally, when the kingdom closes, dwelling in holy power and peace and goodness when God is all in all.

Meanwhile, as the course of the world has ever been and is now more than ever man doing his own will and pleasing himself, the path of faith is ever in separation to God and His word. Christ is the One revealed by God and revealing Him in order to make this knowledge good in all who believe.. All saints since sin came into the world looked to Him, and were lightened, and their faces shall never be confounded.

Since the Word became flesh and wrought redemption, grace abounds more exceedingly. Nor is it grace only, but this reigning through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. Remission of sins, yea, peace made through the blood of His cross, is preached to every creature; that whosoever believes may know himself made nigh in virtue of Christ's blood, God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them.

Still there are difficulties, dangers, and enemies which each soul that heeds the call of God must face. He who is quickened is sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (1 Peter). The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Such is man's moral bent in his very nature fallen as it is. Nor is this by any means all; for the friendship of the world (and what man has not sought it?) is enmity with God; and this so surely that whosoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Then the power of Satan, the liar and murderer, is the most directly destructive of all. Who is sufficient for these things? It is, and must only be, of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ. But every natural influence here below is in Satan's hands, and as hostile to man as to God. Therefore the Lord says, "Come in through the narrow gate; because wide [is] the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that come in through it; because narrow [is] the gate and straitened the way, that leadeth to life, and few are they that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Follow the multitude, as it follows the wise according to the flesh, the mighty, and the noble, and you are lost. Public opinion may be well enough for things of this life; but it is never founded on God's word. This sets forth Christ and Him crucified, which to the perishing is foolishness, but to

those that are saved the power of God, and His wisdom. So faith receives, and enjoys now, and is blessed for ever. It hears Christ's word and believes God that sent Him. It distrusts and turns away from the world which cast Him out and crucified Him. It seeks not ease or pleasure for the flesh, but follows Him who was despised by the vain, and abhorred by the self-righteous, and loathed by such as sought their carnal desires. Hence it is and must be the narrow gate and the straitened way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Those who trust self and the world naturally prefer the wide gate and the broad way. But beware, poor soul! Such is the way that leads to destruction It may look fair now, yet what solace will it be then that many come in through that wide but fatal gate? The proud and the mean, the haughty and the servile, the highest and the lowest, the dissolute and the violent, the superstitious and the sceptical, the self-satisfied and the hypocritical enter through it into the broad road whose end is perdition. O my fellow-sinners, hear Him who is Himself the way, ay the sole and sure way to the Father. Never did He refuse one that cast himself as a lost one on His grace and truth; never does He fail to guide aright each that calls on His name. He is the Saviour of all that believe. His sheep hear His voice, and as He knows them, they follow Him; and He gives them life eternal, and they shall never perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand (John 10:27-28).

4 The Salt and the Light Matthew 5:13-16.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 371-372. Gospel No. 11-4.) In the preceding verses the Lord lays down the character of such as belong to the kingdom of the heavens. Now He states their position here below. Is it truly applicable to you? Do you in unbelief treat it as impracticable or indifferent?

If I own myself a lost sinner, and in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing dwells, neither salt nor light is mine, but sin dwells in me. It would be sheer presumption to claim that I am born either the one or the other. Naturally I am corrupt, and as to God and His things dark as night. Important as baptism is, it in no case according to scripture produces so mighty a change; but life in Christ does, which the believer receives through the Spirit and the word of God. As its fulness and perfection were in the Son, so of His fulness did all we receive, and grace for grace. It is no presumption to believe God, nor what He declares He gives to those who receive Christ.

Let me beseech you, fellow-believer, not to slur over nor shirk the position in which the Lord sets you here below. These are His words:- "Ye are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing save to be cast out and to be trodden down by men. Ye are the light of the world: a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do they light a lamp, and put it under the bushel but upon the stand, and it shineth for all that are in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, that they may see your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens." Let us earnestly seek to make this good, instead of slipping it through or shoving it on to a Jewish remnant. As there were two broad characteristics among the foregoing "blessed," righteousness and grace, both displayed in Christ and in Christianity, so is it with the position of the disciples. In Matthew 5:3-6 are the righteous characters: in Matthew 5:7-9 the gracious: followed by the blessing of the persecuted for righteousness' sake in Matthew 5:10, and by those persecuted yet worse for Christ (i.e. grace) in Matthew 5:11, and their joy, exultation, and reward above in Matthew 5:12. The position too is presented accordingly. In Matthew 5:13 we have the righteous side; in Matthew 5:14 and the rest the side of grace, but both to be verified in our practice.

Salt is the righteously preservative principle. It is sharp rather than sweet, but guards from impurity and decomposition. It gives fixity to what is good and wholesome. It proves all things, and holds fast the right. It keeps aloof from every form of wickedness. When then the disciples are called the salt of the earth, the Lord designates them as set apart to God the Father, and in patient continuance of good work seeking for glory and honour and incorruptibility at Christ's coming. They obey the truth, and are to hold fast what they have till then. If they lose the good savour, it is fatal. Saltless salt (and such a change was familiar in those lands) cannot be restored. It is not fit for anything but to be trodden down on the streets, as it often was.

How has it fared with the holy deposit in Christendom? Has the salt there retained its virtue? Did the favoured Gentile abide in goodness, any more than the Jew under law? If not, cutting off is the sentence of God (Romans 11:21-22). All the more should every faithful soul humble himself, repent, and look to the Lord who is as willing as He is able to make Him stand. But are we not responsible as "the light of the world"? If it is not the property or power of salt to cure corruption, it is for light to illuminate the dark. It goes out and around. And we may notice it is to "the world" at large here in this appropriate diffusion by grace, as the salt is "of the earth," the ordered scene of privileges. As being the light, it is compared to a city set on a hill and not to be hid; and not this only, but as penetrating the home, it is as a lamp (not absurdly under the bushel as its extinguisher, but) upon its stand, that all in the house may enjoy its brightness.

Only let us not forget the Lord's momentous caution as to this. "Thus let your light (your living profession of Him, Who is the true Light and made you light in Him) shine before men, that they may see (not your inconsistencies, but) your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens." He means the very reverse of men displaying their benevolent works before their fellows, so as to bring glory to themselves. He would have His own let their confession of Him, the one source of their light, shine, so that men may see the goodly fruits, and therefore glorify not the disciples but our Father in the heavens, the Father of lights, of whom is every good giving, and whence comes down every perfect gift from above.

5 The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3-12.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 8-9. Gospel No. 11-5.) In what is called the Sermon on the Mount the Lord does not treat either of new birth or of redemption. He addresses His disciples that came unto Him, and begins with pronouncing who are the blessed in the kingdom. It is a solemn test whereby every disciple may try himself.

"Blessed the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Blessed they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

Blessed the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

Blessed the peace-makers; for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Blessed are ye when they shall reproach and persecute you, and falsely say every wicked word against you for my sake. Rejoice and exult; for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus persecuted they the prophets that were before you."

Such are the qualities, said the Lord, which suit the kingdom. They are not those of man fallen nor even unfallen. The first man in Paradise had none of them any more than the outcast race. "Ye must be born anew," and even then have your new character formed and impressed by the Lord Jesus. None other He owns (Matthew 7:21-23), nor can others have to do with the Kingdom save for judgment. Those only do the will of His Father that is in the heavens. But the Saviour Son of God elsewhere shows, and is, the unfailing way. "As many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become children of God" (John 1:12). Who are they? "Those that believe on His name." They are born of God. They have life eternal, and can each say, "I live, no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that which I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God that loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). O, believe Him in Whom is life producing every quality God values! There is none other in His sight. Believe, and it is yours now; and with an evil nature in an evil world as is the fact, here it is indispensable as well as for heaven.

You, my brethren, may not have noticed that there are seven characters, all blessed in Matthew 5:3-9, divided as after into four and three. Four righteous qualities are first, three gracious follow; and they rise respectively in each class. Christ manifested each and all in perfection. Those that follow Him, having Him as their life, must have His qualities reproduced and manifested in them.

Poor in spirit is the first named. It is just the opposite of fallen man's aspiring spirit. Outward forms of poverty will not do. Under that garb what pride may lurk, what self-seeking, what party spirit! "It shall not thus be among you, but whoever would be great among you, let him be your servant; and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave" in this evil ace and rebel world. Such was the Son of man in life and death. He is the disciple's example; for his is not a present place of honour but the kingdom of the heavens whether to faith now or displayed by-and-by. And who was such a mourner where His Father was unknown, and His own light and love scorned? Here too the disciple treads in His steps and looks for the comfort wherewith He was comforted and comforts.

Next, as He was meek and lowly in heart, so must he be who takes His yoke and learns from Him, assured of inheriting that earth where the hard and haughty have now their brief portion. The last of these are such as hunger and thirst after righteousness, which marks not only persevering energy but this in inward personal desire, and they shall have satisfying fruition in and like "Jesus Christ the Righteous."

After this, we have the higher characters of grace, but with righteousness preceding. As Jesus was full of grace and truth, so His followers not only exceed in their righteousness that of scribes and Pharisees, but show mercy not known to these. And truly they shall find mercy, as they have found it plenteously.

Theirs too is purity in heart, and as by faith they see God now, so shall they beyond others by-and-by (Revelation 22:4). In fine, they are the blessed peace-makers who now represent the God of peace; and His sons shall such be called as they are. But observe that the Lord reveals a supplemental blessedness for each of the two great classes. "Blessed they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake" answers to the opening class in Matthew 5:3-6, and so fitly repeats the opening blessing, "for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The last of the two rises to the highest, and leaves the abstract for direct personal words of love: "Blessed are ye when they shall reproach and persecute you, and falsely say every wicked word against you for my sake." This was suffering for grace in full. "Rejoice," says the Lord therefore, "and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus they persecuted the prophets that were before you." As Christ only is all-sufficient now for evil and lost man, if he believe, so in His day shall the poor in spirit have the true and abiding riches. What then must be the lot of all who despise Him?

6 Prayer for Disciples

Matthew 6:9-13.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 20-22. Gospel No. 11-6.) Are you a disciple of the Lord Jesus? Are you born of the Spirit? Are you a child of God entitled to say Abba, Father? Such were they, and no others, whom the Lord taught to pray thus: Our Father that art in the heavens, Sanctified be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven also an the earth, Give us today our sufficient bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors, and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. If you are a disciple as they were, you too can pray thus, even if like them you could not say that you have in Christ redemption, the forgiveness of your trespasses (Ephesians 1:7). Such too was necessarily their state then, for Christ had not yet suffered for sins. But it ought not to be yours now; for the atoning work is done. If then you believe on the Lord Jesus, be it known to you, that through Him is (not promised, but) proclaimed to you remission of sins, and in Him is every believer justified from all things (Acts 13:38-39). You have not appreciated the alphabet of the gospel, if you know not that once purged you have no more conscience of sins.

While in this unformed condition, born of the Spirit but not resting on redemption known as yours (and therefore not yet having the Spirit of adoption, Galatians 4:4-6, Ephesians 1:13), you do well to pray as the Lord taught His disciples. waiting for the Spirit (Luke 11:1-3). When the Paraclete was given, they entered into peace and liberty, far beyond their then state (Romans 5:1-11, 2 Cor. 17, 18); and so may you prove when thus subject and obedient to God (Acts 5:32). Nevertheless, though the standing of a Christian will lead you to pray in the Spirit according to the new relationships, how blessed ever is that which the Lord here taught! Do you really know what He meant? Many fail in this. Let us weigh His words.

It is in the First Gospel we hear of the Father who is in the heavens. The aim was to raise the eyes on high of Jews who were used to wait for God to display His glorious power on earth (Isaiah 25:9; Isaiah 31:4; Isaiah 35:4. etc.), as He did in measure since the day of redemption from the old house of bondage. Now He is made known as the One who makes His Sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, yet with special favour to His sons. The petitions are seven, and divide into two classes; the first three are of righteousness, as the last four are of grace. This is an order intrinsically due to God, and proper for saints. If lost sinners as such were contemplated, all

must begin with sovereign grace. But of this we hear not in the so-called sermon on the Mount, but such grace shines appropriately elsewhere.

1. And how right, even our hearts feel, is the opening petition, Sanctified be thy name! It is the foremost desire of the renewed, however young in faith. Without this made good, there can be nothing good.

2. Thy (not My) Kingdom come, the Father's Kingdom (Matthew 13:43) where the heavenly saints shine forth as the sun in risen glory, the dearest object of His love here as Father, Who will have them there with and as Christ, through Whom alone it could be.

3. Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth. This is at the same time the Son of man's Kingdom, Who will send His angels to gather out of it all offences and all that work lawlessness (Matthew 13:41). It is the earthly things of God's Kingdom, as the other the heavenly (John 3:12), Christ being Head of the church and over all things (Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 1:22).

Then come the petitions of grace.

4. Give us today our sufficient (or, necessary) bread. Thus are they taught to begin with confessing dependence for ordinary wants, as the apostle called us to be content with food and raiment.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. For indeed all saints are bound to judge self and confess sins, as an antecedent spirit of forgiveness is imperative. See Matthew 18:35, Luke 17:3-4.

6. And bring us not into temptation. So the Lord impresses on the disciples; for He ever knew their weakness as none else did yet. Luke 22:46. To !endure" temptation is as blessed, as "entering into" it is full of danger.

7. But deliver us from evil in general, if not from the evil one in particular. This was not the sifting, or temptation, deprecated in the clause before, which grace may put us through for good, as we see in Peter; but the power of the enemy in drawing into sin against God. The proper desire was to be kept from the evil, or, if one fell, to be restored from it. Grace in no case fails, if a disciple alas! did. Deliver us from evil. The doxology is an ecclesiastical accretion and therefore uninspired. Luke was led by the Holy Spirit to omit the special title (Luke 17:2), the earthly Kingdom (Luke 17:3), and the final clause (Luke 17:7), as not so much called for in the case of Gentiles.

Reader, can your state admit of your adopting the prayer for a disciple of Jesus? How sad to use it lightly and untruly!

7 Grace in Practice Matthew 5:38-48.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 37-38. Gospel No. 11-7.)

There is nothing that comes before the eyes of men which strikes them more than the meek, lowly, thankful spirit which endures a wrong. The natural man resents, and, if he can, avenges everything of the sort. You might as well tell him to feel otherwise, as to walk in the air a mile or a foot above the ground. To the disciple such grace is a principle of his new life. It is what in its perfection he has beheld in Christ, and what suits his Father who is in the heavens and looks for the reproduction of His own character in His sons. Retaliation is here reversed and uprooted.

"Ye have heard that it was said, Eye for eye, and tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Resist not evil; but whoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him that would go to law with thee and take thy coat, leave him to take thy cloak also. And whoever will impress thee one mile, go with him two. To him that asketh thee give, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away.

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens; for he maketh his Bun rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust. For if ye should love those that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the taxgatherers the same? And if ye should salute your brethren only, what beyond do ye? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

It may be personal lawlessness, an unjust suit, or a hard law; but the disciple of Christ is taught by the Master to bow. What is a brutal insult compared with truly representing Him? Consistency with Him is far more than one's coat, and cloak to boot. Instead of begrudging the service pressed for one mile, add another to please Him who would have us walk by faith, not by Bight, still less selfishly. Luke, who was led to note not the legal side but unauthorised violence only, omits the impressment, and inverts the stripping by letting the plunderer take the inner garment as well as the outer, the Lord no doubt exhorting to both. Nor did He end here, but bade the disciple give habitually to him that asked; for what had not he himself received from the divine Giver beyond all he asked? The object of countless and rich mercies, was he to turn away from one that would ask or borrow? But the Lord goes farther in His next utterance. Whatever was said of loving one's neighbour and hating one's enemy, His word to His disciples was and is, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you. So too the Epistles insist on those that bear His name. In the Gospel of Luke rightly stand the clauses, Bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray also for those that use you despitefully. These enlarge the grace which disciples are exhorted to show to hostile man of the world; and from thence they were imported into the copies of Matthew by scribes who were prone to assimilate. The inspiring Spirit was pleased through]aim to urge loving our enemies, and praying for our persecutors, which last pertained to Jews pre-eminently, because of their hot and proud religious prejudice in the flesh.

Such love and piety, to be of value, must be no mere form but a living reality, that they might be sons of their Father in the heavens; for such is their place of dignity. And what a pattern He sets! For He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. What rich grace in the first comparison, and what faithful goodness in the second! Nor was the Lord content with the pointed reference to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. He would make them ashamed, as His disciples, of not rising above the practice of Jews and Gentiles. If they loved those that loved them, did not the odious tax-gatherers the same? If they greeted their brethren only, the scorned Gentiles did also the same. This was altogether beneath the Christian according to Christ. "Ye shall be therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." A lower standard of feeling and conduct was to the Saviour intolerable. Have we such confidence by grace toward God? Assuredly we have no competency as of ourselves: but our competency is of God, according to the spirit of the new covenant, not of the old. The grace of Christ alone suffices the believer. If you reject Him, you are lost. Flee to this the only refuge, if you would be saved; flee to Jesus now, ere the House-master shuts the door, when "Lord, open to us" will be in vain. Then will

He judge strictly, instead of saying as He does now in all grace; then will He say, I know not whence ye are: depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.

8 Treasures?

Matthew 6:19-21.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 53-54. Gospel No. 11-8.)

Christ beyond all others knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He Himself knew what was in man. He seeks treasures on the earth. It may not be gold or property. It may be pleasure or power or position. Some set their heart on fame in letters or learning, in science or art. Some court poetry, oratory, or philosophy. The bar and the bench, the army or the navy, civil government or politics, philanthropy or even the pulpit ordinarily, fire the ambition of others. These objects and all akin which attract the heart of man are treasures on the earth, and beneath the faith to which the Christian is called — faith in God unseen and eternal. "Love not the world," wrote His inspired servant," nor the things that are in the world. If any one loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world, And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Listen to the Saviour's words on the more prevailing snare. "Lay not up for you treasures on the earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and where thieves dig not through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also." The treasures in heaven are the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. On these things we are to set our mind, not on things that are on the earth. For we died with Christ from its best things, the rudiments of the world which Israel had as their religion; and our life is hid with Christ in God. His cross closed all such shadows and ordinances; and therefore is the world crucified to the Christian, and he to the world. If he is truly Christ's, he is heavenly as united to Christ, though he is still on earth, and bears the image of Adam the earthy till He comes. Be not moved by the unbelieving sneers of those who try to lower as other-worldliness your true objects. These are far above the world, or the habitable earth to come, blessed as it will be when Christ and His saints reign over it. Our proper portion is in heaven and with Christ there. Be not cheated out of that which is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, on which the Epistles enlarge beyond what the disciples could bear when their Master was here, as He Himself tells us (John 16:12). The wisest of mankind is no judge of what God wills for His children now. The New Testament is as clear as possible that He would have His own not of the world; indeed our Lord declares that they are not, even as He is not. And as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for those that love Him: them God revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. These are treasures which the Lord calls us to lay up for us in heaven. And nothing can harm them, like earthly treasures by corruption or violence. Do not say that such an aim is beyond the believer. It would be assuredly, if there were not the grace of God to enable. But we have Christ as Head above, from Whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God. His grace suffices one in the most crushing circumstances. And if we have such an Advocate on high, we have One no less divine to

work in us here below that we may be strengthened in the inner man. Thus could one of old boast of weaknesses, never of sins, that the power of Christ might tabernacle upon him.

If you urge that you have doubts about your soul, how can you pass this day without settling that question before God? He sent His Son for you, that you might live through Him, and that He, the Lord Jesus, might die for you — yea, for your sins. Let it be your need, your guilt, your ruin, looking to God in the name of the crucified Saviour. Jesus never said Nay to one that, feeling his sins, appealed to Him. God the Father would have you thus honour the Son, who declares solemnly: Verily, Verily, I say to you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard shall live." Be not faithless then, but believing; trust His grace that all else you lack, as you surely do, will be given in the like love. It is His joy to bless the believer.

9 Christ come to fulfil Matthew 5:17-18.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 70-71. Gospel No. 11-9.) From the outset of His ministry our Lord was careful to affirm that He came not to dissolve but to make good divine authority in the law or the prophets. In both He was predicted as the One whom all blessing depended. He only could deliver sinful and seduced man. He was to he the Sacrifice which would justify all previous offerings to God, and render their just interpretation, and furnish their efficacy. Fulfilment of a prophecy is the same word; but the context here points to a larger scope. The law and the prophets testified to man’s unrighteousness and to God’s righteousness (Romans 3:21). But they could not do more. Christ came, not to enfeeble or undo them as His blind enemies thought, but to make good that divine testimony which left the sinner without excuse and gave what God only in His grace could supply. It was far more than even pious men conceived, a mere making up, by His obedience of the law, what men failed in. This had merely been man’s righteousness accomplished by Him for the unrighteous, Here too He has done incomparably more and better. He laid the basis in His obedience unto death for God’s righteousness, that God might be just and justify him that believes on Jesus. For He who knew no sin glorified God in being made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in Him. Hence God’s grace is enhanced, not frustrated; for if righteousness is through law, then Christ died gratuitously. But it is not so: never was anything else contemplated or revealed but that the believers rest their hope on His death.

God took care therefore that promise should long precede and exist independently of it, as the apostle argues in Galatians 3:1-29. This at Sinai Israel in their self-confidence overlooked. Instead of asking for the unconditional promise of grace they undertook to stand on their own obedience. As no sinful man can subsist on such a condition, the law written on stones, even when brought down a second time with types of mercy accompanying, could not but be a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7-9). For them it is said in the reading of the old covenant the veil remains unremoved; and the veil is more than on the face, being upon their heart. They did and do not look to Christ, law’s end for righteousness to every one that believes. They strove to stand on a mixture of law and grace, which only adds to the sinner’s condemnation, because the added grace increases his guilt if disobedient. But we look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and are transformed to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit, Who testifies to Him in the glory of God as the fruit not only of His person but of His work. And so the

apostle preached the gospel of God’s grace and of Christ’s glory, as he had been converted. The Epistle to the Hebrews told the Christian Jews that the "new" covenant of which Jeremiah bore witness held out under Christ a better covenant. It did not, like the old at Sinai, depend on Israel as the party on whose fidelity blessing depended. All hung for the new covenant on the Lord’s sovereign grace. "Because this is the covenant that I will covenant for the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: giving my laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they shall be to me for people. And they shall in no wise teach, each his fellow-citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; because all shall consciously know from little of them unto great Of them; because I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses and their sins, and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:10-12). This was no real way to set aside the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them to God’s glory and for man’s salvation and blessing. Christ filled up the gap between God and the sinner for him who believes on Him. The law pointed to Him as the coming One who alone could restore the balance which the creature’s evil had disturbed by weight overwhelming to all but the Saviour. He alone could by redemption win and give the blessing which God’s nature loved to bestow and God’s counsels assured in due time. But all this and more Christ was by His word and Spirit bringing in a new and divine life by faith into the soul, before the day arrives when He will transform our body of humiliation into conformity with His body of glory according to the working of His power even to subdue all things to Himself. It was not mere addition, as if the law and the prophets were not intrinsically complete and perfect for the end God proposed; but He is throughout assumed and predicted as essential to give the blessed result. "For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass" (Matthew 5:18). So even the N.T. speaks of filling up the gap otherwise left in it by the revelation of the mystery of Christ’s headship on high and the church united to Him as His body. And the apostle in Colossians 1:25 tells us of the stewardship of God given Him thereby to complete His word. For this was a secret hidden from ages and generations, and quite distinct from the kingdom, the new covenant, or the inheritance of Abraham’s promise. It was a promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel and God’s eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3:6; Ephesians 3:10).

O dear reader, look you by faith to Jesus, the sole accomplisher of what you most want and of infinitely more — what glorifies God and gives the believer a wondrous part in it all. Look not to yourself save to condemn yourself; look to Him who secures from all condemnation which you must otherwise dread. May your heart learn how truly Christ is all. This no man is willing to do, until he is brought to the decided conviction before God, that he is lost, and that in him (that is, in his flesh) good does not dwell.

10 The Father in secret

Matthew 6:1-18.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 88-89. Gospel No. 11-10.)

Here is a Christian principle, which our Lord puts in contrast with acting so as to be seen. What so suited to exercise and strengthen faith day by day, or to guard from that hypocrisy to which man is prone?

He first lays down the general principle, it would seem, in Matthew 6:1, and then applies it to alms in Matthew 6:2-4; to prayer in Matthew 6:5-15; and lastly to fasting in Matthew 6:16-18. Some ancients and moderns have been disposed to regard "righteousness" in Matthew 6:1, as equivalent to "alms," as Rabbis and others were prone to do. But the better text and sense point to retaining the inclusive term "righteousness" in Matthew 6:1, under which fall the three duties that follow. For if applied there to "alms," it is hard to conceive why the proper term for "alms" should be given in Matthew 6:2-4. The different word in verse 1 points to the more comprehensive sense of "righteousness" or consistency in practice with our relationship. This is then shown to embrace three varied forms in which the disciple is called to do the Father's will in the pious course of life here below. Daniel 4:27 distinguishes mercy to the poor from righteousness; and I am not aware of any confusion of the two in scripture.

Matthew 6:1 calls the disciple to righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees, without which none can enter into the Kingdom of the heavens. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward with your Father that is in the heavens." Here is the large principle for Christian practice. Knowing Him as Christ has revealed Him to us, all acceptable service refers to Him, He is a living and true God whom we serve, and He refuses to share His glory with others. We walk by faith, not by sight. Can anything be more opposite to the ways of Christendom?

1. When therefore thou doest aims, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be glorified by men: Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth, that thine alms may he in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay to thee" (Matthew 6:2-4). If men walk in a vain show religiously quite as much as in the world, the Lord calls His own to shun publicity, and not merely this, but in His vigorous figure, that our own left hand may not know what the right does. The simple and essential aim is to do what we do to Him and His glory.

2. So it is with the prayer here enjoined. "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they should appear to men. Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay to thee. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as those of the nations; for they think they shall be heard through their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like them; for your Father knoweth of what things ye have need before ye beg of him. . . . For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father also will forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences" (Matthew 6:5-15).

Here the same show before men in prayer is reprehended; nor this only, but the heathen folly of vain repetitions, and of much speaking. Lastly the Lord warns that an unforgiving spirit cannot hope to have its own offences forgiven.

3. "And when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, downcast in countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear fasting to men. Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But thou, when fasting, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou mayest not appear fasting to men, but to thy Father that is in secret; and thy Father that seeth in secret shall repay thee" (Matthew 6:16-18). In fasting there is even more sedulous care to guard from any display of that

self-humiliation before God which forms so great a part of it. The Lord would form in His own a spirit of living faith in having to do with their Father. Fasting is for His eyes, just like their prayer and their alms. Faith in Him that is in secret is thus in each way exercised. What a contrast with all that hitherto characterised a Jew!

11 The Lamp of the Body "The lamp of the body is the eye." Matthew 6:22-23.

(B.T. Vol. N3, p. 102-103. Gospel No. 11-11.) That Christ. is the Light, and the True Light, is a truth dear to every Christian. He coming into the world manifests every man. Rich or poor, simple or sage, false or faithful, not one escapes His all-searching light. Nor is there the least circumstance in the course of every day, any more than in what pertains to God, and truth, and morals, not for this life only but for eternity, that He does not set in the light of God. Only through Him do we see fully what God is, Satan, man, the sinner, the saint, heaven, hell, everything. The disciples, as the Lord told them in Matthew 5:14, are the light of the world, as they are also the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). They could be neither apart from Christ. It is He who thus assimilates them to Himself; the latter in His character of righteousness, the former in the quality of His grace, as already explained in Series 11-4. In receiving Him by faith they receive a new nature, being born of God; hence there is both righteousness and love in their ways. But here there is a further though connected truth of great value.

"The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee is darkness, how great the darkness!"

It is a question not of the light, which is perfect but of "the eye." Spiritual condition has an immense deal to do with the disciples seeing aright. Our recipiency and discernment, our actual judgment and our practice, depend on the state of our affections. The Lord presents the ready and effectual test. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark."

Christ truly the object before one gives singleness of eye; and where He is simply and exclusively the "one thing" before the soul, the whole body is light. Difficulties vanish. The will of God becomes quite clear. I am surprised and ashamed to have had doubts here and uncertainty there. I recognise to my humiliation that I had been asleep in my ways and had to rise up from among the dead, and then only have Christ shining upon me.

Prayer alone does not ensure singleness of eye, nor yet suffices searching the word accompanied by prayer. There may be a fleshly film that dims the eye. We are too apt to think ourselves of importance for God when it is all of grace that He uses us in this way or that. We fail to appreciate our Lord’s waiting on His Father, without taking a single step till He gets the word. Yet it is to His obedience that we are sanctified by the Spirit.

We are not like Jews with every point great or small religiously and in ordinary life, in peace or in war, personal, domestic, or social, all ruled by the statutes and ordinances, prohibitions and injunctions of law. Christ brought in the fuller and deeper obedience of a Son, and makes it by grace the believer’s by the gift of life eternal and eternal redemption, with the Holy Spirit indwelling as power and personally also in us. But though thus blessed, there are still the three great enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, in the face of which we are responsible to please God

as His children. We need therefore to pray, as the apostle did for the Colossians, to be filled with the right knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the right knowledge of God (Colossians 1:9-10). For this we need the eye single and the whole body light. How is this to be? The Lord tells us in John 15:7 : "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you." Habitual dependence on Him with confidence in His love is to abide in Him: without this all else is vain. But where we abide by grace, His words are needed to direct: for who is sufficient otherwise? and His Spirit is given to guide us thus. Only thus are we sure that we have His mind; for thus the eye is single and the whole body light. Then when we ask, we have our petition. Oh, that so it may be I and that we may be content with nothing less!

What is the issue, where other objects are allowed? The alternative is, "If thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark." How solemn the sentence, and how true! "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!" Oh, look to God that it be not so with you, a disciple of the Lord!

See too the impossibility of the Light yours, of the eye single, save by genuine repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. Doubt yourself, not God; and receive Him who in His grace came to receive you by faith, if you have not already done so.

12 Be not anxious.

Matthew 6:25-32.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 121-122. Gospel No. 11-12.) As the Lord charges His own to lay up for them. selves treasures, not on earth, but in heaven, so does He forbid anxiety about their life here below, as His servant did about anything. He lifts our eyes above the seen present to the things unseen and eternal, whence He came and whither He was going, as He is coming to take us shortly. Here He deals with the believer’s heart, and the snare of seeking to serve God and mammon which He pronounces morally impossible.

"For this reason I say to you, Be not anxious for your life what ye should eat and what ye should drink, nor yet for your body what ye should put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment? Look at the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father nourisheth them. Are ye not more excellent than they? And which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit? And why are ye anxious about raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, nor yet spin; yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory put on like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, being today and tomorrow cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? For all these things the Gentiles seek after; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:25-32).

Anxiety as to the things which the present life needs is natural. All these things the nations of the earth seek after. In God they have no faith, as the Jews professed loudly, but in works denied. But the disciples had the heavenly Father’s name now set before them as the One who is perfect in grace, making His sun shine on evil and good, and sending rain on just and unjust. How true this is! Yet who had affirmed it as a living principle but the Lord on earth, who also set it forth as a

model for His own practically, that they might be sons indeed: an astonishing doctrine, especially for those, as they were, trained up in the legal ideas of the Jews. So their righteousness was to be, whether alms, prayer, and fasting, not before men but to their Father that sees in secret. The name of their Father made anxiety about earthly and bodily wants a painful incongruity, and in particular about what kind the supply should be. From Himself the birds read them one lesson, and the lilies another. He nourishes each fleeting creature, He gives the passing flower its beauty. How much more did He care for His children? It was a touching appeal and carrying with it to every believer the conviction of irresistible truth. They were, they are, called to believe in His sustaining goodness. He never fails in His love: they ought not to fail in resting and counting on it day by day. If tried as to it, let them not doubt that it is for their good. It is impossible for God to lie. Are they to doubt His love Whom the Lord reveals as their Father? He who embraces the least objects of His care will act worthily of His love to the nearest. Nor does the Lord spare them the humbling proof how little the anxiety of man avails. "Which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit?" It was a very small thing if some would count it a very great addition. Yet even for this how powerless is man! Why then be anxious about a garment? The herbage of the field rebukes the vanity of a child of God; for as the Lord called their attention to the lilies, he pointed the moral by the plain fact that God clothed even these transient creatures, lower in the scale than the birds, with a beauty far beyond Solomon’s array in all his glory. Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? Here the Lord urges two considerations which we do well to heed. One is to guard us against sharing the unbelief of those who do not even know God, How compromising to share the thoughts and feelings of the Gentiles! "For all these things the nations seek after." The other is to assure the doubting heart. "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," "Not one sparrow falls to the ground without Him: but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29-30).

Now are you, who read these words, a child of God by grace? Believe not such as say that all mankind are so. They deny the fall; they ignore sin; they oppose the solemn testimony of scripture, that, however favoured by privileges, we are by nature children of wrath, even as others (Ephesians 2:3). Believe not others who say that baptism quickens those dead in trespasses and sins. Christ quickens by faith of His word and the working of the Spirit. He is the Life, as He is the Way and the Truth. You have His words, not merely to instruct His own, but to show how the dead may live, yea have eternal life; for this it is He gives to those who believe. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life " (John 6:47). Why wonder? Is He not the Son, the I am? "He that believeth on the Son hath life eternal (or, everlasting): and he that is unsubject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). O sinner, beware lest this be your portion.

05.14. Gospel Words - Twelfth Series.

Gospel Words — Twelfth Series. A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 The Kingdom of God

2 Judge not

3 Confidence 4 The Narrow Gate

5 Fruits 6 Bare Profession 7 Christ and the Law

8 Anger 9 Reconciliation

10 Impurity 11 Purity in Divorce 12 Swear not at all 1 The Kingdom of God Matthew 6:33-34.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 135-136. Gospel No. 12-1.) The kingdom of the heavens is an expression derived apparently from Daniel 4:26. Its inauguration also is foreshown in Daniel 7:13-14; in Daniel 7:22 not only the Heir of all but the heavenly joint-heirs, and in Daniel 7:27 the "people" under the whole heaven to whom the chief dominion is given. Such will be the manifested kingdom when the Son of man comes with power and glory; and there will be earthly things and heavenly (John 3:12). But He came first as the great moral. test in humiliation; and His rejection and cross brought out higher than earth through redemption therein accomplished. This too, refused by the unbelieving people, left the door open for the mystery of that kingdom and its mysteries while the rejected King is on high, and the gospel of indiscriminate grace, till the church is complete. Then all Israel shall be saved on their repentance, and the blessing of all the nations as such shall fully come.

Plainly, "the kingdom of the heavens" is a dispensational phrase peculiar to the first Gospel, as in contrast with the incredulity of the Jews who looked only for an earthly one. Mark and Luke use "the kingdom of God" for it, and in a general sense; John exclusively for what is real. But Matthew, for that very reason, when he does say "the kingdom of God," does not mean the dispensational view, either in future manifestation or in present mystery, but the power of God ruling in Christ when here, or now in the Spirit’s action morally in those that are His. Hence the same term which is so comprehensive elsewhere has here this force all the more marked because of Matthew’s general employment of the dispensational phrase

Here occurs the first instance; the others are, Matthew 12:28, Matthew 19:24, Matthew 21:31; Matthew 21:43, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Be not careful (or, anxious) for the morrow for the morrow will be careful about itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

Throughout the discourses on the Mount the Lord is not preaching the glad tidings to the lost but instructing His disciples who already believed. Earthly care is a great bane and unworthy of faith.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Where could they find that kingdom and righteousness most truly, plainly, and fully set out before their souls? Surely nowhere as in Himself. It was even more wondrously by God's Spirit in His moral power than by His casting out demons. "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God," was far beyond all the miracles together that ever had been wrought. Who but He was the "man that lived by every word of God" unswervingly? Nor is it too much to ask of such as were born of God. Indeed the principle was always true. Jehovah's people were to be holy because He is holy. And this applies all the more strongly now that we have the relationship of sons, with redemption through Christ's blood, and the gift of the Spirit. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; nor yet abstinence from flesh or wine; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Making God's kingdom and righteousness our first concern, we are entitled to expect that all the things needful and good will be added to us. For our God and Father never overlooks our wants. If faithful in the greatest and deepest things, He loves that we should confide in Him as to our least things. Do we believe the Lord, that "all these things [about which unbelief worries] shall be added unto us?" Let us not forget the condition: "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." What can be more due to God, or more comely for us as His sons? The Lord's yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

It is unbelief, accompanied by loving the world or the things in the world, which produces anxiety, darkness, and doubt, as in the Gentiles who knew not God. If we know Him, and the blessedness of His kingdom, and the perfection of His righteousness, why be careful for the morrow? For the morrow, says the Lord, shall be careful for itself. Has He failed us today, or in the past? What evil has He ever done us, what good thing withheld from us? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Even if the hardest trials come, do we not know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those called according to purpose? Do you, my reader, say that you love Him not, but dread Him because of your sins? Then why do you not flee for refuge to Him that stretches out to you His strong and gracious arms? Come unto Me, He cries, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. He is full of grace and truth. Is not this the only Saviour for a sinner? What does "grace" mean but unmerited favour? You are justly condemned if you refuse to come at God's word.

2 Judge not "Judge not that ye be not judged." Matthew 7:1-6.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 149-150. Gospel No. 12-2.)

There ought to be no question of the Lord's meaning here. No fault was more prevalent then or now. Censoriousness is not only the habitual bane of religious professors, but the snare to which true disciples are too prone. Gracious men who set their face in general against detraction are often bitter against what they themselves dislike, and thus slip into judging motives wrongly like others. He who is Judge of quick and dead discerns every heart, and enjoins what is comely and just on His followers. For this sin tends to hypocrisy; and what saint would regard such a thing lightly?

"Judge not that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you. And why lookest thou on the mote that [is] in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy

brother, Let me pull out the mote from thine eye; and, behold, the beam [is] in thine eye? Hypocrite, pull out first the beam out of thine eye, and then wilt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of the eye of thy brother." The indulgence in a hasty, severe, and suspicious spirit provokes reprisals, and such as wantonly impute evil to others in ignorance or unkindness do not fail to bring on themselves unsparing imputation. For here the Lord turns from the lack of confiding in our Father's care and love, and warns of our danger from many an unkind impression and expression. To surmise wrong motives is itself a wrong. It is natural for such as live in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another; and such once were we ourselves. But since the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God appeared (no premium for our deserts), but according to His own mercy He saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He poured on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, are we not bound by the family character, the new life relationship as children of God, sons of such a Father? Since redemption and the gift of the Spirit, more can be added now to what the Lord uttered then. But He reminds us of what we easily forget. If others are a trial to us, are not we a trial to them? Are we not, unless walking according to the light, as dull to see our own faults as we are sharp to notice, and even imagine, wrongs in our brethren? How pungently the Lord puts the case that we may loathe ourselves! "And why lookest thou on the mote in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote from thine eye, and, behold, the beam is in thine eye?" The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls thus holily strips us of the mask which failure in self-judgment puts on. For if before God we discern not our own grievous shortcomings and sins, we do not know our brethren with anything like the same certainty and clearness. Love therefore and the fear of God call us each to deem others better than ourselves, judging ourselves for what we do know instead of others for what we know not and ought not to think. "Hypocrite," says the Lord with severe reproof, "pull out first the beam out of thine eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Yet it is well to beware of the too common misuse of our Lord's warning. How often pious persons thereby deprecate any censure of their own position and any care against false doctrine, or evil associations, or responsibility for such discipline as scripture requires! But this is to fail in godliness; which assuredly covers not only personal conduct, but also public walk as members of Christ. The Corinthians were careless in this way and others, which grace has turned to the profit, not only of them, but of "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." The apostle allows no excuse for carelessness congregationally any more than individually. There is no call to exercise discipline on the evildoers of the world; but Christians have the obligation of dealing with offenders in God's assembly. Paul, though absent, could not but judge that the wicked person should be excluded. It was due to Christ and His sacrifice. God must be vindicated Whose is the assembly. The saints were bound to clear themselves in the matter, taking up the offender's sin as their own; yet even here his ultimate good was sought, "that the spirit might he saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Do not ye judge those that are within? But those without God judgeth. Put away the wicked [man] from among yourselves" (1 Corinthians 5:3-13). Here we are commanded to judge. The selfsame principle expressly applies to sins far less gross. Our thoughts and reasonings are to be discarded on the one hand; and on the other God's authority to be recognised and conclusive. Scripture too is plain that, important as is right judgment of moral evil, the truth is yet more momentous; and this both because to slight and oppose it offends against the Giver, and it ruins those who thus err, whilst they have a fair

appearance, instead of shocking men like immorality or unrighteousness.

Express injunction is also laid down, when the evil is of a more general and public character, as in 2 Timothy 2:1-26. "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are his; and, Let everyone that nameth the Lord's name depart from unrighteousness. Now in a great house are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some for honour and some for dishonour. If one therefore purge himself out from these, he shall be a vessel for honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work." There is thus no licence to join in what God disapproves and demands us to judge. Conscience, a purged conscience, is exercised, and the heart all the more free to love fervently according to God, But how is it with you, dear reader? If you are of the world and only bear the outward badge of Christianity, take the place of truth for your soul in God's sight. Jesus is the all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, and He, the Lord of all, is rich and near to all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call on the Lord's name shall be saved. Righteousness and salvation are the portion assured by God to each that believes and confesses Him. If you received Christ, say not that you cannot tell who are His. How then can you love God's children, as Christ charged you to do? Even the unconverted know in a general way who are His, and who are not; how much more does every sober believer? He owns that, till born anew and brought to God by Christ's work, he was as evil as anyone; and, without pretending to judge the heart, he accepts those who confess the Lord and follow Him, as he himself does. Such is the judgment of true charity, not the indifference of unbelief which is of Satan. The verse that follows itself shows whom we ought to judge. For we are to prove all things, holding fast the right. "Dogs" and "Swine" we are bound to discern and disown. "Give not the holy thing to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine lest they trample them with their feet, and turn and rend you." Nabal's family is not extinct, sons of Belial with whom a disciple cannot speak with impunity. Shamelessness and filth plainly tell what they are, and the folly of treating them as sheep of God's pasture. No doubt the grace of God can save such: but in all this discourse is not a word about redemption or saving sinners. All throughout consists of the characters which suit God, and must really be for His Kingdom. This is its design: and it is worthy of Christ, as the gospel is where this was the question.

3 Confidence Confidence in our Father's giving.

Matthew 7:7-12.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 164-165. Gospel No. 12-3.) Our Lord here encourages His disciples to count on the goodness of their Father for every want consistent with His will.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask of him for a loaf, will give him a stone; and if he ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If therefore ye, being wicked, know to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye desire that men should do to you, thus do ye also to them; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:7-12).

It is not a sinner needing life and forgiveness of his sins, but saints directed to appeal to God and assured of their Father's answer of love, whatever their wants be. The Lord had already taught it

them to pray in Matthew 6:1-34 as with alms and fasting, parts of saintly righteousness and due to His name and glory. Here He enforces it as the way in which all they need from above is to be given them. Hence perseverance and earnestness are incumbent. Asking will ensure receiving, yea to every one that asks; seeking will not be fruitless but shall find; and to the still more importunate the door will be opened, which is but shut to exercise faith. For there may be a matter of importance for the applicant to learn before the request can be granted, as with the Syro-phenician woman, so earnest in supplicating the Lord to have pity on her, whose daughter was grievously possessed by a demon. Yet at first the Lord answered her not a word. She pleaded like a lost sheep of Israel's house; whereas she was a Greek, and had no right of promise with the Messiah; indeed she was a Canaanite, and thus under the curse. But when she drops His title as Son of David, and gathered from His answer to the disciples wherein her mistake lay, she did Him homage, saying, Lord, help me. On this He speaks out, It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the whelps. This did help her soul, for it led her to the secret of sovereign grace on which she at once threw herself, saying, Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering said to her, O woman, great is thy faith ; be it done to thee as thou wilt. The door opened to her knock. She was deepened and cleared in her faith, as her daughter was healed from that hour. The Lord also encourages His disciples through the affection which is implanted in a parent's heart. If their Father makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, how does He feel toward His sons? His love surely goes out to them in every request that is for their good, and withholds only what their foolishness asked that must do them harm. Hence He says, Or what man of you, whom his son shall ask for a loaf, will he give him a stone? and if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? Who would not repudiate such mockery of a son's hunger? Thence He draws the conclusive words for their hearts, If ye then, being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask Him? The last verse goes into that which becomes the disciple with men, and lays down the simple but evidently sound principle, to do to others as we would have others do to us; and this too on no ground of human rights or natural benevolence, but of consistency with God's revealed will. "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, thus also do ye to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

Now let me ask you, dear reader, if you have not by faith the Son of God as your Saviour, are you not conscious that these words are altogether beyond you? What is your state then now, and what must the end be? I call on you in the Lord's name that you perish not in your sins. The same Lord, who thus cheers His disciples and bids them ask freely, warns you that he who disbelieves (who is unsubject to) the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him. Go to God as you are, a poor sinner, in the Saviour's name, and own your ruin and His grace, that you way be saved, and know it to your exceeding and everlasting joy; and then serve Him as your Lord, awaiting Him from heaven, for He is coming.

4 The Narrow Gate Matthew 7:13-14.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 180-181. Gospel No. 12-4.) The Lord here gives a warning of great practical value. Public opinion weighs much with the natural mind. It maybe and often is right in material things: there men judge fairly well, and are awake to their interests. For the spirit of man that is in him knows the things of man. But it is not so in the things of God, where the carnal mind does not

fail to display its inveterate enmity against Him to man's certain ruin if it sway. Therefore is it elsewhere written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. All turned aside, together they become unprofitable, there is none doing good, no, not one (Romans 3:10-12).

Hence the Lord says here, "Enter ye through the narrow gate; because wide [is] the gate, and broad the way that leadeth off unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it. Because narrow [is] the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth off unto life, and few are they that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Reader, how is it with you? Have you entered through the narrow gate of conversion to God? Have you repented toward God and believed on our Lord Jesus Christ? Baptism is the divine and admirable sign of salvation; yet it never gave life, but rather represented remission of sins and death to sin for such as had life : if they had not life in Christ, its true meaning, as far as they were concerned, was their guilty and wretched inconsistency, to their utter condemnation far worse than if they had not been baptised to that excellent Name. Deceive not your own soul; he not deceived by others. The great apostle warned that in the last days grievous times should come, and evil men and impostors wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But this trust in an ordinance is one of the oldest of errors, and revived of late with fresh audacity and large success, though the same apostle expressly denounced its vanity and danger in early days (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). For "our fathers," said he, "were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink . . . Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness . . . . Now all these things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages are come."

O unbeliever, will it assuage the horrors of everlasting fire that you followed the multitude in despising the word of the Lord and neglecting His great salvation? You cannot deny that what He says here is very plain; your conscience must own that it is true. It is of no avail to talk about the fate of Tibet sealed up against the light of the gospel, or to enquire what is to become of the heathen millions in darkest Africa, or in haughtier India and China, or anywhere else. You at any rate have the Bible, and may outwardly profess the Lord's name. You have often heard and perhaps read these words of Him who will surely judge living and dead; and the time hastens for it. When you stand and are manifested before Him, will you not be speechless, like him who might be christened but had no wedding garment? The numberless crowds of the lost will verify His words, but yield not a drop of water to cool your tongue in the torments of that day without an end, or even when you die impenitent now before it come. Masses and classes alike perish in their unbelief of Him and His word. In fact it will only add unspeakably to your bitter self-reproach that the Lord gave you so distinct a signal of danger for time and eternity. You refused the narrow gate, because it admitted neither self-will, nor fleshly lust. You loved the wide gate and the broad way, because you set your heart on what you called liberty, seeking and doing what you liked in defiance of God's will. You stifled the conviction of your moral folly and incredulous madness by the abundance of your company high and low. The narrow gate was repulsive to you, because it compelled you to stoop to God, which your pride and your passions alike resented. You had in entering through it to meet God singly, and to face Him alone about your sins. Had you been in earnest, you would have seen that He is our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be

saved and come to acknowledgement of truth. And this is solely in Christ Who is the one Mediator of God and men, and gave Himself a ransom for all.

Therefore are you without excuse. And you are lost and must be condemned for ever, above all your sins for this crowning sin that you reject Christ Who died for you, losing the ransom so precious to God and efficacious for man. O bethink yourself: believe the words of Him Who cannot lie, and in love uttered this warning that you might hear and live. For both gates are clearly set before you, and both ways, one unto life and the other unto perdition. Many are they that enter through the wide gate and tread the broad way. O beware; for I too was once your fellow-sinner, as infatuated as any other. But the Shepherd's voice reached my ear, my soul. May it pierce yours, that you may turn off from the broad way, as from a serpent, yea the old Serpent the Devil, and enter the narrow gate of Christ, the straitened way that leads off unto life. Few are they that find it. May you know this happiness now and evermore in the Saviour.

5 Fruits Matthew 7:15-20.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 196-198. Gospel No. 12-5.) The disciple is here cautioned. It is not only against trusting himself, that he may be dependent on his Father, and earnest in prayer that looks for an answer of grace. He has to pass through a scene haunted by the subtle emissaries of the unseen enemy; and the greater their pretension, the more are they to be shunned. The Lord would not have His own deceived and led astray.

"But beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep's clothing but within are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall them recognise. Do they gather from thorns a grape bunch or from thistles figs? So every good tree produceth good fruits, but the worthless tree produceth bad fruits. A good tree cannot produce bad fruits, nor a worthless tree produce good fruits. Every tree that produceth not good fruit is cub down and cast into the fire. Therefore at least by their fruits ye shall recognise them well

Every reader of the O.T. may learn the destructive part by the false prophets who followed like a dark shadow the holy men whom the Holy Spirit inspired, and took up popular cries to oppose the warnings of God as evil became more rampant There is no less danger now, as Peter particularly insists under the gospel; not to say that there is so much the more when good men pretend not to inspiration and are no longer invested with miraculous vouchers, but press only the word in the Spirit. And so it will be again for the godly remnant in the last days when, the heavenly ones being caught up, it becomes a question of that land and people. But the Lord's warning is of living value now also, as we hear in the worst and deceptive form (1 John 2:18-23; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 1:7-11). What believer does not know of the boldest antagonism to the truth? What Christian has not tasted bitter grief in seeing saints of God deluded by the sheerest clap-trap? Yea, even conniving, for alleged peace, unity, or testimony, at the denial of Christ's Person?

They who love Christ do well to beware of false prophets, who are such as come unto them in the garb of sheep, but within are ravening wolves. They may cultivate sanctimoniousness and pretend to devotion, but are under the dominion of a mightier foe than themselves, and filled with the keenest zeal to deprive the Christian of a true Christ, of life eternal possessed, of present standing as God's righteousness in Christ, of association with Him in and for heavenly glory. Are not such truly ravening wolves? What remains, if the disciple lose all the treasure distinctive of Christianity?

"By their fruits ye shall recognise them." Do they exalt Him who humbled Himself? Do they confess His incomprehensible being, God and man in one Person? Do they proclaim His grace and truth? Do they follow Christ in absolute subjection to scripture? Do they own it, as the invaluable standard, and the sure communication, of God's mind by His Spirit? Is the believer established? Is the sinner won and delivered? Or are minds filled with ideas which but inflate the spirit, inspire self-complacency, and end in death? For these are practical effects which test what men teach, and which are legible enough to simple souls little versed in scriptural truth, and still less in human subtleties. And thus the Lord safeguards the sheep in various ways.

There is another class of false prophets who more openly contradict the Lord, count scripture obsolete, or deny that it was ever more than Hebrew sages moralising or romancing according to their genius. Hence they dare to say that the wide gate is all right, and the broad way safe; that the few are only sour, proud, and narrow, and that the many cannot but be welcome to the universal Father, Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, too good to be severe to His erring children. Here again for all who receive scripture as the expression of divine revelation and authority there is no lack of evidence for any one to recognise these false prophets from their fruits. For their love of the world, or indulgence of the flesh, is as plain as their apology for sin, slight of the Saviour, and ignorance of the true God.

Good fruits are produced by neither the religious misbeliever or the profane unbeliever. How could it be? Do people gather a bunch of grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? Those who utter false oracles are trees which the Father never planted. It is the worthless tree producing bad fruits: whereas every good tree produces good fruits. Christ is the true vine; and they only who abide in Him are branches that bear good fruit.

O then, sinner, renounce yourself, and heed none who point to another than Christ. Were He not set forth openly, and did He not welcome you in perfect grace, your lot would be dismal indeed. But He Himself declares, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto myself" (John 12:32). On earth He, the Messiah, was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel, though he and she who by grace discerned a higher glory were blessed according to their faith. But lifted up on the cross He is seen as the Son of man come to seek and save the lost, whoever and whatever they might be. He is the attractive centre to draw all, however dark or distant, who own Him as Saviour and themselves as guilty and rained sinners. For on the cross He through death annulled him that has the might of death; on the cross He bore the judgment of sin and effected propitiation; on the cross His blood was shed that brings the defiled one perfectly cleansed nigh to God. O sinner, no longer hold out against a work thus provided and commended to you just as you are. Christ is the true God, and eternal life; and it is written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.

Made a true and living branch of the Vine, you will bear the good fruits of that only good tree. Be humbled, but not in despair, if through allowance of flesh you bear unworthily. For you have still the flesh in you, but no excuse to let it out. For if you are Christ's, you died to sin, not to sins merely, but to that source of lust and will, the flesh; and such is the virtue of His death to law too, that even if a Jew you ware made dead to that old husband and free to belong to Another, Who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God. The Holy Spirit directs your eye and heart to Christ; and He, as He produces nothing but good fruit, never fails him that looks to

Himself. He is the way, the only way of life and holiness; and if you live by faith, it is now yours to say, "not I, but Christ that liveth in me." Then and then only, can you produce good fruits; as surely as "every tree that produceth not good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." Be not deceived then. Look to Christ believingly; and all will be well with your soul now, and evermore. Therefore at least by their fruits ye shall know those that uphold the ways of the Lord, and those that pervert.

6 Bare Profession Matthew 7:21-23.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 213-214. Gospel No. 12-6.) The Lord here delivers a most salutary warning, to which the new things of the kingdom gave occasion. For while the truth which came through Him is as precious as it is characteristic, it of necessity left the door open for mental activity and spurious profession in ways which could not under the law be addressed to Israel. "Now we know that, whatsoever things the law saith, it speaketh to those in (or, under) the law." The truth, Christ, on His coming into the world which knew Him not, casts His light upon every man, and places all that have it under deep and direct responsibility. But it is also capable of being abused widely and variously by a false pretension more or less willing, yet ever inexcusable. This the Lord meets in these verses with emphatic clearness and solemnity.

"Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in the heavens. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many works of power? And then will I avow to them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness" (Matthew 7:21-23). The sense of entering into the kingdom of the heavens here is fixed to its glorious estate, not only by "in that day" in the following verse, but by the Lord's application of it in Matthew 8:11, where its citizens sit in it with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is the more important to note; because His rejection (which soon began to appear) brought in its "mysteries" as in Matthew 13:1-58, during which He sits on high upon the Father's throne, and the kingdom applies to the anomalous state, as in the field or world wherein He sowed wheat and the devil darnel to ruin as a whole. This is the present mixture of Christendom while the Lord is absent above, during which any one can say "Lord" in vain, and wheat and darnel grow together till the harvest time, and the glory come by judgment. The essential thing is doing the will of His Father which Christ was revealing. As He said in John 5:24, where life eternal was in question, "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal." These are the persons who, having done the good things as possessed of life now, rise for the resurrection of life (John 5:28). Equally peremptory is the Lord's word here. No profession without corresponding course of life can avail; nothing less or other than doing His heavenly Father's will. And who so competent to reveal as the Son, who left (as He tells us in John 16:12-13) many things, beyond hearing then, for the Holy Spirit to announce when He came?

It is clear that, as in the entire discourse, not a word is said about the new birth, still less redemption. The Lord is not here preaching to sinners how they were to be saved; He is teaching His disciples how to walk before the Father that is in the heavens. How does He view that vague and multitudinous profession, which. is a burlesque of Christianity, though now so popular, on the one hand through histrionic ceremonies and gaudy shows and religious fables, and on the other through appeals to the intellect and to the imagination by oratory or. reasoning. There may be seeming devoutness and profuse earnestness; but without living faith in Christ, neither is God

known nor is self judged. The Lord insists on true obedience.

O my fellow-sinner, how can you obey a far fuller standard than the law, as long "you are dead in your offences and sins? Are you not by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-22)? For we are, saved (nobody else), as the apostle adds, by grace through faith. A rite is wholly unavailing. And faith is God's gift; it is not of works, as rash men pretend: else man could and would boast. Faithful is, the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Oh then repent and believe the gospel.

How overwhelming is the Lord's warning! "Many shall say to Me in that day (and it is at hand), Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many works of power? And I will say (not even you once knew Me, but) "I never knew you." Compare Hebrews 6:4-8. No gift of power is a sign of life eternal, not even the edifying gift of prophesying. A man might be an apostle of Christ, but not a child of God. "Ye must be born anew," begotten by the word of truth; which Judas never was. Outwardly near, he was really far off, not only a stranger in heart but an enemy. And so we read here of crowds not like Judas, deceived as well as deceivers, "Then will I avow to them, I never knew you." So indeed it is and must be, where men enjoy the greatest outward privileges, and remain without faith working through love. But it is faith, not founded on evidence, nor on tradition, nor dependent on a dying priest or a dead ordinance or a self-asserting church, but given of God's grace that you may become God's son and Christ's bondman, though just as surely a member of His body. Thus only can you walk in obedience of the Father's word and will, till Christ comes or you depart to be with Him, waiting with Him as well as for Him till then. And those who do not so believe, whatever their claims now, whatever their pretension to order, office, power or authority, must assuredly hear in that day the just and irrevocable sentence, "Depart from Me, ye that work lawlessness." May grace work and win now, giving an ear to hear the voice of Jesus to the saving of the soul, and delivering from the delusion that christening quickens souls, or exempts them from the condition of being lost and the need of being born anew.

7 Christ and the Law Matthew 5:18-20.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 229-230. Gospel No. 12-7.)

We have already seen how certainly and clearly laid down is Christ's position in ver. 17. He maintained the authority of the Old Testament. "Think ye not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfil." He came to make good God's mind therein. This He confirms in ver. 18. "For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall do and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I say to you that, except your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens" (Matthew 5:18-20). That the Lord obeyed the law is beyond doubt. This is not the meaning of fulfilling. He gave the full scope of the law and the prophets; and He did yet more, for He revealed God in Himself both by words and ways, and disclosed those secrets of the kingdom which were absolutely hidden of old. For His rejection and departure to heaven would and did give it a quite new form; and beyond this the great mystery as to Christ and as to the church had to be made

known, involving things still higher and deeper. But nothing in the new could weaken the authority of God in the old. "Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass."

Christ should be glorified in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down to baptise the believing Jews and Greeks into one body, the body of Christ, the temple destroyed, the city trodden down by Gentiles, and the Jews scattered over the earth for their Bin against Messiah. But even these woes on the chosen race fulfilled the law and the prophets, and in a special way Christ's word; yet more remains, and darkness still, before the law and the prophets are fulfilled in the salvation of Israel coming to and out of Zion. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God shall bless to the full His long unblest people, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. Oh haste the day! Assuredly Christ came not to make void but to fulfil. But the Lord is here addressing His disciples who were still under the law. He is not yet even predicting His death on the cross and the redemption through His blood to which grace turned it in the justifying righteousness of God by faith to be revealed in the gospel. Indeed, as we have often noticed and might through the entire Sermon on the Mount, not one word says He here of this work of sovereign love. He first sets out the characteristics that are proper to the kingdom in Matthew 5:3-12; then position in Matthew 5:13-14; and now the relation, like His own in their measure, to the revelation God had given to His ancient people, however unbelieving and unworthy as a whole. He does not foretell what their rejection of Himself must entail on the Jewish nation, or what God would then do for them or others who believe.

Hence in Matthew 5:19 He still speaks to them as the godly remnant that heard His voice and clung to Him, born of God, but under law, and on this side of the cross and its blessed results to faith. Obedience first and last is insisted on. Here He begins with the law; but even in this chapter He goes on to what He is saying to them, which the ancients never heard. He brings in rich additions in Matthew 6:1-34 as declaring the Father's name from the close of Matthew 5:1-48, guards them from inward and outward snares in Matthew 7:1-29, and ends the discourse there with hearing and doing His words as the rock of wisdom and safety. As undoing the word justly sunk one to be "least" in the kingdom, faithfulness to it raised to a great place therein. Evidently therefore the righteousness of such as entered must exceed and excel that of the Pharisee (Matthew 5:20) who honoured tradition, the word of man, to the necessary disparagement of God's word.

It was the perfection of giving His disciples their food in due season. Many prophets and kings, some even inspired, desired to see the things which the disciples saw, and saw them. not; and to hear the things which they were hearing, and heard them not. And greater things were at hand, even that most wondrous of all wonders, God's work in the cross and the resurrection and the heavenly glory of His Son. But if heaven and earth shall pass, as they are, and not the least tittle of the law and the prophets, how far above these to God's glory and man's blessing rise the words of the Lord Jesus! And these are words of His which deeply concern my reader, who is not a disciple of His, but a slave of sin and Satan. If you are indeed His disciple, let me rejoice with you in the grace God has shown you. If you are not, but only a guilty and wretched sinner, I beseech you to hear His words meant for you to heed before God that you may live for ever. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are, heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Doubt Him not: He is able, He is willing. "I came to call, not righteous men, but sinners:" why despair, or turn away? Even His

enemies cried, "This man receiveth sinners." What does He Himself say, even when His hearers sought to kill Him, and when He sought those who had not a pulse of life toward God? "Verily, verily I say to you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment [out of which no unbeliever can emerge, nor yet believer if he entered], but passed out of death into life." For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him may not perish, but have life eternal. What love in God Who hates the sins and pities the sinner! What infinite love, when you think, first of His Son, then of yourself! But O my fellow-sinner, what a doom must be yours according to His word if you disbelieve the Son, are unsubject to Him, and neglect so great salvation!

8 Anger Matthew 5:21-22.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 244-246. Gospel No. 12-8.) The Scribes and Pharisees were especially ritualist and external. This was letter, not spirit. Our Lord not only condemns a righteousness of mere outward acts, but insists on inward reality as indispensable for the kingdom of the heavens. He does not explain at this time how the requisite practical righteousness is possible and actually made good in sinful men. He had already let Nicodemus know of the necessity for a Jew no less than a Greek to be born anew, as well as to have redemption by His cross. Here to His disciples He expounds the absolute need of realising the varied spiritual qualities brought before them in order to enter the kingdom. As the Pharisees fatally narrowed the scope of scripture, the Lord gave its fulness as none but He could. The first of these references is to the law of murder. But the Lord goes immeasurably farther for the kingdom.

"Ye have heard that it was said to those of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be subject to the judgment. But I say to you, that everyone that is [rightly] angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment; whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be subject to the council; and whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be subject to the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21-22). The law and the prophets He had vindicated. All must come to pass. Yet the law made nothing perfect. He speaks Who is above the law and gave fulness to all on His own authority.

Thus is the commandment made exceeding broad and deep. The axe is laid to the root of the evil tree. All violent feelings are judged as in God’s sight, and every evil word of malice and contempt shown to be of sinful and dangerous consequence. As He said later in the same Gospel (Matthew 12:37), "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Here He warns, not so much of every light word, but of wrath, hatred, and contempt. The Judge of all the earth, Himself despised by man and abhorred by the nation, as was soon proved, could not fail to discern aright. The danger He denounced is the burning sense of self, of the old man set on fire of hell. Circumstances might hinder its expression; but it stays in the heart it ruled, and makes itself at length felt in its malignity. He that formed the heart knows it, as He detects a feeling so contrary to His own nature, not only unbecoming in man, but wholly inconsistent with the peacemakers, the pure in heart, the merciful, as well as the poor in Spirit, the mourning, the meek, and those hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the blessed ones that suit the kingdom of the heavens. How too could it agree with being persecuted for righteousness’ sake? how with being reproached, and having all manner of evil said and done against one falsely for Christ’s sake, yet, rejoicing and being exceeding glad to be thus defamed and ill-used for His name? But we know that very recently (Mark 3:1-6) the Holy and the True looked round with anger in the synagogue on

those who watched with murderous hate, if He would heal a poor sufferer on the Sabbath. Instead of shrinking from the issue, He bade the man rise up into the midst. They (the high and the broad) were silent; but the fire of their anger burned to destroy Him, after He also bade the man stretch out his palsied hand, restored on the instant His holy anger was distressed at the hardening of their hearts who, in the vain confidence of tradition (ever spurious), were thus maddened against the active and blessed goodness of God as a reality among men here below.

Again, John the baptist said to the Sadducees coming to his baptism, Viper brood, who forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce therefore fruit worthy of repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for father. These were scathing words; but if anger dictated a word, it was unselfish and holy. It was indignation at men who sought a religious form to cover their unbelief and wickedness. And He, whose sandal-thong John counted himself unworthy to untie, pronounced woe after woe on these Scribes and Pharisees, albeit standing highest in Jewish estimation. Blind guides He called them, fools too and hypocrites and serpents; how should they escape the judgment of hell? Was not the blessed Lord fully justified in His words, overwhelming as they were to the highest degree? It was not enmity to tell an evil-doer the truth, that he might repent. Flesh hates fidelity.

If it be objected that so the Lord was entitled righteously to denounce, but no one else may, what are we to learn from one of like passions with ourselves? He on just occasion could say in the Spirit, to an erring saint at Corinth with questions about the resurrection, Fool! as he said before, Wake up righteously, and sin not; for some are ignorant of God: I speak to your shame. So in the next chapter he declares that if anyone love not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maran-atha (accursed at the Lord's coming), 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; 1 Corinthians 16:1-24. The same apostle tells the saints (Ephesians 4:26), Be angry and sin not. If one truly follow the Lord and the apostle, anger then is a duty, not a sin; yet one surely has to watch and pray withal. The source, motive, and aim decide. If of God and for Him by the Spirit, anger has His sanction; if for self, it is evil that exposes to judgment: and so the Lord denounces on its various degrees expressed in a form familiar to Jews.

O my fellow-sinner, whose words have been habitually sinful, violent and ungodly, how can you, as you are, enter the kingdom? And if you cannot, what must be your end without end? The Judge tells you plainly. But He is now the Saviour, the only perfect Saviour. Flee, flee for refuge, for pardon, and a new nature, to Him Who alone can give all you need. The resource of God's grace is Christ. And if we believe on Him, His love constrains us to live, not to self, but to Him Who for our sakes died and rose again. Then only do we cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

9 Reconciliation Brotherly Reconciliation.

Matthew 5:23-26.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 261-262. Gospel No. 12-9.) The Lord was not content, with authority peculiarly and emphatically His own, to lay down the hateful evil of anger in heart and word, even if not in violent deed. He proceeds to carry out the revealed mind of God for the kingdom by requiring reconciliation if any had stumbled one's brother. Throughout, disciples are in view, not mankind in general. Sin in disciples is exceeding sinful: good is peremptory (surely not evil) for the kingdom of

the heavens.

"If therefore thou be offering thy gift at the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Make friends (or, be of good-will) with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the official, and thou be cast into prison. Verily 1 say to thee, Thou shalt in no wise come out thence till thou have paid the last farthing" (Matthew 5:23-26).

It is no less evident that Jewish disciples as yet under the law are those addressed. This is as plain in Matthew 5:20-21 as in those we are now considering. In fact it is the rule in this Gospel as a whole and in the others; and it must be so, till in the death of Christ the middle wall of partition was broken down, and thus the way was opened to reconcile both Jew and Gentile that believed in one body to God, the enmity being slain. The discourse of our Lord anticipates no such unity, nor even the call of the Gentiles, in any one clause. But it is a profound mistake that this indisputable fact takes away the profit of a single word from the Christian, though we stand now in a position of grace which could not be then. There is the richest instruction morally for every one who honours Him who spake as never man spake; a spiritual estimate of unequalled depth for those who know redemption and have the indwelling Spirit to enter in far more fully than those who heard His words of divine truth at the time He uttered them.

Thus the Lord enjoins the disciple who was bringing his gift to the altar, if he remembered that his brother had anything against him, to stop short of his devoted purpose as to God Himself, and be reconciled to his brother, before returning to offer his gift. What tenderness of conscience was looked for, brotherly affection, lowliness of mind, readiness to own wrong, and desire to win an offended brother! It was the very reverse of anger, contempt, or hatred, which He had just treated, as His servant in measure re-echoed at a much later day (1 John 3:11-15). And that reverse was the Jews' case. For absorbed in bringing their offering to the altar, they were blind to their wrong against Him who deigned to be their brother, with far more than brother's love, born for adversity as they knew not. But they refused to be reconciled, and persisted in their offering, however offensive to God. It was presumptuous sin, and high-handed self-will under cloak of religion.

What follows points to a still more solemn consideration. Who that weighs scripture can doubt that the Lord in Matthew 5:25-26 refers to the position in which the Jew then stood with God? This was a far deeper consideration than any other brother aggrieved: their Lord became their brother. The awful truth is that He who loved Israel and would die for them, Jehovah-Messiah, was made their adversary by their perverse disobedience and blind unbelief; and His presence, which had been their salvation and best blessing if received, must bring on the inevitable crisis by their utter rejection and hatred of Him. The Lord at this point avails Himself of the occasion in His infinite grace to urge their agreeing, or making friends, with their adversary quickly, whilst in the way with him. How His heart yearned over them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! But they would not. Their deadliest aversion was to their loving Messiah.

Hence the case was just about to come before the Judge, and the Judge would deliver to the official the convicted one, and he must be cast into prison till the last farthing be paid. It is no question here of eternal judgment, but of divine government morally on the earth; but all is plainly true of His people found guilty and consigned to suffer long. In that prison still lies the guilty debtor,

till his heart turns to the One he despised. Then the word shall go forth, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her, that her time of sorrow (or, suffering) is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins (Isaiah 40:1-2). Who is a God like unto Thee, that forgiveth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Micah 7:18.) Is not this the true unforced bearing of our Lord's words? One may apply it, to Christian use or unchristian warning. But it is an evil to twist scripture or to complain of those who bow to its full force. Such ignorance has led men into the fable of purgatory. But let me appeal to you, my reader, who may excuse yourself because you do not profess to be a disciple. How will this avail when you stand before the great white throne? By your own plea to escape responsibility you incur certain and everlasting perdition. You know that your works are evil, and that dying as you live, you are utterly unfit to be in heaven with the Holy One of God. He whom you refuse as Saviour now will then be your Judge. You turn away from the Lord, you neglect so great salvation; your name is not in the book of life ; your works are selfish, vain, proud, wilful; addicted to lustful passion, rebellious against God, you serve Satan, and therefore must your portion be with the enemy of God and of His Son, as you have been here and are now.

O be warned in time. For the end of all things is at hand, even if you live; and your life at best is but a vapour. You know not what a day may bring forth. God was in Christ reconciling, not only embittered, or self-righteous Jews, but a world to Himself, not imputing their offences to them. But all was vain for either: they hated both the Son and the Father. A great king, a mighty conqueror, would have been to their taste. How would that have blotted out their sins, or given them a nature to serve God on earth and enjoy Him in heaven? In divine wisdom and grace their hatred was allowed to culminate in His cross; and thereby sin was judged, themselves who believe cleansed from their iniquities, and made God's righteousness in Christ. O harden not yourself for hell-fire. God as it were beseeching by us, we pray for Christ, on His behalf who died for you: he reconciled to God. The work is done, according to His will, to save you for over. Repent and believe the gospel. What could be done to compare with that which God has done?

10 Impurity Matthew 5:27-30.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 276-277. Gospel No. 12-10.)

Throughout it is not mere acts the Lord demands, but state; the spiritual condition suitable for the kingdom of the heavens. As in the verses immediately preceding the Lord insists on a spirit of lowly grace, going immeasurably beyond Thou shalt not kill, so now on a purity as far beyond the non-commission of adultery.

It is plain also that here, as everywhere in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, it is not the grace which saves the lost sinner who repents and believes the gospel. The state of soul that befits entrance into the kingdom of the heavens exclusively occupies the Lord. He is teaching the disciples what suited the Father's name which He made known to them. All that He laid down therefore manifestly presupposes that one is born of God, as the essential requisite for His kingdom, not acts merely if they could be good, but renewal of heart. Christ Himself was the blessed pattern of perfection.

"Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit, adultery; but I say unto you that every one that looketh at a woman to lust after her committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye stumbleth (or, ensnareth) thee, pluck out and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand stumbleth thee, cut off and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee, that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell."

Violence and corruption are the sad characteristics of man's fallen estate. We see them marked in the antediluvian world, at least as the general signs of a ruined state, whatever the specific evil which aroused divine indignation and unsparing judgment. Throughout man's history as traced in the Bible, and particularly in the favoured circle of Israel under the law, they are ever before us. Christ came, and grace and truth through Him, and redemption through His blood, everlasting redemption, to say nothing now of heavenly counsels made good in His person and place, and communications to the Christian and to the church. But man is essentially unchanged, and even avails himself of grace to become the worse. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil." "But when thy judgments are in the earth," says the prophet, "the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness," Showing favour to the wicked, who believe not, emboldens them to persevere. And as the Jew was no exception who dealt wrongfully in the land of uprightness and would not behold the majesty of Jehovah, so will the Gentile reject the gospel to his perdition, and be cut off irretrievably. The time also hastens. But as of old, so now are the faithful men, of whom the world is not worthy, who lived and suffered as seeing Him who is invisible. And the Lord did not lower the standard but raised it, clearing it of letter and of all accretions or diminutions. He has the godly remnant in view, still Jewish as He spoke, who not only entered the kingdom, but had higher relations intimated as His rejection set in, till His session at God's right hand and mission of the Spirit gave all necessary to reveal and make good in the saints what had been ever hidden heretofore. As violence then was judged and excluded in any shape for the disciples, so was impurity. The avoidance of the extreme act might satisfy a Pharisee or Scribe; but the Lord could not dispense with anything short of truth in the inward parts. To look at a woman lustfully was to commit adultery with her already in his heart; and it is not the outside only that God regards but the heart above all. It is only a new nature that delights in holiness; and he who has it by grace answers to the will of God his Father; and abhors himself if he slip even into a wrong look, as unworthy of his calling and hateful to Him who loves him. But the Lord follows up His stringent condemnation by the call to deal promptly and unreservedly with anything that acted as an incentive. Therefore He specifies that which is part of ourselves, and when. rightly used of the greatest value. Not even the right eye, or the right foot, can be allowed in presence of His displeasure which the saint fears, because he is a believer and God's child; as the Lord said elsewhere, "Be not afraid of those that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will tell you whom ye shall fear. Fear him who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say to you, Fear him." It is not the highest motive, but it is an imperative and most solemn and urgent appeal.

Therefore says He now, "And if thy right eye stumbleth thee, pluck out and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand stumbleth thee, cut, off and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee, that one of thy

members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." The right eye and the right hand present forcibly the mortifying of our members that are on the earth, to hinder sin against God. At, all cost must the believer deny self; as we find elsewhere he must hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea and his own life also, or he cannot be Christ's disciple.

O my fellow-sinner, you know that this is wholly beyond you. You do not, will not, make any such sacrifices. Nothing but Christ, the new life, can so feel and act; and you have only your depraved life of sin and self. Are you then to despair? Yes, despair of yourself. You are truly lost, as the Lord says. But He came to seek and to save the lost. Tell God of your guilt and ruin, but plead the name of Jesus whom He has sent. He is a present and everlasting Saviour. Doubt not, but believe what God declares of His Son. Life in Him answers to the appeal of Jesus, when you rest on His redemption; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you accordingly.

11 Purity in Divorce Matthew 5:31-32.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 294-296. Gospel No. 12-11.) In connection with the light of heaven on the lusts of the heart, the Lord adds His word on the permission of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-22. It is here the woman protected against hard-hearted man. Positive sin in violation of the marriage tie alone calls for divorce. Men abused the licence beyond measure, as if the permission were a precept; and any vexation sufficed. But Jehovah hates putting away, as the last prophet testified to the Jews in their evil day. In Matthew 19:1-30 the question distinctly proposed to Him by the Pharisees, Is it lawful to put away one's wife for every cause? And He answered and said, Have ye not read that He that made from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God joined together, let not man put asunder. They say to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put away? He saith to them, Moses for your hardness of heart allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been thus. But I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that marrieth one put away committeth adultery. His disciples say to Him, If the case of man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. And He said to them, All cannot receive this word, but those to whom it hath been given.

Thus was the mind of God made clear. The indulgence of lust is incompatible with entering the kingdom of the heavens. The law forbade the act of adultery; the Lord condemns even the looking licentiously as adultery committed already in the heart. He insisted therefore on the most unsparing decision with all that gave occasion. Was it not better to pluck out the right eye or cut off the right hand, rather than the whole body be cast into hell? Here (as in all the chapters of the first Gospel before Matthew 13:1-58 where He begins as the Sower), it is not seeking sinners in sovereign grace, but saints, as He enjoins on the twelve in Matthew 10:1-42. "Into whatsoever city or village ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy" (Matthew 10:11). So the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-48) describes what spiritual characters suit the kingdom, as the end (Matthew 7:1-29) declares that none shall enter but he that does the will of His Father that is in the heavens. Not even prophesying or miraculous powers, were it casting out demons through the Lord's name, could be a passport to the workers of lawlessness. Practical obedience of His words alone should stand. The rock here is spiritual reality. His word was incomparably more withering to

self-righteousness than the law of Moses.

There is power of God given exceptionally to be above marriage, and live only to Christ here below. But, to far the most, marriage is God's order for man on earth. And the monkish rule with high pretension leads into horrible evasion, hypocrisy, and corruption even contrary to nature and abominable. God's mind is clear from the first; adultery alone justifies divorce.

Hence the necessity would be felt urgently and absolutely of receiving a new nature and an everlasting redemption in the Saviour. No interpretation of our Lord's words here or elsewhere is more radically false than that He puts believers under the law as their rule of life. He is really condemning unbelievers and hypocrites far more stringently than the law did, and those sayings of the elders which took advantage of a legal permission for carnal indulgence and unfairness to a wife who through any cause became less attractive to her selfish husband. Such souls were inadmissible to the kingdom. Only the godly remnant are here contemplated, who abhor corruption as they do violence. The presence of Christ, not of the law given by Moses, was bile suited moment for defining the character and conduct proper to the new thing He would set up. He was the standard of what pleased God, and must mark those who are His. "The law made nothing perfect" was a hard lesson for Jews; it seems quite as hard for those who inherit the traditions of fallen Christendom, and not less for Protestants than Papists, To be content with being nobody in the world, and despised by its religion, is impossible to human nature; to be mourners as Christ was, feeling for God's will and majesty where lawlessness pervades; to be meek now, waiting for the glorious inheritance in God's time, instead of clamorous for our rights; to hunger and thirst after (not ease or wealth, or power or honour, but) righteousness, cannot be without partaking of a divine nature. Harder still was the actively gracious spirit of mercifulness, purity in heart, and peace-making according to God, with the persecutions which such righteousness entails, and especially such maintenance of Christ's name as effaces ours. Our Lord accordingly singles out of the Decalogue the two great prohibitions of murder on the one hand and of adultery on the other. Assuredly He came not to make void the law or the prophets, but to give their fulness. He not only went farther than either, but declared that a righteousness surpassing that of the Scribes and Pharisees was indispensable for entering the kingdom of the heavens. He most pointedly sets His word with divine authority, so as to contrast what He laid down far beyond the claims of the law. In the case before us, as looking lustfully convicts of adultery before God, so whosoever put away his wife, save for cause of fornication, made her commit adultery, as well as him who married her. Thus He established a moral basis, not for a nation of mixed character, but fit for God's family and kingdom, which judged the heart's evil and allowed no concession to hard-heartedness. And what can be plainer than on this later occasion (Matthew 19:1-30) His going up to the beginning, long before the law, to God's instituted order and word in Genesis 2:1-25? There again His own word is full and final authority, for the Messiah was the Jehovah God of Israel. Whatever had been allowed by Moses, He is Mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. It is God speaking in Him who is Son: But I say to you."

Now, I appeal to your conscience, my reader. Can you face the light of God, which our Lord is, on these evils of man's fallen nature? Are you not utterly convicted by every saying of His, who is the Judge of living and dead? And if such be the truth, O spread it out, and yourself as verily guilty before God. Presume no more to stand on your own foundation. You are lost: own it truly and humbly and in earnest. The Lord Jesus is not Judge only; He is the real and the only and the

present Saviour of the lost. But you must be in the truth of your guilt in God's sight, if He is to act toward you in the truth of His salvation. That is repentance toward God; this is faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is for faith the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all, from every, sin. There is also life in Him, the Son, for every believer in Him. The one is as indispensable as the other. That life is the spring of the new nature which produces every good fruit and detests every evil work, word, and feeling; and now that one rests on His work of redemption, the Holy Ghost is given as divine power to strengthen the new man and mortify the old. It is true, that dependence on Christ, abiding in Him, is needed all the way through, and His words to abide in one, and prayer suitably and with confidence in divine love. But this is just practical Christianity so far; and we are sanctified by the Spirit, not to independence which is sin, but to obedience, the same blessed filial obedience as Christ's, our blessed Lord.

12 Swear not at all Matthew 5:33-37.

(B.T. Vol. N4, p. 308-309. Gospel No. 12-12.)

Here again the teaching of our Lord far transcends what was said of old. His presence brought in the light of God, and it was addressed to a new and divine nature in those who believe. It dealt with the root of every question, not merely with the fruit or overt acts.

"Again ye heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not swear falsely, but shalt render to the Lord thine oaths. But I say to you, Swear not at all; neither by (in) the heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his feet's footstool; nor by (toward) Jerusalem, for it is the great King's city. Nor shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your word be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; but what exceedeth these is of evil (or, the evil one)."

Thus the Lord goes far beyond perjury or breaking a vow. He prohibits swearing altogether in the intercourse of daily life. Our word therein is to be, Yea, yea, or Nay, nay. That which is more than these has no sanction from God, and is therefore of evil, or the evil one, the enemy of God and man. All such asseveration as the Lord illustrates from the facts of Jewish habit. arose from the constant experience of men in deceiving or evading. They therefore resorted to such means of insuring the truth. But these efforts defeated themselves; for we know from a reliable Jewish contemporary of the N.T. inspired writers that oaths by earth, heaven, sun, stars, and the entire universe, were not counted binding. Only those obliged the conscience which were by God's name direct and express; nay others might be transgressed. As the Lord supposed in those He addresses poverty of spirit and purity of heart, He proscribed absolutely all such swearing as offensive to God and incompatible with the place of His sons. Nor is it only Jews then, but professing Christians now, that show themselves as indifferent to the Lord's authority as if He had never thus solemnly uttered His mind. Among Protestants there is some little care to avoid profanity by adopting light and foolish exclamations, or by repeating heathen terms derived from their Greek or Latin reading, forgetting that if the idols are nothing, the demons behind them are real and evil. Romanists are much less scrupulous. It is sad to think how perverts go farther in excuse for their blasphemous phrases than those born and bred in their vain superstitions.

Take the following proof from the late Cardinal Newman's "Lectures on certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Submitting to the Catholic Church": "Listen to their conversation; listen to the conversation of any multitude, or any private party; what strange oaths mingle with it! God's heart, and God's eyes, and God's wounds, and God's blood: you cry out, 'How profane!' Doubtless; but do you not see that the special profaneness above Protestant oaths lies, not in the words but simply in the speaker, and is the necessary result of that insight into the invisible world which you have not? You use the vague words, 'Providence,' or 'the Deity,' or 'good luck,' or 'nature'; where we, whether now or of old, realise the Creator in His living works, instruments, and personal manifestations, and speak of the 'Sacred Heart,' or 'the Mother of Mercies,' or 'our Lady of Walsingham,' or 'St. George for Merry England,' or 'loving St. Francis,' or 'dear St. Philip.' Your people would be as varied and fertile in their adjurations and invocations as a Catholic populace, if they believed as we" (Ninth Lecture, p. 232).

It is grace alone which delivers from Popery and even Protestantism, and makes it a divine joy to be a Christian, neither more nor less. Irreverence of every sort, worldly or superstitious, becomes intolerably evil in one's eyes; and it is the first of duties for the believer to hear these words of Christ and reduce them to practice. But is it not an awful instance of Satan's blinding power, that while none but the vilest of Protestants would think of excusing his own ungodly badinage, a grave clergyman in his new born (or at least early open) apology for the shameless fooling of Papists should plead so barefacedly, not only for such ebullitions in word, but for turning the Last Judgment into a play of fireworks, and argue for it that "they are making one continuous and intense act of faith" (p. 237) But we must carefully remember, that our Lord in no way forbids an oath before the magistrate or judge. This is not of evil; but of good, being of divine authority. For men swear by a greater, and the oath is a term to all dispute as making matters sure. To refuse it is to deny God's authority in any who represent Him in earthly things, and hence called by His name and translated "judges," as in Exodus 21:6, Exodus 22:8-9; Exodus 22:28. See also Psalms 82:1; Psalms 82:6. The principle is asserted in Leviticus 5:1, to which the Lord, far from setting aside on the mount, bowed when adjured by the high priest (Matthew 26:63-64), though silent before. In like manner James 5:12 with marked earnestness forbids swearing either by heaven or by earth. These were not judicial adjuration, which does not fall under people's swearing. It was rather being sworn in God's name. Nor did our Lord any more than His servant prohibit such appeals to God as in Romans 1:9, 1 Corinthians 15:31, 2 Corinthians 1:23, Galatians 1:20, or the like. The scruple of Friends or Separatists has no foundation in scripture. But how and where do you stand, my reader? Have you owned yourself a lost sinner, and the Lord Jesus the only, the willing, and the perfect Saviour? Believe in Him, and thou shalt be saved. So said Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailer, suddenly arrested, and not to him only, but also to his house. And the same night he was baptised, and all his straightway. Why not you too? The same Lord is open to you. May you exult as he did, having believed with all his house in God, the God of all grace.

Chapter 74

06.01. In the Beginning And the Adamic Earth

In the Beginning And the Adamic Earth An Exposition of Genesis 1 - 2: 3

W. Kelly.

06.02. Table of Contents

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06.03. Preface to the First Edition.

Preface to the First Edition. The volume consists of papers which have already appeared in the Bible Treasury and thus secured a considerable circulation. But it has been strongly urged that even those who read these successive articles desire to have them as a consecutive whole, not only for their own reconsideration, but as much or more for the help of thousands unacquainted with that periodical, and more willing to examine the exposition of Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-3 in a convenient collective form. The writer has only to express his growing sense of the perfectness and inestimable value of this scripture as of all others. He prays that the work, notwithstanding all shortcomings may be by grace helpful to all who (in a day of effort to resuscitate lifeless forms and of reactionary free-thinking, both of which schools of unbelief struggle for the mastery) would keep Christ's word and not deny His name. In faith and love they would also seek earnestly the winning of souls from the imminent and increasing peril of going back, from the true light of Christ in all its fulness, to the darkness of a world now rapidly becoming apostate; which, by wisdom even more dangerously than by folly, knew not God, and rejects as foolishness the wisdom of God in Christ and Him crucified.

London, March, 1894.

06.04. GENESIS 1: 1

Genesis 1:1 The Old Testament is a revelation from God in view of His earthly people Israel. It was of the highest moment that they should have the truth authoritatively announced that the one true God is the Creator of all. Darkness covered the earth, gross darkness the peoples. Israel, in Egypt, as later in the land of Canaan, was ever prone to forget this truth and lapse into the delusions of men. Fallen like others, they wished to be like all nations in their polity and their religion. Hence the importance of their knowing and acknowledging creation in any real sense; it points to and is bound up with the unity of the living God. A difficulty has been raised, why, if God created, it was not always. The answer is as simple as complete. Eternal creation, eternal matter, is untrue and impossible, a contradiction for thought, even if we had not the word of God to enlighten us. God of all power, if He pleases, creates: there only is the truth of it. To say that the self-existing One cannot create is to deny that He is the Absolute, that He is God. But that God, omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign and good, can crease when He chooses, flows necessarily from what He is. If He could not display Himself in this way, or even more gloriously, He is not God. If the display of creation or of anything else were always, He would not be free and absolute. His sovereignty is part of Himself (Ephesians 1:11). Suppose any display necessary, and you destroy in thought His divine essence and will. Necessity is at bottom an atheistic device to get rid of the true God. Creation, therefore, was perfectly free to God, but not necessary; it was when and as He pleased. And He was pleased to create. Creation exists. Nor can there be conceived a more simple, sublime, and comprehensive opening of divine revelation than these few words: — "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It is the absolute commencement of creation, and in the most pointed contradistinction from the seven days. The question is solely about the true unforced meaning of the written word of God, not about Rabbis any more than the chosen people. What does the inspired record contain and convey? It may be of interest to examine what Philo or Josephus understood, as well as how the Seventy translated it into Greek long before Christ. One may weigh either the Massorah or the Jerusalem Targum, and the comments of Jarchi, Aben Ezra, both Kimchis, Levi Ben Gerson, Saadias Haggaon, Abarbanel, or any other learned Jew, to say nothing of others. But without them there is God’s word given to be read and understood, though not without the faith of Christ, not without His guidance Who communicated it originally. It was not given to teach science, and it is wholly independent of philosophy for its intelligence. Geologists, Botanists, Zoologists, Astronomers, Historians, etc., have His brief and clear account before them. Man’s comprehension of what is communicated may be affected by the amount of his knowledge, and far more by his faith. This, however, is a question of our understanding and expounding it; but we must never forget that God is the Author, and the writers only the instruments. The Bible is a moral book, only the more striking in its unity because it consists of so many compositions of so many writers, stretching over a thousand years of the most varied circumstances if we limit ourselves to the O.T. The reader may be right or wrong at any given time in the idea he attaches to what we call "firmament," "plant," or the like; but the truth remains unadulterated and unchanging in scripture, for us to read again and again, and to learn more perfectly. This indeed constitutes its characteristic and permanent value. It is not only a full

and sure source of instruction in consonance with its moral and yet higher designs to God's glory; it is the sole standard of the truth, by which we are bound to test all else which professes to be divine. Let us ever search afresh in faith, and ever grow into a deepening knowledge of the revealed mind of God. The philosophies, as well as the religions, of antiquity were wholly ignorant of creation. Of God, of the "beginning," they knew nothing. Dreams of evolution were the earliest folly, and, among the Ionic school, Anaximander and Anaximenes followed Thales, each differing, all blind. Anaxagoras let in with mere matter the idea of mind, but no creator. It is useless to name others; even Plato and Aristotle, rivals too, had no real light. They, more or less openly, all held eternal matter at bottom; and though the philosophers boasted, as they still do, of their knowledge and logic, they failed to see that they could not prove it, or even that it is to mere mind unthinkable. To the believer it is the simple yet deep truth, that a beginning was given to everything that exists; if God says it, he perceives that nothing else can be true. For it is impossible to admit an effect without a cause; but reasoning can never rise at best beyond, There must be a First Cause; it can never say, There is. This God alone can and does affirm: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." God brought the whole ordered system into being. The form, nature, and aim, are not here explained: such a detail had no proper place here. That He created all is a primary and momentous truth. But there is not a word in scripture to warrant the strange and hasty assumption that the universe was brought into being in the six days of Genesis 1:3-31, so often referred to throughout the Bible. Construe the six days as men will, it is out of the power of any on just principles of interpretation to deny that the first day begins with light, and that Genesis 1:1-2 are marked off in their nature, as well as by their expression, from the work of the six days. Nothing indeed but prepossession can account for the mistake, which the record itself corrects. "In the beginning" has its own proper significance, and is in no way connected with "the days," save as the revealed start of divine creation, and in due time (however probably immense the interval) leading to that measure of time only when the constitution of things was made for Adam, for the race. The antiquity of the earth may be as great as the shifting schemes of the most enthusiastic geologist ever conceived: there is absolutely neither here nor in any other part of scripture the least intimation that opposes vast ages before man was created, or that affirms man to be nearly contemporary with the original creation. It is ignorance of scripture to say that Moses assigns an epoch to the earth's first formation, such as fathers or commentators (not without worthier remarks) have imagined and made current in Christendom. The philosophers who have spent their time in the study of geology and kindred sciences will act wisely in reading with unwonted care the beginning of Genesis 1:1-31. They will thence learn that they have been precipitate in the conclusion that the inspired writing is at all committed to the blunders of its interpreters, theological or scientific. However vast the periods they claim, even for the strata nearest the surface, scripture is the sole record which, while revealing God as the Creator of all things, leaves room for all that has been wrought before the Adamic earth. "The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary: there is no searching of his understanding" (Isaiah 40:28). While geology waits for its Newton, subjection to scripture meanwhile would be untold gain to its devotees as to all other men.

There was an epoch then in the infinite course of eternity when God created the universe. This is here stated with the utmost accuracy — " in the beginning." It is in view of man, primarily indeed of Israel, that the Pentateuch was written, the Second man and Last Adam being the, as yet, hidden object (and the church one with Him) of God's counsels. Angels are not spoken of, though we

know from another ancient book of inspiration that they expressed their joy when earth's foundations were made to sink (Job 38:6-7). "In the beginning," accordingly, is severed from all the measures of time with which a man's existence is conversant. How admirably previous duration, unlimited by ordinary notation, suits the immense changes of which geology takes cognizance, needs no further remark here.

"God" in our version answers to the Hebrew Elohim, which, however, has the peculiarity of a plural substantive with a singular verb. Christianity alone in its own time cleared up the enigma, which still remains impenetrably dark to the Jews, as well to other men, who know not in Christ "the true Light."

Again, there ought to be no doubt among scholars that the word "created" in our tongue corresponds better than any other with the original. With us, as with Israel, the word admits of application to signal callings into existence out of actual material, as in Genesis 1:21; Genesis 1:27, but only with a special ground and emphasis. And never is it used of any other maker than God. But if the aim were to speak of creation in the ultimate, highest, and strictest sense, the Hebrews, like ourselves, had no other word so appropriated. Here the context is decisive. "God created the heavens and the earth," where nothing of the kind existed previously. They were created out of nothing as men speak, perhaps loosely, but not unintelligibly. The heathen might worship, as all did, the heavens, or even the earth; the Jew sinned against the written word if he was ensnared of Satan after their dark example. The first words of God's law told him that those were but creatures; Israel was to hear if others were deaf, and bound to own, serve, and worship the one God, the Creator. The chosen people was quite as ready as any other to worship the creature, as all their history to the Babylonish captivity proves; but there can be no doubt what the Bible supposed, declared, and claimed from its very first verse — God created the universe.

Further, it is not matter created, crude matter to be afterwards fashioned into the shapely and beautiful universe of the heavens and the earth. It is not chaos first, as Greek and Latin poets feigned, in accordance with heathen tradition never wholly right, though often mixing up what was not wrong. It is not a nebula, as La Place conceived, a mere modification of the same rationalism, however refined it be. Lord Rosse, by his observations with his great reflector, has fairly disposed of this unbelieving hypothesis. For he has proved that many nebulae, considered even by the Herschels irresolvable objects, actually consist of agglomerations of stars. Surely, therefore, the only just presumption is that all nebulae are nothing more, and only need more powerful means to make manifest their true nature. God only has given the truth plainly, briefly, and after a way transparently divine in its simple and unparalleled majesty. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." How is it, ye savants, that this great truth is found here only in its pristine splendour, towering above your Hesiods and Homers, your Ovids and Virgils, your Egyptian and Mexican remains, your Hindu and Chinese fables? How is it that to our day the Lyell and Darwin, to say nothing of profaner men, are stumbling in the dark over a morass of hypotheses (to say the least), unproved and dubious? It is because God's word is not believed as He wrote it; and this, because men like not the true God Who judges sin and saves only through His Son the Lord Jesus. So of old when men knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. It is the more guilty now, because, the Son of God being come and having accomplished redemption, the darkness quite passes away and the true light already shines. Alas! anything is welcome but a living God,

and least of all the whole universe created by and through and for His Son Who is before all things and by Whom all things consist. "By faith we understand (or apprehend) that the worlds have been framed by God’s word, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (Hebrews 11:3).

06.05. GENESIS 1: 2

Genesis 1:2

Creation then in Genesis 1:1 is the great primary fact of revelation. It is all the stronger, because the Hebrew text ("In [the] beginning") has no article, any more than the Greek in John 1:1. It is therefore undefined. Compare Proverbs 8:23. From the context, however, it is plain that the fourth Gospel rises beyond the first book of Moses; for it goes back to divine and eternal being (not ■γ■νετο, but ■ν), and not merely divine origination, which in fact appears later (in John 1:3), and this in a form all-embracing and exclusive. "All things were made (came into being) through him, and without him was not anything made which hath been made."

"In the beginning" is not a known fixed point of time, but indefinite according to the subject-matter; it here intimates that "Of old," or "In former duration" (expressly undefined), God created the universe. Undoubtedly there is no disclosure of the immense aeons of which geologists speak so freely; but the language of Genesis 1:1 leaves the door open for all that can be proved by research, or even for the longest demand of the most extravagant Uniformitarian. But the words do affirm a "beginning" of the universe, and by God's word, as in both O. and N.T. (see Psalms 33:6-9, and Hebrews 11:3). This was everything to accomplish His design, and His design was to create the heavens and the earth, where there had been nothing. Whatever Atheists or Pantheists feign, science at length confesses there was a "beginning;" so that "created" stands here in its proper and fullest sense, as the context requires.

"There was a beginning, says geology, to man; and farther back, to mammals, to birds, and to reptiles, to fishes, and all the lower animals, and to plants; a beginning to life: a beginning, it says also, to mountain ranges and valleys, to lands and seas, to rocks. Hence science takes another step back, and admits or claims a beginning to the earth, a beginning to all planets and suns, and a beginning to the universe. Science and the record in Genesis are thus one. This is not reconciliation; it is accordance." So writes Dr. J. D. Dana, the eminent American Professor, in the "O. and N. Test. Student" of July, 1890. The record declares that God created not a "formless earth," but "the heavens" (where at no time do we hear of disorder) "and the earth." But even as to "the earth," which was to be a scene of change, we are expressly told by an authority no leas inspired, and therefore of equal authority with Moses, that such disorder was not the original state. "For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens; he is God; that formed the earth and made it; he established it, he created it not a waste, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18). The Revised V. is purposely cited, as confessedly the more correct reflection of the prophet. Here is therefore the surest warrant to separate Genesis 1:2 from Genesis 1:1 (save, of course, that it is a subsequent fact), severed, it may be, by a succession of geologic ages, and characterised by a catastrophe, at least as far as regards the earth. Indeed it would be strange to hear of an ordered heavens along with a "formless earth" as the firstfruits of God's creative activity. But we are not told of any such anomaly. The universe, fresh from God's will and power, consisted of "the heavens and the earth." Silence is kept as to its condition then, and up to the cataclysm of

Genesis 1:2; and most suitably, unless God's purpose in the Bible were altogether different from that moral end which pervades it from first to last. What had the history of those preliminary physical changes to do with His people and their relations to Himself? But it ought not to be doubted that each state which God made was a system perfect for its aim. Yet it was not formless materials only, but heaven and earth.

"And the earth was (or became) waste* and empty, and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God [was] brooding upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

* "Without form" is hardly exact, for all matter must have form, but desolate or disordered it may be made subsequently. "To become" (not "be") is the force of the verb in some twenty places in this chapter. The well-known and flexible particle of connection in the Hebrew text introduces the verse. Its meaning, usually and simply copulative, is often modified, as almost all words in every language must be, by contextual considerations. Hence the learned Dathe, in 1781, renders it here "posthaec vero," expressly to distinguish the state of things in Genesis 1:2 from that referred to in Genesis 1:1, and sends us to such instances as Numbers 5:23, Deuteronomy 1:19. Now there is no doubt that the Hebrew conjunction admits of an interval as often as facts demand it; but there is no need of departing from its primary force, "and" (though our conjunction is not so pliant); or it may readily have a somewhat adversative force as we see in the LXX. The true determination lies in what follows. For the usage of the past verb when thus employed is to express a state subsequent to, and not connected with, what goes before, but previous to what follows. Hebrew idiom does not use that verb simply as a copula, as may be seen twice in this verse, and almost everywhere; or it puts the verb before the noun. The right conclusion therefore is that Moses was led to indicate the desolation into which the earth was thrown at some epoch not made known, after creation, but prior to the "days" in which it was made the habitation for Adam and the race. With this agrees the occurrence of the remarkable phraseology "waste and empty" elsewhere. There are but two other occasions: — Isaiah 34:11, "the line of confusion [or waste] and the stones of emptiness;" and Jeremiah 4:23, "I beheld the earth; and lo! it was waste and emptiness." In both it is a desolation indicted, not the primary condition. So it is in Genesis 1:2. It is the more to be noted, as in Jeremiah it is said of the heavens at this time, that "they had no light." Thus is confirmed, by each of the other occurrences, the conviction that our text describes a state which befell the earth, possibly long after its original creation as in the verse before. It is to this interval that the successive ages of geology apply. Here are undeniable facts, full of interest, and implying creation made existent and extinguished. One's confidence in the hypotheses reared on all this may be otiose or enthusiastic; but the exact meaning of Moses' words in this verse leaves all the room that could be desired for those vast processes which may be gathered from the observed phenomena of the earth's crust. There is nothing in scripture to exclude a succession of creatures rising to higher organization from lower as the rule, with a striking exception here and there, from the Eozoon in the Laurentian rocks of Canada to the Mammalia, which most nearly resemble those of the earth as it is. But all the brilliant ingenuity of Sir C. Lyell, with others of kindred view, fails to explain or evade the proofs of change at this very period, immense as it may have been, incomparably vaster and more rapid than since man appeared. No doubt the deluge had the deepest moral significance, and is thus unique, because the human race, save those in the ark, was then swept away. But physically its traces were superficial compared with those far more ancient convulsions so apparent except to those who worship Time and Uniformitarianism.

"We simply assert" (says the cautious Sir R. I. Murchison), "on the countless evidences of fracture, dislocation, metamorphism, and inversion of the strata, and also on that of vast and clean-swept denudations, that these agencies were from time to time infinitely more energetic than in existing nature - in other words, that the metamorphisms and oscillations of the terrestrial crust, including the uprise of sea-bottoms, and the sweeping out of debris, were paroxysmal in comparison with the movements of our own era We further maintain that no amount of time (of which no true geologist was ever parsimonious when recording the history of bygone accumulations of sediment, or of the different races of animals they contain) will enable us to account for the signs of many great breaks and convulsions which are visible in every mountain chain, and which the miner encounters in all underground workings. . . . The case therefore stands thus. The shelly and pebbly terraces which exist are signs of sudden elevations at different periods; whilst the theory of modern gradual elevation and depression is still wanting in any valid proof that such operations have taken place except within very limited areas. Much longer and more persistent observations must indeed be made before any definite conclusion can be reached respecting the rate of gradual elevation or depression which has been going on in the last thousand years, though we may confidently assert that such changes in the relations of land to water in the historical period have been infinitesimally small when compared with the many antecedent geological operations" (Siluria, 490-1, fifth ed., 1872). On the one hand the facts point to changes in earth and sea, and these repeatedly varied too with fresh water; to rocks igneous and stratified and metamorphosed, and (during the periods thus implied, and with a corresponding environment of temperature and constitution) to organised natures, vegetable and animal, from lower orders to high, short of man and those animals which accompany his appearance on the earth; to whole groups of these organisms in vast abundance coming to an end, and others quite distinct succeeding and extinguished in their turn. Would it not be a harsh supposition that God, in the fossils of the rocks, made a mere appearance of what once lived? that these petrified creatures never had animate existence here below? On the other hand, the principle and the fact of creation we see not more plainly revealed in Genesis 1:1 than of disruption in Genesis 1:2; and both before the actual preparation of the earth for Adam as described in the six days. As the creation, announced in a few words of noble simplicity, is the first and most momentous of God's productive interventions, so the catastrophe here briefly described seems to be the last and greatest disturbance of the globe, the twenty-seventh or sub-Apennine stage, if we accept the elaborate conclusions of M. Alcide D'Orbigny (Paleontologie Stratigr., Tome ii. 800 - 824), a most competent naturalist. Then the Alps and Chilian Andes received their actual elevation, of itself (though with many other changes of enormous consequence) quite sufficient to account for universal confusion, with destruction of life on the earth, the deep supervening everywhere, and utter darkness pervading all. However vast, this state may have been for but a little while. The animals embedded ages before in the rocks had eyes; presumably therefore light then prevailed. Indeed some of the earliest organic remains had vision with the most striking adaptation to their circumstances, as the Trilobites of the Silurian and other beds, with their compound structure, each eye in one computed to have 6,000 facets (Owen's Pal. 48, 49, 2nd ed.). The language of Genesis 1:2 is perfectly consistent with this, when compared with Genesis 1:1, and in fact naturally supposes the darkness to be the effect of the disorder. To confound the Genesis 1:1-2 is as contrary to the only sound interpretation of the record, as it is to the facts which science undertakes to arrange and expound. Nor can anything be more certain than the manner in which scripture steers clear of all error and

consistently with all that is irrefragably ascertained, whilst never quitting its own spiritual ground to occupy the reader with physics. To reduce these gigantic operations of the geologic ages, in destruction and reconstruction with new living genera and species, to the slow course of nature and providence in the Adamic earth, the fashionable craze of the modern school, is "making a world after a pattern of our own," quite as really as uninformed prejudice used to do. It was absurd to deny that the petrifactions of the strata were once real animals and plants, and to attribute them to a plastic force in the earth, or to the influence of the heavens: but so it is to overlook the evidence of extremely violent and rapid convulsions before man was made, closing one geological period and inaugurating another with its flora and fauna successively suited to each in the wisdom and power and goodness of God.

Neither Genesis 1:1 nor Genesis 1:2 is a summary of the Adamic earth, which only begins to be got ready from Genesis 1:3. There are, accordingly, three states with the most marked distinction: original creation of the universe; the earth passed into a state of waste and emptiness; and the renovation of the earth, etc., for man its new inhabitant and ruler. Science is dumb, because wholly ignorant, how each of these three events, stupendous even the least of them, came to pass; it can only speak, often hesitatingly, about the effects of each, and, with least boldness, about creation in the genuine sense, though some, I cheerfully acknowledge, with outspoken and ungrudging cordiality. How different and surpassing is the language of scripture, which has revealed all these things to babes, if they are hid from or dubious to the wise and the prudent! From the Bible they are, or ought to be, known on infallible authority, and this in the first written words God gave to man, when Rome and Athens had not emerged from barbarism if they existed as such at all. Our Genesis 1:2 then brings to view a confused state of the earth, as different from the order of primary creation as from the earth of Adam and his sons, in regard to which state the Spirit of God is said to have been "brooding upon the face of the waters." By His Spirit the heavens are beautified; and as to creatures generally it is written, "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the ground." Here it was to be for man’s earth. This is the link of transition. All was to be made by God’s word. Wisdom rejoices in the "habitable" earth, and has delights with the sons of men. A mighty wind might rage over the abyss. The Spirit of God, not the wind, could be said with propriety to "brood." What new wonders were at hand!

06.06. GENESIS 1: 3-5

Genesis 1:3-5

Now comes the first point of direct contact with the habitable earth and its surrounding. We have had (Genesis 1:1) the creation of the heavens and the earth, apart from date or definite time; we have had also (Genesis 1:2) a superinduced condition of confusion, but the Spirit of God brooding upon the face of the waters. Neither one nor other has to do with man's earth, though earth there had been under both those differing and successive conditions. Nor can it be doubtful to him who knows God, that even the latter had its worthy and wise aim as well as more obviously the former. But neither phase is connected immediately with man, though all was done to God's glory with man in prospect, and above all the Second man, as we can add unhesitatingly from the N.T. It is to the facts stated in these preliminary verses that geological observations and inferences would mainly refer. As the words are few and general, there is ample space for research. The believer knows beforehand that theoretic conclusions wherever sound must fall in with the sentence of inspiration. The work of the six days has little if anything to do with geology. There may be a measure of analogy between the work of the third, fifth, and sixth days, and certain of the alleged antecedent geologic periods which the Bible passes over silently as being outside its range and object, while room is left for them all in Genesis 1:1-2. But the effort to force the days, whether those three or al] six, into a scriptural authority for the successive ages of geology is mere illusion. If it be a harmless use of geology, it is anything but reverence for God's word or intelligence in it. That there are discrepancies between the record and any facts certainly ascertained, neither geology proves, nor any of the sciences still more sure and mature. But he who is assured of revealed truth can afford to hear all that experts assert, even when based on a partial induction of facts, as is not seldom the case. If, outside scripture, there is nothing a believer has to contend for; if scripture speaks, he believes, no matter what science declares to the contrary; if science confirms it, so much the better for science. Assuredly God's word needs no imprimatur from men.

If one appealed to any branch of physical science as to the first day, he could get no clear answer. Geology has confessedly, nothing to say. What can astronomy or optics do more? Science, as such, leaves out God — science, not scientific men, many of the greatest of whom have been true-hearted believers. Science, in itself, knows nothing of the power that originated, ignores the First Cause, and shirks ordinarily even the final causes which might summon heed to a first cause. It occupies itself with an established order in the world and with secondary causes, especially those at work before men's eyes or probably deducible from experience. The peril for the unwary is obvious, and real, and notorious. It would be much less if science were honest enough to acknowledge its ignorance of what is beyond its sphere. But often its interpreter says "There is not," where logically and morally he is entitled only to say, "I know not." This is not merely audacity without warrant, but sin of the worst kind. The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God." It is exactly where science finds itself confessedly stopped by a blind wall that scripture proclaims the truth from God. As He knows, so He revealed as far as in His wisdom and goodness He saw fit. "And God said, Light be: and light was. lend God saw the light that [it was] good; and God divided

between the light and the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, one (or, first) day" (Genesis 1:3-5).

Now who but an inspired man would have so written? The more you depreciate Israel as an unlettered, if not rude and barbarous, people, the greater the wonder. Did Egypt so teach, or Babylon? did Greece or Rome? How came Moses to declare that the fact was as he writes? I do not speak of the sublime which Longinus so justly extolled, but of that which human experience never could have suggested; for living man, had he judged from universally known phenomena, had ever regarded the sun as the great source of light; so that if the writing had been his, he must naturally have spoken first of that bright orb. In other words, the work of the fourth day would more reasonably have taken the place of the first. That the philosophers taught for ages afterwards. But not so the truth; and, whatever the seeming and striking difficulty, especially then, Moses was given to write the truth. As the apostle says some fifteen centuries after, God spoke light to shine out of darkness (2 Corinthians 4:6). The darkness is not said to have been everywhere, but "on the face of the deep," and now that an earth for the human race was in question, there it was that God commanded light to shine. That it was "created" now is not said; that it had existed before during the geologic ages for varying phases of the earth and for a very long while for the vegetable and animal kingdoms, there is abundant reason to conclude. But this is science, not faith, though the scriptural account is the sole cosmogony that leaves room for it. But what is affirmed is that (after utter confusion reigned over the earth and darkness on the face of the deep, yet the Spirit of God brooding on the face of the waters) God interposed and said, Light be; and light was. As far as the Adamic earth was concerned, the light-bearers were not yet set in their functions as now: this was the fourth-day work. The word was, "Light be;" and light was: language evidently consistent with that view of light which prevails in comparatively modern times against Sir I. Newton’s theory of emanation from the sun. If the phenomena of light are allowed in general to be a result of molecular action, and dependent on fundamental qualities of matter as it is now constituted, so that it was not the creation of an element admitting of independent existence, as science now owns, is it not remarkable that the words of Moses avoid all error, without forestalling scientific discovery, and express nothing but truth in the clearest terms? At the word of God appeared instant activity of light, just before that time inert. But science easily over-shoots itself in hasty generalisation. For it contradicts the inspired record when it ventures to say that the fiat as to light on the first day must have preceded the existence of water and of earth, of solid or liquid or gaseous compounds of every kind. Granted that light is manifested in the making of such compounds. But Genesis 1:1-2 give the surest testimony that "earth" and "water" did exist, not indeed before light, but before that particular fiat of God which called it into action for the earth that now is, after the confusion and darkness which had just before prevailed.

It is all a mistake then, and distinctly at issue with the context, to assume that there was no "light" in the state of things intimated by Genesis 1:1. And it is allowed that even the "earth" and "water" of Genesis 1:2, whatever the then state of ruin and darkness, could not have been without "light" previously, if but to form them. Verse 3 was not therefore really the signal of creation begun, but of God acting afresh and in detail, ages after the universe was created, with its systems, and within them its suns, planets, and satellites. On the plain face of the record, after the mighty work of the universe, and after a disruption that befell the earth with most marked consequences, God puts forth His word to form the Adamic earth with its due accompaniments.

Hence we may notice anticipatively that on the fourth day not a hint is given of creating the physical masses of the sun, moon, and stars. It is there and then no more than setting them in their declared and existing relations to the earth. Their creation belongs in time to Genesis 1:1; but of the rest more fully in its place. That on the first day light dissipated the then prevailing darkness is true, and of deep interest as God's first word and act for the earth of man. But this says nothing about the original creation of the heavens and earth. Nor is it quite comprehensible why "the waters" of Genesis 1:2 should not be literal waters, because utter darkness veiled the deep or abyss. These are the inconsistencies that necessarily flow from the false start which confounds "in the beginning" of Genesis 1:1 with the "first day" of Genesis 1:3-5 and those that follow; as this again involves the extraordinary error of taking Genesis 1:2 to be the original state of the earth in Genesis 1:1, when it immediately came into being from God. The hypothesis that the earth when creation began was a frigid chaos or frozen globe, strange as it seems, is hard to escape for such as deny successive states since creation according to God's will, or, which goes along with it, for such as affirm the "creation" of the sun, etc., only on the fourth day. The argument is that, if so, it must have been almost cloudless, well lighted, and well warmed — in short, an impossibility. But reasoning from things as they are to a condition so contrasted in the record itself with what God formed for man subsequently is fallacious. It is simply a question of what God tells us of the abnormal state supposed in Genesis 1:2. Not a word implies frigidity, save that darkness was on the face of the deep, which may rather have been the effect of heat acting on the earth and the waters, a transient state after previous order, and before it was made for Adam.* The record in no way identifies the disorder with the earth when its creation was effected in Genesis 1:1; but it assuredly distinguishes the dark dislocation of Genesis 1:2 from the work of the fourth day when the earth and sun and stars became one in system as in their present constitution. In short, the dilemma appears to be quite baseless. The true scope of Genesis 1:2 is not at all that the original creation was a scene of darkness, even for the earth, but that when the earth, not the heavens, was thrown into confusion ever so long after, darkness was on the face of the deep. Light is not an element calling for annihilation (which would indeed be absurd), but a state flowing from molecular activity which God could and did here arrest, as far as "the deep" was concerned. It acted all the same elsewhere; as it had over the earth till then during the formation of what some geologists call the Tertiary, Secondary, and Primary beds, to say nothing of what preceded: details for men to discover and interpret as they can scientifically, but as foreign to scripture as the detailed wonders and movements of the starry heavens.

* Without any pretension to dogmatise on science, it is curious to find how these oracles disagree. For the nebular theory in La Place's "Exposition du Système du Monde," the boast of modern science so vaunted against Genesis 1:1-31, supposes all the planets existing before the sun reached its actual condition. And Arago, Humboldt, etc., contend that the sun not only was but is a dark globe, with a luminous atmosphere simply. Dr. A M'Caul also refers to the discoveries of Kirchhoff in proof that the earth was before the sun and had a light of its own. Why attach weight to any speculation about the solar system before the preparation of the earth for the race? The proper domain of science lies not in what has long passed away, but in the accurate classification of facts grouped under general laws that stand the test.

Hence "creation" of light, first or second, in the universe is only the slip of philosophers. Scripture is more accurate than its most modern expounder, even when striving to show the accordance of

science with the Bible. In the gloom that overhung the earth thrown into desolation God caused light to act, as the characteristic act of the "first day" of the week, the brief cycle that was to close with man its new master and representative of God here below. "And God saw the light that [it was] good; and God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." It presents to us God pondering and speaking in gracious consideration of the race He was about to create thereon, with a mind dwelling on realities about to open out for man far more solemn than the light or the darkness, day or night, literally. Yet the light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart, says the Preacher (Proverbs 15:30), and truly is sweet (Ecclesiastes 11:7), as God pronounced it "good." "And it was evening, and it was morning, first (or, one) day." Only we must guard against taking the previous darkness as the evening. It would appear rather that light shone; and then its waning into night, and brightening into day, constituted the first day. That the earth would revolve on its axis, before the light- bearing of the sun afterwards, and so have the phenomena of evening and morning, is easy to apprehend. The fact is certain; the "how" was no difficulty to Him Who spoke and it was done. Our place is to honour Him in believing His word, without which faith nothing is as it should be. Another first day was to behold a better light; there, too, still more conspicuously, if that True Light shone when all was profounder darkness, He too had been before the darkness.

If the preceding exposition be just, the day of the first week is plainly one of twenty-four hours. No one can fairly deny that scripture, like other speech, uses "day" where required in a general or figurative sense, which may cover a period of considerable length. But this need never produce embarrassment to a careful reader: as ever, the context gives the clue. In Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 2:1-25 we have the word variously applied according to the exigency of the case; in none ought it to be doubtful. Here "the evening" and "the morning" should exclude just question. It can only mean, thus defined, a day of twenty-four hours. Before (not "there was a sun," but before) the sun was set to rule the day (of twelve hours) as now makes no difference as to the length meant. The same phrase is carefully used before and after. Nor would any prolonged sense have been tolerated for this carefully specified week but for the error which muddles "the beginning" with the first and following days, makes the heavens and the earth at first to be a chaos, and in so doing effaces in fact the creation of both the one and the other. For where is either really "created" on such a scheme? This will appear still more convincingly when we come to close quarters with the six days viewed as embracing the immense ages of geology. It might not be so glaring when taken in a dreamy poetic way as a vision in the hands of the late Hugh Miller. But when the simple dignity of the true father of history is vindicated for the matchless prose of Moses, the effort to make the days, or some of them, answer to the ages of geologic formation in building up the crust of the globe proves itself in so much more glaring and violent failure. Take the first day as our first test: are we told to imagine such a notion as that the outshining of the light in dispelling the immediately antecedent darkness occupied an age? And if not for the first day, or the second, or the fourth, how harshly inconsistent to claim it for the third, fifth, and sixth? Especially as the seventh day, or sabbath, should honestly put to the rout any such application. In every case the figurative sense is here irrelevant and unsuitable. We shall see in due time from scripture that the stretching out of the sabbath into an aeon is altogether unfounded. An ingenious attempt is made in "Sermons in Stones" to show that the brooding of the spirit in Genesis 1:2 means the creation of submarine animals (Zoophytes and Bivalve Molluscs without visual organs) before light; then of a higher class furnished with organs of sight after light on the second day; and lastly of Vertebrate Fishes on the

third. All this is error opposed by the record, which admits of animated nature for man’s world only after the fourth day. For this confusion we are indebted to the misinterpreting "days" here into ages. The truth is, according to the record, that the Spirit’s brooding upon the face of the waters is quite general and admits of no such precision, as it was also before the first day. And if the days were simply days of the week in which Adam was created, geology can neither affirm nor contradict. Its main office is to investigate the evidence of the successive ages of the earth’s crust before the human race. It is freely granted that the language employed by inspiration is that of phenomena; but this does not warrant the hypothesis of the medium of a vision. It was a divine communication to and by Moses; but how given we know not and should not speculate, lest we err. A vision in fact might have shown him the submarine animals, being beyond natural conditions; but the hypothesis is invented to foist in the creation of animals, not seen or specified in the record.

Further, we must banish the notion that the black pall of an unbroken night was the original condition - a heathen, not a biblical, idea. It was not so before ver. 2, which describes a subsequent and transient state. The first verse supposes an order of the universe; the second, an interruption of no small moment for man; then in ver. 3 the week begins in which the earth was prepared for his abode who was made before that week ended. The geologic ages had passed before the human measures of time commenced. If the record had been duly read, the Inquisition might have avoided its unwise and suicidal judgment of Gal. Galiléi; for the first day, compared with the fourth, favours the Copernican theory as decidedly as it condemns the old philosophy of Ptolemy. It exactly agrees with the revolution of the earth round its axis for evening and morning, independently of the function of the sun soon after formed. Only we must take note that the profound darkness dispelled was neither primeval nor universal, as many men of science have hastily assumed. It had nothing to do with the heavens, any more than had the disorder which befell the earth, after ever so long lapse of time.

06.07. GENESIS 1: 6-8

Genesis 1:6-8

Happily the second day's work admits of a notice so much the more brief because of the rather full remarks on the preceding verses. In these were discussed the original creation "in the beginning"; then the superinduced state of confusion; lastly the work of the "first day" that commences the week of the earth's preparation for the human race. The evident immediateness of the first day's work applies throughout the other days. Whatever grounds there may be for scientific men to infer processes occupying vast tracts of time before the "days," there is no real reason to doubt, but plain and positive scripture to believe, that the work done on the several six days was not of long ages, but really within the compass of the literal evening and morning. How unnatural to suppose an age for light to act on the first day! And why suppose otherwise on the second day or any other? A long succession of ages may be true after "the beginning" and before "the days," which taken in their natural import have a striking moral harmony with man, the last work of God's creation-week. In this way there is no contest between long periods of progressive character and successive acts of marked brevity. On the one hand, the record is so written as to leave ample space for the researches of scientific discovery over the evidence of successive states of the earth before man existed; on the other, details under the shape of divine fiats in the six days appear only when man is about to be created. There is thus truth in both views. The mistake is in setting them in opposition. One can understand, if God so willed it, immense times of physical action, with secondary causes in operation before man, not without the evidence of convulsion far beyond volcanoes or the deluge within the human period, which great geologists at home and abroad admit, contrary to the recent speculations of others. But there are those that feel the gracious (not belittling) condescension of God in deigning to work for six days and rest on the seventh, only when getting ready that earth where was, not only the first man to come under His moral government, but the Second man later to glorify God to the uttermost, give to such as believe eternal life, and prove the worthlessness of all who reject His grace and repent not of their sins; the true and intelligible and blessed reason why this earth, so insignificant in bulk when compared with the vast universe of God, has a position in His favour so transcending all other planets, suns, or systems, put together. If man was much to differentiate the earth, Christ is infinitely more: and He has yet to show what the earth and man on it are to be under His glorious kingdom, to say nothing of the heavens according to His grace and the counsels of God. But a little must be said of the second day. These are the terms: — "And God said, Let an expanse be in the midst of the waters, and dividing be between waters and waters. And God made the expanse, and divided between the waters that [are] under the expanse and the waters that [are] above the expanse: and it was so. And God called the expanse Heavens. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day" (Genesis 1:6-8).

There is no more ground for conceiving this to be the first creation of atmospheric heavens than we saw in the case of light on the first day. The absolute language of creating is avoided in both cases. As there had been light in the long ages of geology when not only plants but animals

marine and terrestrial abounded, suited to the systems that contained them, so an atmosphere was requisite and, no doubt, was furnished of God with every provision for their sustenance till a new condition succeeded by God's power. That which now girdles the earth may not have been altogether alike for the varying states of vegetable and animated being long before man existed, to say nothing of the azoic periods before either. They had each an environment adapted by the Creator of all. The remains in successive strata indicate an admirable suitability for the then flora and fauna, quite different from the Adamic earth and its inhabitants, in some of which it may be doubted if man could have lived, as he did not in fact. The great difficulty for geologists, especially of late from the growth of infidel thought, is to allow such a revolution as Genesis 1:2 intimates. Even Christians among them are afraid to be governed by its express declarations, and shrink from the ignorant mockery of those who boldly deny there ever was a breach of continuity between the original creation and the days of man on the earth. But on the one hand it is certain that the record maintains such a breach to have occurred (and this not on a circumscribed part of the earth, which some like Dr. Pye Smith have imagined in a spirit of compromise,* but for the earth wholly) as to require an entire re-ordering of it as well as man's creation, God's vicegerent then first made to have dominion over all here below. On the other hand, it is intolerable to assume that no convulsions could have effected such changes as the non-action of light, or the destruction of atmospheric conditions, etc. This is mere and narrow unbelief. "Ye do err, knowing not the scriptures nor the power of God." How little science can explain even of existing life and of its surroundings! How unbecoming of geology to dogmatise! Is it not one of the youngest of sciences, with much to explore and adequately weigh, and very far from the precision of chemistry for instance, though there too how much is unknown?

* Sir J. W. Dawson, in his "Archaia," rejects the views represented by both Chalmers and Smith, but seems himself obscure as to the bearing of Genesis 1:2. He is a believer; where, and when, does he then assign the occurrence of that unparalleled disorder? That scripture places it before the Adamic earth, and after the original creation, is an undeniable fact. It is easy to object if influenced by some loud-voiced materialists; but what is the truth? What saith the scripture? Geology has much to learn. Our call is to believe God, not to humour the lispings of an infant science. That immense and violent upturning was itself absolutely requisite for man about to be created subsequently. At a fit moment the question of the mammoth, etc., co-existing with the musk-ox and other surviving quadrupeds may be briefly examined. But on the face of the argument it is plain that there is no more difficulty in conceiving God might renew some previously existing plants and animals for Adam's earth, than in causing light again to act on the first day and the atmosphere on the second. The work of the first day, perfectly if not exclusively consistent with an instantaneous exertion of the divine will, illustrates and confirms that of the second day. Scripture places the description of Genesis 1:2 at some time before these days commence. Light acted first after that disorder, and according to the earth's revolution on its axis. Next day the atmospheric heavens, so essential to light, sound, and electricity, to vegetation and animal life, were called (or rather recalled) to their functions after that confusion which destroyed them in ways beyond our ken.

Assuredly this renewal was no matter of a long age of gradual process, but a work to which God assigned a separate day, though to Him abstractedly a moment had sufficed. As it is, man's attention was impressively drawn to His considerate and almighty goodness Who then separated

"waters from waters," which otherwise had filled space above the earth with continual vapour and without that due mixture of gases which constitutes the air essential to all life on the globe. To its machinery with other causes by divine constitution we owe the formation of clouds and the fall of rain as well as evaporation; to its refractive and reflective powers, that modification of light which adds incalculably to beauty no less than to the utility of the creation: a black sky had otherwise cast its constant pall over the earth. Even had dry land by another fiat been disengaged from the waters, without this encompassing elastic fluid, vapours would not have been absorbed nor have fallen as now; dew had ceased; fountains and rivers if formed had wasted away; water had enormously prevailed; and if dry land had survived anywhere, it must have been a dry arid waste with neither animal life nor a blade of grass. But enough; these are not the pages in which to seek the physical methods of creative beneficence.

It is now generally known, as it had long been laid down by the most competent Hebraists before modern science existed, that "expanse" is the real force of the original word, instead of "firmament" which came to us through the Latin Vulgate, as it seems due to the Greek Septuagint. Possibly these Jewish translators in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus may have succumbed here as elsewhere to Gentile ideas or at least phrases. And a great Rabbinical scholar, a Christian teacher, has given his opinion that the Greek version employs the word (στερ■ωμα) in the sense of an ethereal or fine subtle orb, and in no way of a solid permanent vault as rationalists love to assume, basing it on etymology and figurative usage. The aim is obvious, the wish father to the thought. Excluding God from the written word as from creation, deifying nature and exalting fallen man (more especially of the nineteenth century), they gladly depreciate the text by citing "windows" and "doors," "pillars" and "foundations" as if meant literally. Now the usage of the word even in the chapter itself (Genesis 1:15, Genesis 1:17, Genesis 1:20, Genesis 1:28) sufficiently proves that the word conveys the idea of the open transparent sky, whatever may have been the misunderstanding of the reader at any given time.

Hence it may be noted that the Authorised and Revised English Versions give "the air" as the equivalent of "the heavens" in Genesis 1:28 as elsewhere. It is really the expanse, including the atmospheric heavens in the lower part of which birds fly. A solid vault is out of the question. The true derivation seems rather from a word expressing elevation, like the source of our own "heaven"; but even if drawn from the idea of beating or hammering out, who knows not that words may and do acquire a force etherealised according to the object designated, wholly above their material origin? The scriptures really present the heavens as spread out, and the earth hung upon nothing, nowhere giving countenance to the grossness of the stars fastened like brass nails on a metallic vault. Sceptical ill-will likes that it should seem so; but it is unworthy slander. Even Dathe who was free enough gives "spatium extensum," as did learned Jews generally long before and since.

"The waters above" consist of that enormous supply of vapour which fills the clouds and falls as rain, hail, or snow. "The waters below" covered the earth as yet, but were shortly to form seas, when the dry land appeared next day. It is ignorance therefore to say, in the face of a crowd of scriptures, that the waters above imply a permanent solid vault like a shower bath. The Hebrews could see the movements of many heavenly bodies instead of regarding all as fixtures. But even had they been as dull as rationalism is invidious, our concern is with the divine record, the accuracy of which irritates hostile minds who would hail the least flaw with satisfaction. Scripture

abides; science changes and corrects itself from age to age. As to figures, "bottles" are used no less than "pillars," and a "tent" or "curtain" as well as "windows" and "doors." They are all strikingly expressive. Only the stupid or malicious could take any of them in the letter, to dishonour the scriptures.

06.08. GENESIS 1: 9-13

Genesis 1:9-13 This publication is scarcely the suited place, nor does the writer pretend, to draw out adequately the wondrous and beneficent functions of the separated waters or seas and of the dry land, any more than of the light and of the atmospheric heavens, on which a little has been said. But a few words here may confirm, what was remarked as to the first and the second days, that the record speaks with immediate propriety of God's constituting the earth for the human race. By no means does it intimate particulars of the long periods before man when those successive changes are observable, which laid down vast stores for his future use and fitted the earth's progressively built-up crust, the rich field of geological research. One can admire the wisdom which did not encumber the Bible with the details of natural science. Rocks crystalline and stratified are before men's eyes, who can reason on the fossils they embalm. Scripture alone avoids the universal heathen idea of a primitive chaos, and the philosophic error of an eternal universe or even eternal matter. Scripture, on the contrary, has carefully enunciated God's creation at an undefined moment, "in the beginning," not merely of crude materials, but of the heavens and the earth, without a word about their denizens. It also makes known the fact that the earth was subjected to revolution so complete that before the Adamic state of things divine power was needed to cause light to act in a diurnal way, as well as to order the atmosphere, and from a previous and universal overspread of waters the appearance of dry land, on which God began the plants or vegetable kingdom for man.

Thus the work of these days wholly leaves out, because chronologically it follows, the vast operations both of slow construction and of destruction which give special interest to the geologist. Original creation and subsequent dislocation (which swept away in due time whole species and genera of organised beings, followed by fresh and different ones, and this repeatedly) it asserts distinctly; and both, before the days which prepared all for his life and probation under divine government who was created ere the week closed. The document itself furnishes the warrant to the believer for taking the first verse indefinitely before the six days, and also for affirming the state, possibly final state, of confusion into which the earth passed before it became the world as it now is.

There may indeed be some analogy between the days that concern the earth of the human race and those immense ages of ripening advance which preceded, so as to furnish a slight ground of resemblance on which not a few men of ingenuity and the best intentions have reared their various schemes for accommodating the days to the geological ages. Yet this hypothesis, even when guarded by the most cautious and competent aid of science, does not square with scripture. It is unjustifiable in every point of view to confound the disturbed state of Genesis 1:2 with the creation of the earth described in Genesis 1:1, which it really follows, disorder after order; is it not even absurd to identify Genesis 1:3 with either? Each follows consecutively; and the long tracts of time, if filled up in a way that scripture does not essay, would come in after Genesis 1:1, and before Genesis 1:3, which wholly differing from what precedes, introduces a new condition where alone details are given to mark God's direct dealings with man.

Hence the days, from Genesis 1:3 and onward, are wholly misapplied to the geologic ages. Where for this scheme have we the formation of the plutonic, volcanic, and metamorphic rocks? Where the upheaval of the mountain ranges and the tracing of the river systems? Where the succession of organic remains, marine and terrestrial, vegetable and animal, new ones following those extinguished, and mutually distinct, from the Laurentian beds to the Post-Pleiocene or Quaternary? The six days set forth the peculiar constitution God was pleased to establish for the existing or human world. What the geologic periods embrace is successive remodellings of the earth where sea and land have changed place, mountains were raised and valleys scooped, perhaps again and again, not only a sweeping away of old organic creation, but an introduction of new plants and animals, each assemblage confessed even by Lyell to admirably fit the new states of the globe; with singular varieties all pointing by harmony of parts and beauty of contrivance to One Divine Maker. These days only begin, when God, having closed the long undefined periods of progressive character, with repeated extermination of their correspondingly changed flora and fauna, forms, within the brief span of human labour, that system, inorganic and organic of which man is the appointed head, but enriched by all He had slowly deposited and rendered available to man's industry and profit by that dislocation which laid bare treasures so remote and manifold, so interesting and important. The divine operations of the third day call for more detail than that which was last before us. They form a double class, as does the work of the sixth day.

"And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together to one place, and let the dry [land] appear. And it was so. And God called the dry [land] Earth, and the gathering together of the waters he called Seas. And God saw that [it was] good. And God said, Let the earth sprout grass, herb producing seed, fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind, the seed of which [is] in them, on the earth. And it was so. And the earth sprouted grass, herb producing seed after its kind, and trees yielding fruit, the seed of which [is] in them after their kind. And God saw that [it was] good. And there was evening, and there was morning, a third day" (Genesis 1:9-13).

We have seen light (involving heat) caused to act for the Adamic earth, and that atmosphere which sustains an enormous body of waters above those that lie below: both of them results of essential importance for what was coming, and of course adapted by divine power and wisdom to the system in which the human race were to exist. It was needless and foreign for a divine revelation to explain how these and other works of God were effected. The important truth for His people, and for every soul of man, to know, is that He is both the Originator and the Maker of all. No student of geology doubts mechanical any more than chemical agency on the largest scale in forming the crust of the earth. Heat, water, and air have played their part under His hand in change, and waste, and progressive formation. But it is only the petty and pedantic unbelief of some who cry up such gradual secondary causes as are now seen, shutting out the evidence (which geology itself affords to candid minds) of repeated and enormous transformations, and all but entire revolution of organic life, in both extinction and new creation, with the corresponding change of the globe and its temperature which this implies, and each of these not for a brief space but for ages before the earth of man. Facts plainly enough point to these conclusions for those who occupy themselves with the natural antiquities of the earth. Nor can it be doubted that each successive tale inscribed on the fossiliferous rocky tablets of the earth shows on the whole distinct progress, in no way as mere development of the antecedent condition, but the fresh fruit of creative acts, even if some species seem renewed for the subsequent phase, and all with evident

relation to the earth as it was to be for Adam, and as it will be when the Second man takes it with the universe itself for His inheritance. Unity of plan marks all from first to last. But all this bygone succession of physical change is only left room for in the revealed word which dwells on man and Immanuel. Geological detail in scripture would have been as much out of place as any other science; but how can the room left for all, in what is said, be accounted for save as implying the knowledge of all by Him Who revealed His word? An original creation of the heavens and the earth without details, and unlimited even by myriads of years, "in the beginning," perfectly falls in with every ascertained fact; and a violent dislocation of the earth, of the highest importance for the race in its disarrangements, altogether different from and more thorough than any diluvial or merely superficial action, is also made known; followed by that "making" of heaven and earth which is historically described in Genesis 1:3-31 and referred to solemnly in Exodus 20:11.

It is pertinent to observe that the effort to interpret the days of the immense ages before man, separates Adam from his historic time as well as the creation placed under him as its head. For according to the long periods of geology what would the fossil-plants of the third day have to do with those that grew on the Adamic earth? And so with the animals on the fifth day, if not the sixth. On the contrary "the six days" were plainly meant to convey a realm of creation immediately connected with Adam, the various forms of organic nature being subjected and given to him. The sixth day is thus made geologic as well as historical. Surely this does not hang together; any more than our having a detailed account of fossil creation, and none at all of that which seems the express object of the several days — the creation in view of the incoming race. Now in a divine revelation it is easy to understand passing over all particulars of the fossilised stages of the earth; but inconceivable that there should be no account of heaven and earth and sea and all that in them is, in connected relation to Adam and his sons: especially as out of the thousands of organised species in the Secondary rocks, not a single species, says Professor Hitchcock, corresponds with any now living; and even out of the thousands in the Tertiary, but few seem identical with living species The natural and only reasonable conclusion is that, whatever the analogy with the divine action in past geologic time, the "days" speak solely of what God made in immediate view of Adam; not of fossils, animal or vegetable, but of the organic beings placed under Adam and his race, with their surroundings and suited system. To suppose both is nothing but confusion.

Returning to the day before us we see a fresh operation of God for man’s world, the waters under the heavens collected to one place, and dry land consequently appearing. Not that such a separation had not existed before; but that the disruption, wise and benevolent for the earth of man, made it a necessary act now, as indeed in a general way everything had to be made afresh for Adam: a disruption wholly distinct from the vague and useless chaos which the heathen imagined.

Now God formed the earth and seas in the condition which substantially abides to our days. How momentous an act for the race needs few words to explain. That both earth and seas had existed previously no geologist disputes, any more than the various phases of both according to the plants and animals that prevailed from one geologic age to another. Doubtless also, save for dead-level Uniformitarians if there be such, the epochs of change that destroyed the older creatures and beheld new races modified greatly both the earth and the seas; for each period had its own proper system, with changes in inorganic matter, water, atmosphere, temperature, and the like,

corresponding to each new set of organised beings. The earth then was to have that form for the most part which God saw best fitted for His new purpose: vast continents and vaster oceans, islands large and small, lakes salt and fresh, swamps and torrents, mountains and rivers, plains greater or less, and valleys not merely effected by gradual erosion but often by deep and sudden dislocation. It is common knowledge what a part is played in the physical economy of the world by the "seas," (which in Hebrew idiom embrace all large collections of waters, oceans, seas, lakes, and even rivers,) as well as by the varied disposition of the land, high or low. To this the disarrangement of Genesis 1:2 had directly contributed; as now in the separation of earth and seas after having been commingled for a time. Rapid extraordinary operations wrought, and of course slow and existing causes, in bringing about what was then done for man; but here we learn that God laid down the great landmarks which abide to this day. Genesis 2:11-14 is enough to indicate that men attribute to the deluge or other changes more than can be proved.

God gave names too, as to the objects of His work on the previous days. But there is a second part of His work to notice: vegetable nature for the earth that now is, that kingdom which mediates between minerals and animals. God commanded the earth to bring forth grass (or, sprout sprouts*), herb seeding seed, fruit trees yielding fruit after its kind, which has its seed in itself after its kind, as is said here most emphatically. This is the true origin of vegetable species for the Adamic earth. And as God pronounced good the dry land and the seas, so now the beautiful clothing of the dry land, and the abundant supplies for man and beast — at first indeed the exclusive food even for man.

* There may be a question whether the peculiar phrase here does not mean the general term "sprouts" expanded into herbs and fruit-trees, as some learned men have inferred. The substantive has a wider meaning than "grass" which it frequently signifies; but I am not aware of any other application so extensive as to justify that generic forge. If meant here it is peculiar.

How does the protracted scheme of the days as geologic periods agree with the vegetable kingdom on the third day, and the animal even in its lowest forms on the fifth? Is it really so with the evidence of fossils? The coal measures indicate vast brackens, ferns, etc.; but what of fruit-trees bearing fruit according to each several kind? Certainly it would seem that Zoophytes are as early as any vegetable remains, long before the Carboniferous era so paraded as the fulfilment of the third day, after a great abundance of marine animals far beyond plants, of which direct evidence appears in the rocks. If the days are taken simply in reference to Adam, there is no difficulty on any such score, as the provision for the world that now is appeared with no interval such as geology can appreciate.

How absurd, taking the third day before us as our example, for us to identify it with the Carboniferous age, or that which laid the basis for the coal measures! What real analogy between coal-plants, chiefly Acrogens, and the grass, herb, tree, so manifestly for the food of animals, above all of man? What with herb in general producing seed, and what with fruit-trees yielding fruit after their kind, the seed of which is in them? This is evidently not provision for coal, but for the food and refreshment of man and cattle, of bird and beast. The analogy vanishes when looked into. For geologic eras it is a failure; for man’s world it is the simple and suited truth. It was plant-life for Adam’s earth. The Carboniferous era, when people have been content with facts, was the age, botanically of Cryptogams and Gymnosperms, in the animal realm of the earlier reptiles,

Batrachian or Amphibian. Now does this truly correspond with the third day? With the formation of seas and the emergence of dry land? And this clothed with verdure, herbs, and fruit-trees, each propagating after its kind? Beyond just doubt Moses means herbs, not of the Carboniferous age, but solely of the earth for man, animal life for it not existing till the fifth day. Compare Genesis 1:29. But the geologic evidence points to plants and animals even in Archaean time; for as the simplest animal forms (Rhizopods) have been detected in the Laurentian rocks, so the enormous quantity of graphite, being carbon, implies abundant vegetation, sea-weeds, and lichens. The metamorphism of the rocks may account for the rare indications of organic life even in the Huronian beds which were subsequent; but according to what is generally averred, Paleozoic time goes farther back than even the Silurian age, Upper and Lower, the era of fucoids on the one hand and of marine invertebrate animals on the other (Protozoans, Radiates, Molluscs, and Articulates). Then comes the Devonian, or age of fishes (chiefly Selachian and Ganoid), and some insects, in addition to previous invertebrates; and, besides sea-weeds, Calamites, Conifers, Ferns, and Lycopods. Surely long ages with organic life, not only vegetable but animal, before the Carboniferous period, as all geologists accept, disprove beyond controversy the effort to make out the third day therein fulfilled. Hence Principal Dawson (Arch. 168) is obliged to own that the coal flora (consisting mainly of Cryptogams allied to ferns and clubmosses, and of Gymnosperms allied to the pines and cycads) cannot coalesce with the higher orders of plants called into being in our Genesis 1:11-12. "For these reasons," says he, "we are shut up to the conclusion that this flora of the third day must have its place before the Paleozoic period of geology," i.e., when vegetation was incomparably lower than that of the coal measures! The true conclusion on the contrary is that the third day's work implies a flora for man and the creatures under him, long after the coal measures. By the way, Dawson remarks that "the sacred writer specifies three descriptions of plants as included in it": the first he will have to be not "grass," but the Cryptogamia, as fungi, mosses, lichens, ferns, etc.; then seed-bearing herbs, and fruit-bearing trees. The Cryptogams may well be doubted: if tenable, it might be pleaded even more fairly that the Phaenogams, endogenous and exogenous, follow. However, it would seem that no scientific classification is intended, but a general division which all could observe into grass, herbs, and fruit-trees, each species none the less expressly and permanently reproductive. In point of fact it is not till the Cretaceous period of Mesezoic time that we find the first traces of Angiosperms (Oak, Plane, Fig, etc.); so that the reference to an age before the Paleozoic time is still less reasonable than the hypothesis of the Carboniferous era.

Doubtless geologists would, if they could, make Genesis 1:11-12 subsequent to the great operations of the fourth day; for who can question the all-importance not of light only but of the sunbeam for herbage of all kinds, for fruit-bearing, and for timber? This is no difficulty for one who takes the days as "the evening and the morning"; but is it not insuperable for all who regard them as representing ages of untold duration? The Archaean rocks, we must bear in mind, are believed to be near five miles thick; the Silurian system considerably thicker, especially if we add the Devonian. Then come the Carboniferous and Permian formations of not far from four miles; and after the Triassic and Jurassic the Cretaceous, when it would seem that Angiosperms or Dicotyledons began to appear (Rose, Apple, Elm, etc.). In fact it was only just before the Tertiary or Cainozoic, if we include in it, as most do, the Nummulitic beds. Who can reckon the times of these formations?

There is another observation of importance to make. What scripture reveals of the third day's work points in no way to Archaean or Paleozoic times, but simply and naturally to the formation of the Adamic earth. Geology tells us that the continents while still beneath the waters began to take shape; then, as the seas deepened, that the first dry land appeared, low, barren, and lifeless; next that, under intestine and external action, the dry land expanded, strata formed, and mountains rose, each in its appointed place, till finally heights and continents reached their fullest development. Now the flora described by the inspired writer does not fit the geologic first appearance of dry land, when of the character above described, till the mountains rose ages afterwards and river-systems followed. To say the least, marked advance of state is involved in the flora described by Moses. How then identify it with the earliest geologic time when sea-weeds alone existed in the waters, along with lichens on the land, and even then the Eozoon Rhizopod?

Moses describes just such a vegetable kingdom in its main features as Adam had, and we have now. It was vegetation as he knew it; and God led him so to describe it, being the truth. Is there then contradiction between the more or less satisfactory conclusions of geology and unerring scripture? In no way. Distinguish the times, and clashing disappears. The third day speaks solely of the earth's last emergence from the waters by which it was submerged long ages after the original "outlining of the land and water determining the earth's general configuration." Dr. Dana on reconsideration should acknowledge that the idea of life expressed in the lowest plants and afterward, if not contemporaneously, in the lowest or systemless animals, the Protozoans, is doubly and hopelessly incongruous with the Mosaic record. Take it as of the Adamic week, and all is plain to the believer, if a few difficulties remain for the geologist. Why should any wonder, since it is confessed by the same competent authority that "a broken record the geological undoubtedly is, especially for terrestrial life" (Dana's "Manual of Geology," 601, third edition, 1875)? Not so with the Bible, which, being divine, is and most be true: plain for the wayfaring man, profound for the most informed and best cultured.

06.09. GENESIS 1: 14-19

Genesis 1:14-19 The evidence which the record furnishes of the third day is express. It is dry lands and seas in view of man: in no way the varying phases of either in the geologic ages, but solely the result, after the last disturbance when the waters prevailed everywhere. Indeed a good deal of unfounded hypothesis is now exploded (especially since the recent deep-sea soundings) as to the alternation of the ocean beds and the vast mountain ranges east or west. For though the strata and fossils, marine, lacustrine or fluviatile, and terrestrial, point to repeated submergence and emergence of considerable regions, the continents have abode from Archaean time, the Atlantic flowing on one side, the Pacific on another. During the ages that followed, allow all that can be proved of change by upheaval, oscillation, dislocation, and rock formation, fragmental, or crystalline, eruptive or stratified, by means organic, mechanical, or chemical, by atmosphere, water, fire or aught else, there were elements of life vegetable and animal brought into being in the waters and on the land, but successively extinguished, and new ones created with the changed state of the globe, each period having its appropriate species in the new environment. But none of these alternations, vast and important as they were physically, enters the scope of the six days. No geologist denies that the mountains, to take this one sample, were elevated substantially as they are, long before the human race; and on mountains depend the springs and rivers and even the due fall of rains, and striking equalisation of temperature between the extremes" climes, so necessary to man and beast and herb. Very much more indeed had been done by God in that immense preparation, not only in the partially hidden supplies (coal, marble, lime, precious stones, metals, etc.) for man’s use, but in enriching the soil and beautifying the surface of the earth in countless ways, working, as He still does, now for instance by sudden volcanic action, and again for example by the slow process of innumerable polyps, yea, and mysteriously by their combined action (though the one be organic and the other not) in the accomplishment of His creative designs, from a time when there was no life here below, till every organised form was there short of man. Now it is exclusively of the human era and its belongings that the six days speak; and none more clearly than the third day, when the vegetable kingdom began, but solely in reference to Adam and those subject to him. The application to geologic time is impossible as proved by the record itself, and the mutual contradictions of all who essay it. The evidence is no less plain and conclusive as to the fourth day, of which the more prudent advocates for the long-period days say little. But even here, though it be a question of the heavenly orbs, the record looks at them simply in view of man and this earth. "And God said, Let there be light-bearers in [the] expanse of the heavens to divide between the day and between the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for light-bearers in [the] expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light for ruling the day, and the lesser light for ruling the night (the stars also). And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide between the light and the darkness. And God saw that [it was] good. And there was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day" (Genesis 1:14-19).

It is a mistake to suppose that during the long ages of vegetable and animal life up to the highest forms, one excepted, there had not been the shining of sun, moon and stars, as well as sea and land and atmosphere, though not always quite the same as ours. If geology can trace the proofs of life, and its progress in a typical system, which reveals unity of plan as distinctly as deep and comprehensive wisdom, be it so; yet they enjoyed sunlight, heat, air, and water throughout. But here we have everything successively ordered for man, after those immense eras of change were closed, when the last disturbance needed God's interference for a new system. Light was caused to act. The atmosphere as it is followed, Next, the seas were gathered to their own place, and dry land appeared, and the vegetable realm; the work of mountain-making and valley- scooping, shaping as well as storing, having been already, and it may be in long successive ages, effected. In each case of these "days" the result seems instantaneous. "He spoke, and it was done." The work stated here is quite distinct. "The evening and the morning" are the expression of God's considerate goodness to man, responsible to learn of Him and to do His will on the earth, as Christ did perfectly.

It is assuredly not the creation of the sun, etc. This the inspired historian does not say, but only that God now constituted the heavenly luminaries, after the plants and before the animals for the Adamic earth. Light had shone otherwise since the first day of the great week. Now He set the light-bearers of the heavens to do their assigned work, but it is for the earth, and indeed for man. Their creation was implied in Genesis 1:1; for God did not create either empty; and what would heaven be without its host? And we saw that Genesis 1:2 implies that the earth even had not been so, though so it became with other marks of disorder. What then hindered the functions of sun and moon was now rectified. Light independently had been proved to be under God's control. On the fourth day He gave the luminaries of heaven their unhindered relation to divide the day from the night. Now we can readily understand the plants (and these were for the use of man and his congeners) caused to spring forth on the day before without the sunbeam; but assuredly not so of a geological age of grass, corn, and fruit. Yet we see the fitness of the due ordering of light and heat, as we have it, the next day, if the plants were to flourish, as well as for the animal life that begins after that according to His word. This is entirely confirmed if we inspect the context more closely. For where would be the sense of the light-bearers "for signs and for seasons, and for days and years," if it had been an age (thousands, myriads, millions of years) before Adam? If, on the contrary, God was not creating them, but, after that which had intercepted, only "setting" them to their ordained task in immediate view of man, all is clear and consistent. And to whom could this be of such interest as to Israel, the people of His choice, in whose history we have them acting as "signs" on critical occasions for His sovereign will? Without dwelling on His wonders in Egypt where light was in Israel's dwellings, darkness thick in all the rest of the land, or later at Sinai, we see what a sign it was to Israel when Joshua said in their sight, "Sun, stand still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon"; or in far other days when Jehovah spoke to sick Hezekiah, and gave him a sign in the shadow that went back ten steps on the dial of Ahaz. And what a sign again where all was lost, as far as man is concerned, in the Cross of Messiah when darkness for three hours covered all the land! A mere eclipse was then impossible. Nor will whole clusters of signs be wanting when He comes in power and glory on the clouds of heaven. For "seasons" is needed no comment: man alone on earth understands and appreciates these fit and recurring times. As the same Hebrew word means "the congregation" and "the solemn feast," as well as the season or appointed time at which they kept it, "seasons" may have a sacred aspect; but the more

ordinary sense seems confirmed by what follows. Very little astronomy is requisite to know how "days and years" are defined by them, but only for man. In the ages before him this were all irrelevant. In view of man, and Israel especially, it is as affecting as full of interest. The constant design is reiterated in "Let them be for light- bearers in the expanse of the heavens." It was their effect, not their structure, that is intimated. "And it was so."

Then we are told that "God made," not created, "the two great lights." The language is never varied without purpose. Rosenmüller the younger was an admirable Hebraist, and certainly free enough in his handling of scripture: yet he has no hesitation in his discussion of this question formally, but insists that the genuine force of the construction is not "fiant luminaria" (i.e., let lights be made), but "inserviant in expanso coelorum" (i.e., serve in the expanse of the heavens). He compares the singular with the plural of the Hebrew verb for being, and deduces the inference that the language can only express the determination of the luminaries to some fixed uses for the world, and not to their production. Further, it is solely relation to man on earth that demonstrates the strict phraseological propriety of "the two great lights." He Who created all and inspired Moses knew better than Newton or La Place the sizes of every orb in heaven; but for man's and for Israel's help on earth, to say nothing of every subject creature, what were all the rest, for light-giving by day and night, compared to the sun and moon?

This, again, as definitely excludes scientific preoccupation as it confirms the reference throughout. The stars only come in parenthetically. God made them too, if blind man deified them. But God gave sun and moon to rule over the day and over the night. They were His creatures and gifts for man's use dividing between the light and the darkness. "And God saw that [it was] good," not as if they were just created, but in the assigned work He gave to be done by them. "And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day." Here it cannot be fairly denied by any, that from the necessary effect of that day's work we have the ordinary vicissitude of night and day; and that a similar diurnal revolution followed for the fifth and sixth days, as for every day since, including the seventh. But this being so, surely consistency requires it for the three previous days. That light was supplied otherwise before the fourth day is no impediment. The daily course of the earth on its axis depends on gravitation, not on illumination, and would have gone on equally, had the sun been only and always opaque, or had its previous and its present action in light-bearing never existed. And here it may be noticed that those who contend for nothing but the same agencies at worn from the first as act now before our eyes, and who go so far as to swell the time into incalculable ages by embracing the fond hypothesis of evolution, so that 300,000,000 years span an inconsiderable period of geological imagination, have now to confront an unexpected and veritable coup de grace from Lord Kelvin. For he has proved that if the earth existed at all only 100,000,000 years ago, it must have been on scientific grounds a red-hot molten globe altogether incompatible with life, animal or vegetable. The geologists in their loose and one-sided way reasoned from the deposition of the enormously deep strata at the present rate of formation. But Lord Kelvin founded his far more rigorous calculations on the acknowledged facts of the earth's tidal retardation, as well as of its gradually cooling state. Hence the recent disposition among the less prejudiced men to re-arrange the order and time of formations by the probable contemporaneity of unlike strata. They essay thus to reduce their egregious demands by the supposition that the Cambrian, for instance, may coalesce chronologically with the Silurian, the former lacustrine, the latter marine; and similarly the Permian with the Jurassic, etc. The groups

thus associated would each owe their different phenomena to their respective conditions of deposit. But those who accept the plain and simple interpretation of the record here offered will observe that, if all these shifting and precarious hypotheses are due to the dim twilight of the science, scripture is responsible for no error. What it asserts remains not only unshaken but indisputably true.

06.10. GENESIS 1: 20-23

Genesis 1:20-23

We are now come to a fresh activity of divine power, when the Holy Spirit employs again the term "created" (Genesis 1:21): not merely organisms, for these we have seen for the new vegetable kingdom on day third, but the first animal life for the Adamic world, to people the waters below and the heavens above. They are familiarly known to be the opposed but mutually dependent realms of life, far above inorganic nature, not only in growth and structural development, but in germs for the continuance of the species, both of which materialism vainly strives to explain or evade. For plants take in nourishment without an interior cavity or sac, and without digestive fluid, which animals have; and as plants imbibe carbon and give out oxygen, animals exhale carbon and use up oxygen: a provision worthy of divine wisdom for the well-being of the earth. Nor is this hard to appreciate; for plants are nourished by inorganic food which they convert into organic for animals, as they store up for their use condensed force from the sun's influence, starch, gluten, etc., for animal development with increasing power, and locomotive faculty, as well as a will. That their germs are chemically like, not only in elements but in their proportions, only brings out the total difference which results from their respective character of life. To originate animal life especially, even in its least form, justly calls for the term "created."

Thus God is not content with employing chemical powers to disintegrate and to reconstruct, as well us mechanical means chiefly by water, frost, and gravitation not only to enlarge the surface but to increase its fertility. The provision and satisfying of life is a part of His admirable plan even for a fallen world, the very volcano playing no small part, whatever its temporary terrors, in His beneficent hand. But all else would have been ineffectual without that great reality, of which science is as ignorant as those whom it most despises in its unbecoming scorn — that reality which would bring God face to face with every rational being, were men not hard in conscience and blinded by sin — that reality which meets every soul as the surest fact, yet the most inscrutable for any man; life, not vegetable only but animal, even if we regard it in its simplest range. It is life that directs the chemistry of plants or animals; it is life which produces the organisation appropriate according to its kind. Men may speak of protoplasm, and analyse into carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen; but these are the mere materials which God employs according to the limits He has imposed on species under the agency of life. When life is given, the activity of change goes on in the creature and its reproduction; when life is withdrawn there is a dissolution into the common stock for the fresh replenishment of the earth and its organized beings. Men may shrink from the Causa causans, and take refuge in "the laws of nature "; but after all they only succeed, if they do succeed, in retreating a step back from the Giver of]life, and the Sovereign sustainer of nature. But this retreat is to lose God altogether.

Genesis 1:1-31 knows nothing of a primordial gas, or the nebula hypothesis, of an original spore, or of a monad. That God created the universe is its proclamation, with details of Adam's world. A nisus formativus is here unheard, and left only to the unbelieving fanatics of science. Men would

have had ere this wings better than those of Daedalus if desires and efforts availed; nor would the peacock be left alone to expand his feathered glories in the golden light of the sun. The power and wisdom of God has made these countless creatures, plants or animals, out of a few elements; and these, as geology is compelled to own, repeatedly exterminated on the earth, and as often renewed, in systems ever perfectly suited to each, and as uniformly rising on the whole, when He was pleased to form a higher one, till He created man. Yea, at last He deigned to send His Son, the Eternal Word, to be made flesh, accomplish redemption, and unite to Himself those that are His for heavenly glory; as God will send Him again to bless Israel and all nations, to reign from heaven over a reconciled creation (for He is Heir of all things), but none the less to judge those who reject Him the Lord and Saviour to their own everlasting ruin, and manifestly so in "that day."

Further, as God created, so He perpetuates life within variations brought about by circumstances and especially by man's will, which, ceasing to act, leave plant or animal to revert to primitive type; when hybrids are forced, sterility also ensues. His will gave birth to the creatures that people the waters and the sky; and He abides to give constant effect to His will. We can see therefore the wisdom of His revelation of the day before us; for how many sages have dreamt and thought that the sun was the prolific source of life! The vegetable kingdom was formed when the sun was not yet set to do its all-important office for the earth of man. The humbler departments of the animal kingdom were called into being by God the day after. And how manifestly is contingency excluded no less than necessity? It is all the result of the Creator's will, Who upholds all that He has called into being. "For thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were and they were created" (Revelation 4:11). Dualism, pantheism, eternal matter, and evolution are mere but wicked delusions.

"And God said, Let the waters swarm a swarm of living creatures (lit. souls), and let birds fly above the earth on the face of the expanse of the heavens. And God created the great whales (or, sea monsters) and every living creature that moveth with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind. And God saw that [it was] good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day" (Genesis 1:20-23).

Here it is to be observed that "sea-monsters"* is given by many modern translators, the Revisers among them; so as to include the huge creatures of large rivers, crocodiles, etc., as well as marine. Indeed "whales" may be here in view specifically by the accompanying epithet "great"; seeing that they exceed in size all other animals, not only of the Adamic period, but even of previous ages when characterised by creatures of enormous magnitude as compared with analogous ones in man's day. If the whale be here singled out, the description is justified beyond dispute; and all the more because the fossils, as the rule, disclose specimens larger of their kind than any now living, whether Protozoans, Crustaceans, or the Vertebrates in general. Even the birds then must have been gigantic, if we accept their supposed footmarks on the new red sandstone of Connecticut. Their fossils were much later.

* This must not be confounded with a shorter word, which would seem to mean jackals. When a land monster is expressed by the word in the text, it means a dragon or serpent. In Genesis 1:20 then God spoke into being the creatures that people the waters and those that people the air in terms the most general. In Genesis 1:21 the result is stated with more precision, the great whales

or sea-monsters being distinguished from every living creature that moveth (whether Protozoans, Radiates, Molluscs, Articulates, or Vertebrates), with which the waters swarmed, after their kind. Again we hear of "every bird of wing" after its kind. A correct version here, as the reader may see, explodes the error which commentators, Jewish and Christian, have tried to explain; for the sense is not that the waters produced the birds, but that God made them fly in the open expanse of the heavens. Compare Genesis 2:19, which distinctly teaches that they were formed out of the ground no less than was the beast of the field. But the important fact announced is that for Adam's world the waters were now peopled and the air likewise. It is in no true sense the Reptilian age, though no doubt such reptiles as belonged to the waters then were included; for land reptiles are distinctively of the sixth day, as is certain from Genesis 1:24-26, Genesis 1:28. Hence the effort to make the fifth day's work correspond with the Mesozoic time of geology is an utter fallacy. During it, especially in the Cretaceous period, reptiles abounded, and many were enormous, Dinosaurs, Enaliosaurs, Ichthyosaurs, Mosasaurs, Plesiosaurs, or Pterosaurs; for in contrast with the fifth day the earth had then its species, as well as the sea and the air. Jurassic Britain had its vast and numerous varieties, as their absence is the more conspicuous since Adam's day. But all that the cautious Dr. Dana says as to birds is, that they probably began in the Triassic, especially as the inferior tribe of Marsupials were then found; that in the Jurassic some if not all birds exhibited the long vertebrated tail which with other peculiarities allied them to reptiles; but that in the Cretaceous they were numerous, and most of modern type, though some were of the older form. To suppose all that now people the waters and air existed then is as baseless as that these verses really describe the Reptilian age. For "the great" sea-monsters and many birds had yet to be.

Now it is on the face of the record that the entire population of the waters and of the air, as Adam knew both, is meant; not that extraordinary era of the Secondary formation, with its prodigious denizens of earth and sea and air. Indeed it is notorious geologically that Protozoans, Radiates, Molluscs, and Articulates had been even in the Lower Silurian; and in the Upper S. fishes appear if only Sharks and Ganoids. Again, who does not know that the Devonian is habitually designated the age of Fishes? How then can it be fairly alleged that the day-period interpretation holds good? If the third day means the Carboniferous age, though this has been proved erroneous, how comes the age of Fishes to be before it? The record declares that the fish and the fowl of Adam's world were only and alike on the fifth day. Is it not then extreme prejudice that has beguiled able and excellent persons into the thought that the record here speaks of the Reptilian age of geology? Hence one zealous advocate limits the swarm of the waters in Genesis 1:23 to "the reptile," and for the same reason changes "that moveth" into "that creepeth" in Genesis 1:21. The fact is that, though the former word often means "reptile," the context here proves it to be of far larger bearing, and in fact of cognate signification with the verb; so that to "swarm swarms" seems the literal force, and to "bring forth abundantly the moving" thing is a fair representation as in the A. and R. Versions. Again, in Genesis 1:21 the right way is to interpret the Hebrew as "moving" in water and "creeping" on land; so any one may see who can intelligently use a Hebrew Concordance. In both respects Sir J. W. Dawson is more correct than the late Mr. D. M'Causland: but he errs in making Genesis 1:21 say "great reptiles." It is either all the large creatures of the deep, or not improbably "the whales," for the reason already and appropriately implied in "the great." Perhaps we may fairly add that the Cetacea call for a special place as being the representative of Mammals, and hence are made to stand apart from the general population of the deep. Certainly they were of the waters. The effect too of the periodic construction of the days is here quite plainly as unfounded as

elsewhere. The fishes with which Adam and his race were familiar are thereby almost wholly left out of God’s account of His creation. All we are told, on that hypothesis, is of fossil Saurians, the most anomalous in appearance of all the creatures whose remains have come to view, of which Moses knew as little as the children of Israel, however interesting to geologists in our day. Is it credible that the Holy Spirit inspired the law-giver to speak of wonders only intelligible in the nineteenth century, and to pass by without a word what they needed to know of the teeming creatures in the watery world? As usual the hypothesis when considered seriously betrays its inherent unreality. The huge Saurians of the Mesozoic were not marine only, as they ought to be if the record spoke of them; many of them were Pterosaurs of the land, some species even winged, though we cannot count Pterodactyls as birds. The inspired text therefore conclusively puts them all out of consideration. Here we read solely of the creatures with which the waters swarmed, of every living creature that moved there, each according to its species, as well as of those justly designated "the great" among the multitudes of smaller sea-creatures; as also of "every winged bird" after its kind. The natural force and true aim of the revelation was to make known God’s work in that lower part of the animal kingdom, which is none the less the object of His care; and if one portion be of vast bulk, none the less was it His creature. The Adam family were called to own His hand and goodness in the whole. The evident intention was to impress, on all that heed the written word, that the fifth day’s work embraced the entire circle of aquatic animals as well as all bird life known to mankind; not at all to acquaint them with a bygone system of animated nature, which sustained at the close of the Cretaceous period one of the most complete exterminations of species confessed by geologists. In fact too it is only in the Quaternary that Teliost Fishes as well as Birds find their culmination; of all allusion to which, though nearly affecting man, the mis-interpretation entirely deprives us. If on the contrary the inspired writer speak of what concerns man practically, with this agrees the expressed blessing of God, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." It also derives impressive confirmation from Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:28, where dominion over the fish of the sea is given to man, no less than over birds of the air, and beast and cattle and all that creep on the earth. The only detail in fact is in setting forth the origin of what was actually put under man’s rule; which certainly does not apply to Paleozoic, or Mesozoic, or Tertiary times.

06.11. GENESIS 1: 24, 25

Genesis 1:24-25

It needs few words to prove that in the fifth day's work we vainly look for an exact correspondence with the Secondary or Mesozoic period. Fishes, even vertebrated fishes, had been created in abundance in Paleozoic time, and so before the Carboniferous age; also the earlier reptiles, chiefly Amphibian, preceded the age when they arrived at gigantic proportions and in every sphere, earth having its species no less than sea and air: Does this agree with the record which distinguishes its denizens, as of sea and air, from those that were only called into being on the following day, — which declares that every reptile of the earth belongs to the sixth, and not the fifth? Dinosaurs (including Megalosaurs, Iguanodons, Hylaeosaurs) being land reptiles stand opposed. Nor is this all. The absurdity of the periodic interpretation is that we are compelled to leave out the fishes proper, such as Adam knew and we, in order to make it fulfilled in Labyrinthodonts, Ichthyosaurs, Pterodactyls, &c. Birds had in no way their culmination, any more than Teliost Fishes, or even the higher insects, and Mammals, till the Quaternary of man. The Cetacea ("the great whales") again resist this expository violence. Expressly specified in the text as created on the fifth day, being water-creatures, they according to geology ought to belong to a far later epoch, as being of a high mammalian rank, and in no way to be classed with even the small marsupials, &c., of an earlier day, though this again is not according to the record. The truth we have seen, in accordance with that of the four previous days, is that the fifth day's work contemplates the entire population of sea and air for man's world, and nothing else. Here as in every other case the ages of geology prove untenable when fairly examined. Apply the six days to Adam's time, and the balance is restored.

Exactly analogous for the land's inhabitants is the work of the sixth day. Does it really correspond with Cainozoic time before man, or the Tertiary age? The scripture gives manifestly and solely the land- creatures made for man and on the same day as man; geology is obliged to confess that "all the Fishes, Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals of the Tertiary are extinct species" (Dana, 518). Take the equine tribe alone: there was the Orohippus of the Eocene, the Anchitherium of the Meiocene, and the Hipparion of the Pleiocene. All passed away before the Quaternary, when the Equus Caballus exists for man's service. Even those who contend most keenly for nothing but secondary causes operating all through cannot deny the general extermination of species that closed Mesozoic time any more than the great disturbances that wrought repeatedly and similarly in the Tertiary age. Indeed geologists of eminence, who had nothing to do with theology and alleged prejudice, are constrained to allow that the elevation of the great mountain chains of Europe and Asia, as well as of America, only attained its full height about the close of that period, as well as the larger part of igneous eruption, with the usual destruction of systems of life in being previous to God's introducing a new one adapted to the fresh conditions. "Chaos" is not a word any Christian need favour; but there was assuredly a fearful state of disorder that intervened, however brief the interval might have been. Do not geologists seem rash to deny that of which they are and must be ignorant? But all this was antecedent to the six days. The believer absolutely subject to God's

word can calmly accept every ascertained fact, assured that every work of God agrees with His word. But hypotheses are another thing and open to criticism, especially where we see plain symptoms of infidelity open or underlying.

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creature (lit. soul) after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the field after its kind. And it was so. And God made beast of the earth after its kind, and the cattle after its kind, and every creeping thing of the ground after its kind. And God saw that [it was] good" (Genesis 1:24-25). Where is the analogy even here with the age of Mammals, as the Tertiary has been well designated? If we add according to scripture the creation of man on that same day, the system is not only different but even in contrast. The simple truth intended is that we have in these verses the land population of all kinds for the period of the human race; as before we had that of the waters and of the air, after the vegetable provision, with the due establishment not of light only but of the heavenly phenomena. To introduce the herbivores, the reptiles, and the carnivores into the text is to strain after a scientific gloss, besides failing to represent the sense in some respects if not in all. Compare Deuteronomy 28:26 for the very first class. Reptiles again are too narrow, and so are the "carnivore," where "ferae" would express the truth more exactly. Nor is there real anachronism in giving "cattle" as the first named in Genesis 1:24, the domesticable if not yet domesticated animals, appropriate to the use of man. "Creeping thing" follows in its more literal application, whereas "moving" expressed more fully the action of the creatures that peopled the waters, so as to embrace not only serpents, etc., but insect life. "Animal of earth" designates the wild beast.

All of them are terms in constant usage where man lives and reigns; they do not distinctively define the age of Mammals where he was not, such as Anoplotheres, Chaeropotami, Dinotheres, Palaeotheres, Lophiodons, Xiphodons, etc. Pachyderms are no doubt included, but by no means so determined as to warrant a reference to the age in which they abounded. Indeed, at that time confessedly there was the almost total absence of the tribe of ruminants, which rose to prominence when man was made. The language of the text does not really call up the period "when the brute species existed in their greatest magnificence, and brutal ferocity had full play," but the day crowned by the creation of man where material force fell into the shade before higher powers. In man’s presence the greater birds and beasts that co-existed even become extinct; as notably the Moa of New Zealand, the Dodo of the Mauritius, and the Aepyornis of Madagascar; and again the Urus (or Bos primigenius) described in Caesar’s Comm. de Bello Gall. 6: 26, the great Irish Elk (or Megaceros), the Megatherium, the Mastodon, and the Mammoth. For the evidence points to their co-existence with man, some for but a little while, others till recent time. The tendency has been to push man’s age back on the assumption that only so could he have been coeval with them. But the facts are plain and sure enough, not only as to the first but even the last named also, that they existed with man for no inconsiderable time, and this if we accept the lowest reckoning of Biblical chronology. It seems the fashion just now to exaggerate as to time, placing the glacial season or seasons at an incredibly remote distance, and thus the gigantic creatures that perished then, and man also, judging from remains which indicate his hand. There is on the contrary strong and varied evidence, in the estimate of sober geologists, not committed to hypothesis, to show the recent date of the glacial period both in Europe and in America, and the sudden close of what is called "the drift," and the extinction of mammoths, etc. The second part of the sixth day’s work is too momentous to be touched here. This only may be remarked, how fitting

it is that for Adam’s time all animal and vegetable creation should arrive at the highest organisation, that the heavenly luminaries should do their regulative work in view of the race, that the seas and the land should be as a whole adequately settled, that the atmospheric conditions in supplies of water, vapour, dew, etc., should stand most favourably, with the bountiful and regular vicissitudes of night and day, for life more varied than ever before here below. Thus, if the geologic ages brought by divine power and wisdom a constantly rising state of the earth and of creatures suited to each new state, so, the six days connected with Adam and his world express rapidly succeeding divine fiats culminating in him, and in their combination of respective goodness characterising that period in which the human race was called not only into being, but into responsibility before God. Other ages might be distinctively azoic; or the system of life might be ushered in with sea-plants, then with marine life of low type, then with fishes when the Vertebrates were made. Next, when dry land was fitted, such plants grew as would flourish and adapt it for higher ones, and, again, for living creatures that live on herbage, as well as prey one on another. So in geologic ages we can talk of the age of Acrogens, of Invertebrates, of Fishes, of Reptiles, and of Mammals. But the human period is characteristically that of all, not in their utmost profusion or in their greatest physical magnitude, but as the rule in their highest forms and also together in their respective places under their appointed ruler, God’s vicegerent here below. For example, the Cereals attach to the human period, and depend pre-eminently on cultivation. Compare Isaiah 28:28-29. In each case we have God’s word, the immediate and manifest result, and its excellence in His sight declared. Thus if the six days gave an immediate relation to Adam, the immense ages antecedent were on a vast scale preparatory; and geology, as one of its ablest exponents owns, "leaves wholly unexplained the creation of matter, life, and spirit, and that spiritual element which pervades the whole history like a prophecy, becoming more and more clearly pronounced with the progressing ages, and having its culmination and fulfilment in man."

06.12. GENESIS 1: 26, 27.

Genesis 1:26-27. In day third we saw the distinct two-fold energy of the Creator; not only the waters gathered into seas, and the dry land appearing, and this seen to be good; but the earth caused by His word to put forth grass, herb seeding seed after its kind, and tree yielding fruit, with its seed in itself after its kind, upon the earth, and this seen to be good. On the sixth day there is also a double action, and the second still more strikingly distinguished, as human life is brought into being, the highest of earthly natures (not as before vegetable life, the lowest of organised creatures) here below. The spheres had been fitted in divine wisdom and in the unfolding ways of God for the living beings that were to clothe and fill them with beauty, food, and fruit, to be followed duly by higher beings to profit by all that His provident goodness had prepared, all endowed with powers of constant reproduction, whether vegetable or animal. In a general way God had in the vast ages of which geology takes cognisance so wrought in creative energy, but without man as the centre of systems which successively appeared and fell. The days we have seen have special reference to man, who, on the sixth, follows and crowns the highest animals set under his rule.

"And God said, Let us make men in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over fish of the sea, and over bird of the heavens, and over cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created Man* in his image, in God's image created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27).

* The race, Man, which as it has the article in Hebrew, is thus distinguished from the anarthrous noun, has a name derived from the ground out of which man was taken. The context confirms the plural sense also. Not only is man introduced with marked separateness from the previous creation of animals, even from those of the earth made on the same day, each "after its kind," and all seen as "good," but for the first time God enters into counsel with Himself for this great and absolutely new work. It is no longer "Let there be," or "Let the earth (or "the waters") bring forth," though man's body is in its due place expressly said to have been formed of the dust of the ground. Here the language rises into appropriate grandeur and solemnity, "Let us make men." Not a word about kinds of men, for there was but one; whatever people may have subsequently dreamt in their pride or in the selfish advantage they desired to take of their degraded fellows. Not a little was suffered afterwards in view of their hard-heartedness; but from the beginning it had not been so.

We shall hear yet more when we come to a fresh revelation, not of man's creation as its head simply, but of the moral relations in which he is shown to have been set; but here there is ample evidence of the dignity conferred on the race. "Let us make men in our image, after our likeness." Nothing is more opposed to the Bible than the anthropomorphism of Greek and Roman mythology, which degraded their deities to fallen males and females with like passions and lusts, and gave the sanction of religion to the basest immorality. And what philosophers of Greece or Rome ever ventured to claim so noble a prototype? Here Moses was inspired to give it as the holy declaration of the Creator. How far from the brute at length evolving man, a theory suggested by Satan to

brutalise the race! It is the simple yet wondrous truth: not God brought down to the human level, but men alone created after a divine pattern. A frequent question is raised as to the force of the terms and their precise shade of difference; for those are not to be heard who hide their ignorance under the assumption that both mean the same thing. The usage throughout the O. and N. Testaments seems to indicate that "image" represents, and "likeness" resembles. Thus the "image" of the world-power in Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented the succession of Gentile empires from first to last: likeness could not be the point. So it is "image" in the plain of Dura (Daniel 3:1-30), the proportions of which exclude a human figure, or the resemblance of any living creature. Whatever it might not be like, it definitely represented what the monarch commanded to be an object of worship. Again, in the N. T. the denarius our Lord asked for had on its face the image and superscription of Caesar. It might have been a faulty likeness, but was an indisputable image of the Roman imperator. It expressed his authority and represented his claim over the Jews because of their departure from God, ill as they liked to own either. So men (Genesis 1:26) are said to have been made in God's image, after His likeness, as the former is emphatically repeated in Genesis 1:27 not in His likeness, after His image. In God's image is the truth insisted on, though here also man is declared to be made after or according to His likeness. To man only was it given to represent God here below. Angels are never called to such a place. They excel in might. They fulfil God's word, they hearken unto the voice of His word. Yet no angel rules in His name, nor does he represent Him, as a centre of a system subjected to Him, and looking up to Him. But man was made to represent God in the midst of a lower creation dependent on him; though in order to be created in God's image, he was also made "after His likeness," without evil and upright. But even when through sin the likeness existed no more, he abode His image; however inadequate to represent God aright, he was still responsible to represent Him. Hence in Genesis 5:1-2, we read that God made man in His likeness; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day of their creation But it is significantly added in ver. 3 that Adam begat in his likeness. Seth resembled his father, now fallen, as well as represented him. Again, when after the deluge animals were given for the food of man, blood was interdicted, and the most jealous care of human life insisted on; for in the image of God made He man. To kill him was rebellion against God's image, though a man was now anything but like God. The N.T. fully sustains the same distinction far beyond Caesar's case already referred to. Thus the man in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 is distinctively called God's image and glory, as publicly representing Him; and Christ, the incarnate Son, is styled "image of the invisible God." His not being called "likeness" only confirms the truth. If so entitled, it would deny His deity. For He is God, instead of being only like God. Compare for the Christian now, Colossians 3:10, as well as 2 Corinthians 3:18; and for the glorious result, Romans 8:29, and 1 Corinthians 15:49. On the other hand we must not confound the state of Adam unfallen with the new man which "after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." This is descriptive of the new creation, not of the first Adam state where all was mere innocence, but the knowledge of good and evil along with the power by grace which abhors evil and clings to good that is implied in righteousness and holiness of the truth. This is not nature, but supernatural in believers, who become partakers of a divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Nevertheless, though Adam's state was far from that of which Christ is the risen Head, be evidently was made to have a portion, though a creature, above all the creation that surrounded him, "in God's image, after His likeness." How utterly false in presence of the Bible are the

speculations of evolution, an hypothesis logically at issue with those fixed laws of nature which the same philosophers cry up to the exclusion of God! For how reconcile invariable law with change of species? The truth is that real science depends upon the uniformity of results, and consists in discovering and classifying them. This does not hinder variation through circumstances, failing which the original type returns.

Again, as natural science is essentially based on the reality and continuance of species, so it can give no account of origins. If honest, it admits there must be a cause, and an adequate one; but here, as science, it is and must be wholly ignorant. God's word alone reveals the truth; and of all reveries, none viler than the ignorance which refuses to learn and dares to defy divine revelation, by conceiving man a developed ape, fish, seaweed, or aught else. The truth is that primordial causes are beyond science; which, instead of honestly owning its ignorance, pretends to deny the creation which scripture clearly reveals. God alone could create; and He declares that He has done so, and in what order. Science would gladly learn if not sceptical; for its province lies in investigating effects, and cannot reach up to primordial causes, which it is of all moment to know if revealed. But we can only know them from God's testimony, which is simple if we were.

How worthy of God and cheering to man, turning from these freaks of spurious science, to weigh once more His words! "Let us make men in our image after our likeness; and let them have dominion over fish of the sea and over bird of the heavens [the work of the day fifth] and over cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth [sixth day's work]. And God created Man in his image, in God's image created he him; male and female created he them." How emphatically, it will be noticed, Moses says that God created the race. It was enough to say so once of the vast universe in Genesis 1:1, when it was brought originally into being. Again, it was said to mark the introduction of animated nature, or at least of the aquatic Mammals, into the Adamic world in Genesis 1:21. But here of Man it is repeated again and again to enforce the attention of all who tremble at God's word. Not only was Man an unprecedented creature, but he had a place in God's mind altogether peculiar, not merely in time on earth, but for all eternity. For the unfolding of this we must await other declarations of God's mind. What is said here points to his creature place as originally set on earth by God. Even for the details of this we need chap. ii with its all-important supplement on the relations of Adam, where we have the key to the fact that Man was created "male and female," as we are told here: a single pair, and even so, formed as none other ever was, that Man might be differentiated from every creature in earth or heaven. For immense consequences turn on that fact, which God took care to make good, and only He in the nature of things could reveal.

What can science as such say on a matter so profoundly interesting, and morally so important? Is it logical to deny whatever it does not know? For science to confess ignorance is no doubt humiliating. But is it reverent to despise what God does know and has revealed? Alas! science knows nothing of faith any more than of piety or reverence. Were it content to assert only what it knows, and confess its ignorance of all beyond its own limits, it would do less mischief and speak more becomingly. Hewers of wood and drawers of water have a place useful if not dignified. Boasting is not seemly, save only in the Lord for all who trust Him.

06.13. GENESIS 1: 28

Genesis 1:28

Thus we have seen Man, the race, created in God's image. No doubt, that this should be true, it was and must be after God's likeness in the absence of all moral evil. But it was emphatically a creation in God's image. Man was the last and chief creature here below, the only one in the heavens or the earth, whom scripture designates as made in God's image: a wondrously high distinction, with the grave responsibility of representing Him aright before others, as His delegated ruler. Not even the highest angel possesses such a place before the universe. Angels serve on account of those that shall inherit salvation. But here, as we may easily stray, we need simple and entire subjection to the written word; and this we are most unlikely to have or court unless we have unwavering faith in it, as we certainly ought if we believe it inspired of God. This the apostle predicates, not merely of scripture generally as a known body of holy writings, but of everything coming under that designation, some of which had yet to be written. What can be conceived more precious and withal comprehensive, than π■σα γραφ■, "every scripture," in 2 Timothy 3:16? He declares it to be, not only useful for the various purposes of divine blessing to man, but before all God-inspired. All admit the human instruments; but if scripture be God-inspired in every part, it is certain that God is not a man that He should lie. And He has magnified His word above all His name.

Now there is a two-fold danger of misapprehending Adam's state and place while unfallen. We may exalt it beyond the truth by confounding it with what grace gives in Christ; or we may lower it by making it a question of such reasoning and conscience as man acquired by the fall. In his original state Adam stood in relationship with God in thankful use of all He gave, but liable to death on disobedience. It was in no way heaven held out if he obeyed, as will appear more fully by-and-by. The danger was of losing his first estate by transgression. But God imposed no such moral government as the law; nor had Adam the knowledge of good and evil till the fall. Man was not holy but innocent, and tested solely by prohibition as the simple test of obedience on God's part. It was a blessed creature's responsibility to obey with the threat of death on transgression. By the fall man got the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the intrinsic perception of right and wrong apart from prescription; or as Jehovah Elohim said (Genesis 3:22), "Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil!" In Adam fresh from God's hand the knowledge of good and evil would have been a defect, a moral inconsistency, and therefore an impossibility. Before the fall he had conscience solely in the sense of responsibility to obey, not at all in the way of accusing or else excusing self. Only when he sinned, and thus lost his innocence, did he gain the moral power of knowing good and evil of himself, hence forth his sad, painful, but most useful monitor. Before that, he was naturally enjoying divine goodness in its creative effects, under the test, not of resisting things intrinsically evil, but of a single restriction from God which made eating the forbidden fruit wrong: a state wholly different from ours. The fall changed for evil the whole ground of standing. Propitiation with life in Christ is a still deeper and higher change for good, even though in fact the old man yet abides and is altogether evil in itself. Christianity is no mere restoration of

man, but eternal life in Christ and eternal redemption. But unfallen Adam was in no way free in the sense of independence of God. He had indisputable title to act in what God subjected to him, but in nothing else. Obedience and dependence were due to God. All was good around him to enjoy: one thing was forbidden, and wrong because God forbade it, as a test of subjection to Himself. To act independently was to set self up as God, and thus in effect to set aside the true God. But this is sin, yea, apostasy from God, instead of walking as created in His image, after His likeness, the total opposite of Him, Who being God, became man, the image of the invisible God, come to do His will on earth where all else had failed. And here it is that science, however interesting in its sphere and useful also, comes in so mischievously. At best it ignores man as God created him, because it only knows man as he is, fallen from his original relationship with God in nature; as it equally ignores man born anew, born of water and of the Spirit, because the new birth is supernatural. This ignorance falsifies scientific ideas and reasonings. For instance, that knowledge of good and evil of which scripture speaks as a consequence of the fall, or a moral sense as men call it, is assumed to be the highest ethical constitution that has survived the fall! But there was this immense difference that, while of course God knew good and evil, it was as One unassailable by evil and supremely above it in His own nature: man only acquired it by sin and in subjection to the power of evil, and thus having it now in himself. The Lord Jesus on the contrary was the Word made flesh, born not innocent only but holy, rejecting evil always even when tempted as Adam and his sons never were, and at the end as a sacrifice dying for sins and to sin, that we who believe might live in Him risen, the life-giving Spirit, the Second man and Last Adam.

Now faith only, not science, recognises either the fall of the first man as affecting all mankind and the entire scene put under him, or the victory which God gives all who believe in Christ risen from the dead. Science accepts fallen man's estate as the only one, because it alone is the subject-matter of ordinary experience. It is therefore involved in difficulties necessarily insoluble, because it knows neither the sinless and happy state in which God originally set man, nor the righteous deliverance which the Lord Jesus gives to faith in God's love; still less the glory, power, and incorruption to be made good even for the dead, and for the mortal body, when He comes. Philosophy is either openly infidel or vainly essays to conciliate, with a God of power and goodness, a world of sin, suffering, misery, and death. Were creation truly believed and the fall honestly confessed, the main difficulty vanishes; absolutely so, when God's love is read in the gift of His Son incarnate and suffering for the sinful world which crucified Him in its unbelief of His glory and rejection of His grace and truth. But science as such starts with the world and man as they are, ignoring his moral disorder and the effect of this on what was subjected to him; and cannot rise above the facts it discovers in the perceived course of nature, but may deduce its laws so called. God only could reveal creation. His word alone tells how man fell from innocence in first estate into sin and death, and dragged down with him all the inferior creation.

Science in its very nature is incapable of rising to this knowledge infinitely more important as it is than all it can make known or even discover, however ample the field in nature may be. For revelation speaks of three broadly distinct conditions: creation unfallen; creation as it is in guilt, and misery, whatever the resources of sovereign grace held out to faith; creation as it will be when all things are made new. Science occupying itself solely with the intermediate is in great danger of denying in dishonest pride what it cannot know scientifically, to the destruction of all who trust it, instead of the God Who gave His Son in love to save sinners who repent and believe the gospel.

But to return, we read, "And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over fish of the sea and bird of the heavens, and over every living thing that creepeth on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Man, as Prof. Owen said, is the sole species of his genus, and the sole representative of his species. This is the second benediction of creation. The first was when God made the creatures that peopled the waters and the air of Adam's world, the earliest to enjoy animal life in that state of things. God has pleasure in blessing His creatures that have a life even of a lowly kind to appreciate the fruits of His goodness, and especially in view of their reproduction and multiplying within their sphere. Here, a second time, He blessed mankind, male and female, of whom alone it is said, though the detailed difference is reserved for a subsequent and more fitting occasion. In Genesis 1:22 we have only "saying," but here "God said to them, Be fruitful," etc. Man was the depository of God's revelation, as he ought to be His priest, and, as we have seen, His viceroy. This is more than the interpreter of nature, as one of our sages styled him. He had intercourse with God at once.

Language thus was in no way the slow invention of man's wit, but an immediate endowment of our first parents by God from creation. Here His word assures us of its reality from the first day of man's creation; and everything confirms in the chapters that follow. To imagine otherwise is to disbelieve the Bible and prefer one's own thoughts or the dreams of other men, as if we or they could know anything about the matter. He Who alone knows all has been pleased to tell us the truth through Moses. His word was valid for the unintelligent creation: how comforting for the human pair to hear Him say, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it! Even though man comes in as a creature with the rest, still he is introduced exceptionally as the crown of creation; and the higher creatures are pronounced good separately from man, who is blessed, male and female, in an address to them as at the head of all the rest.

Then comes the proclamation of the rule assigned them by God. Not only were they, like others, to multiply and fill the earth, they were to subdue, or bring it into subjection. Next He adds as before, "and have dominion over fish of the sea and over bird of the heavens, and over every living thing that creepeth on the earth." Thus from the outset was man, even when enumerated as a being fresh from God, set apart essentially. None other was to subdue the earth. He alone had the God-given capacity. He alone was called to have dominion. Development in the Darwinian sense is not only an illusion, but at plain issue with the word of God. A striking and practical proof of the reality of this dominion as far as every beast and every bird was given to Adam (Genesis 2:19) when Jehovah Elohim brought them to see what their lord would call them; and whatever he called each living soul (or, creature), that was its name: a fact full of interest otherwise on which some remark will fall in its season. Be was owned by God in that place of authority which entitled him to give each subject creature its name. For the present, however, we do not notice more than the singular evidence here afforded of real intelligible language communicated from the very first to the head of the race. Adam had it in perfection, like the other properties of full growth, the day he was created. Doubtless in this he differed from all that sprang from him in due time and to this day who have to learn. But here God created worthily of Himself; and even infidels own that there must have been primeval causes for all that exists, of which science can give no account. It can at most only say "must be," not "is." For its fixed laws are only gathered from the constant course of things; and such a course supposes the "things that appear" to have gone on long enough for men to observe the order of nature which they thus designate. An originating first cause is no less certain;

also the phenomena need time for that regular course which they describe by "laws of nature."' Eternal self-existence belongs only to God, not to the creature; and none so negligent or perhaps rebellious as geologists, if they forget how often God intervened to create as well as to destroy in a way irreconcilable either with chance or with fate. But these are the characteristic mainsprings of Epicureanism on the one hand and of Stoicism on the other, the two chief opposing systems of ancient philosophy (Acts 17:18) as of modern under new names. Without creation and the fall, man can account for nothing aright; but for knowing either we need faith, as well as their revelation, which some in their infatuation pronounce impossible. These men confessedly can make known their evil ideas to their fellows; but God, they argue, cannot communicate His good word! What is possible with men seems to their unbelief impossible with God! Could folly sink lower? Creation must be a miracle; but miracles must not be. Has not the nineteenth century settled it for ever.

Here also natural religion betrays its inherent insufficiency and falseness. For it never truly feels or acknowledges the fall, even if it borrow creation as a tradition from the Bible. If it estimated the ruin aright, it would own the necessity of divine revelation and of salvation by grace, yea of a Saviour able to meet God in righteousness, no less than man in grace. But it takes the ground of making out a righteousness of its own, supplemented by God's mercy to cover all faults and deficiencies. Impossible for any soul to find satisfaction thus. For on one side he acknowledges a Creator God of power and goodness infinite: on the other he faces a world and race of sin, evil, wretchedness, and death, to say nothing of a judgment he could not but dread. The strongest and clearest mind is lost in this labyrinth; and human efforts on the religious side of superstition are as vain to clear it up and present the truth and purge the conscience as the profane speculations and self-contradictory antinomies of philosophy. Human religion only hardens men in their naturally false thoughts of God as either austere or easy-going. Philosophy (in its struggles to escape the inconsistencies inevitable to a fallen estate, which is not confessed to God with a broken heart) only darkens more deeply what is already dark, and ends too often by the mental endeavour to deny the God Whom sin and unbelief have made unknown, save in the qualms of conscience.

No! man was made to look up, not physically alone but morally, in dependence on God the source and giver of all goodness. He sought independence by sin, and gained a conscience already bad, which made him look down, while his pride still pretended to everything. He had lost God and departed from Him, and (being wholly insufficient to abide self- sustained) set his mind on the creature below himself so as at length even to deify it. The Son of God emptied Himself by taking the form of a bondman, being made in the likeness of men, and humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto the death of the cross; where God was glorified as to sin by propitiation for it, and the ground laid for the righteous salvation of all who believe. A man-god was Satan's bait and man's ruin. The God-man dying in obedience and for redemption is the triumph of truth and grace.

06.14. GENESIS 1: 29-31.

Genesis 1:29-31. The closing notice remains, the economy of the primeval creation, and the divine estimate of it all.

"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb producing seed that [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which [is] the fruit of a tree producing seed: to you it shall be for food; and to every animal of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, in which [is] a living soul, every green herb for food. And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold [it was] very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (Genesis 1:29-31). Man has still his distinctive place in God's commission and plan; but it is in the state of innocence. After the fall came in corruption and violence. Animal life was not permitted to man till after the deluge. Herbs and fruit were given at first to man, and to the subject creation every green herb. Death was not in the Adamic earth till sin. Granted that Romans 5:12-21 does not go beyond the human race as fallen under death through sin; but Romans 8:19-22 looks at "all the creation" as ruined through the fall of its head. Neither scripture raises any question about states of the earth anterior to Adam. We have seen in Genesis 1:1-2, the general principle of a previous condition called into being and destroyed; which, as far as it goes, leaves room for death by one means or another among the then animals. In no previous conditions was there man existing, still less the great moral trial of Adam the first head, and the varied dispensations of God, till through the last, the risen Adam, God gives those who believe the victory. Whatever gradual approach may have been made before, the six days describe the formation of that platform where man would be tested in every way according to divine wisdom, and God was in due time to bring in Christ, His Son, become man to glorify Him, not only in obedience but in redemption, and a wholly new and everlasting creation only as yet come in the person of its glorious Head on high. The words of God here spoken are in view of man and earth yet unfallen.

Here experience is necessarily at fault. For only the Bible could give us the truth as to the primitive phase of man and the creatures around him. But it at once approves itself, when revealed, as being the sole conceivable state in which the Creator could have placed creation and its head suitably to His own goodness. Hence the force and moral beauty of His final survey in the last verse. "And God saw everything that he had made (i.e., in the Adamic earth), and behold, it was very good." So with the one exception of day second had He called each thing "good"; now as a whole it was superlatively so in His eyes.

Yet the unbeliever, scientific or not, is misled by his abuse of experience about a time where he cannot have a tittle of evidence to contradict scripture, and imputes to God, if he allow there is One, such a world as would be the production of a fiend, not of the Only True God. Even on his own ground it is the grossest assumption to assume that at the beginning (and science is now compelled to own there must have been a beginning) things were as they now are. It is illogical, as well as infidel, to take for granted that the present state is a normal one, or that God made men

sinful, vain, proud, selfish, to say nothing of more abominable outbreaks; that He left men indifferent, so as to become heathen or Jews, Mahometans or Christians, of any religion or of none, without guidance or proof. It is evident that the state of the world is offensive to God; and that it has been so since man left records more or less credible. This is a fact, Bible or no Bible. But the Bible alone, unlike every other testimony, gives us the simplest, clearest, and fullest explanation, in a few words, how all came to pass. God made man upright, surrounded by every thing "very good" yet under trial of obedience, as we shall soon hear definitely, but he departed from God through the wiles of the enemy in the face of solemn warning, He sinned and thus introduced death for himself and his posterity, and "subjected to vanity" the creation put under him. But God, when tracing the evil to its source, has proved His goodness by holding out the assurance of a Conqueror over the enemy, even while suffering Himself, to be born of woman too. And to this word all believers from the fall clung till He came Who made it good in His death on the cross and in His resurrection.

Thus does God from the first proclaim mercy rejoicing over judgment, though sin bore its sorrowful fruits in an outcast race and a blighted world, where no creature is as God made it. It is science, not scripture, which here as elsewhere, brings in difficulties even for believers. But Sir J. W. Dawson in his Archaia, 217-222, raises questions which are certainly not solved, though brought by himself, a very competent geologist, "into the light of our modern knowledge of nature." He pictures Eden either cleared of its previous inhabitants or not yet invaded by animals from other centres! He supposes man created then with a group adapted to his happiness (Genesis 2:19, etc., treating of them only), and these latest species of animals and plants extending themselves within the spheres of older districts, so as to replace the ferocious beasts of older epochs and other regions! He fancies that on the fall the curse that befell the earth would thus consist in the predaceous animals with thorns and briars invading his Eden. Most of my readers will have heard more than they wish of notions as irreconcilable with scripture as derogatory to it. How can the excellent Principal of M'Gill College have indulged in such speculations? Evidently because being sure, too sure, of his geological scheme, he accommodates scripture to it: a position not very wise scientifically where so much is continually shifting and so little is absolutely ascertained — a position most antagonistic to a Christian's faith in God's word. He is not entitled geologically to assume a mixture of the conditions of the Tertiary with those of the human period in the Quaternary. His theory of day-ages exposes him to these consequences, along with the recently adopted fashion of opposition to A D'Orbigny's careful and exhaustive proof in his "Prodrome de Stratigraphique Palaeontologie,"* that not a species of plants or animals survived the Tertiary, and that a distinct break preceded man's time as often before.

* Trois Volumes, Victor Masson, Paris; also his "Cours élém. de pal. et de Géol. strat." 2 vols. Perhaps no recent author has combined to the same degree mastery over both zoology and geology with the fullest scope of practical observation. Such a man's positive testimony is entitled to unusual respect. And what is the alleged ground in scripture? "Man was to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the b'hemah or herbivorous animals. The carnivorous creatures are not mentioned, and possibly were not included in man's dominion"! But this is distinctly refuted by ver. 30, which expressly assigns every green herb to "every beast " or animal of the earth. The same text proves that at this time "every animal in the earth was herbivorous," though it is boldly laid down that this cannot be meant. Nor should any believer question the past fact, if assured by

inspired prophecy that the day is coming, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid, when the cow and the bear shall feed, their young lying down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. Here undoubtedly science will decry and scoff; but he who believes (as Dawson does) the unfallen state of Adam and his Eden, if not his earth, is inconsistent in curtailing his rule to a petty domain. The apostle, we have seen, interprets his headship of creation in general, whatever modern geology may pronounce to the contrary.

Philologically too, it is quite an error that b'hemah, though expressing "cattle," is limited as is here imagined. Any good Hebrew Concordance will show the most unlearned that it is frequently employed in the largest sense and rightly rendered "beast" in both the Auth. and the Rev. Versions. Compare Genesis 6:7, Genesis 7:2 twice, Genesis 7:8, Genesis 8:20, Genesis 34:23, Genesis 36:6 : Exodus 8:17-18, Exodus 9:9-10; Exodus 9:19; Exodus 9:22; Exodus 9:25, Exodus 11:5; Exodus 11:7, Exodus 13:2; Exodus 13:12; Exodus 13:15, Exodus 19:13, Exodus 20:10, Exodus 22:10; Exodus 22:19. It occurs at least 25 times in this sense in Leviticus 8:1-36 times in Numbers 7:1-89 times in Deuteronomy; so often in the historical books, in the Psalms and in the Prophets, where the sense of "cattle" is in fact rare. This then is God's account of His creation, and in detail of the Adamic earth. No wise man will wonder that we are conducted silently over the vast and successive platforms of dead plants and animals, to say nothing of the debris of rocks, under water and heat. Here we have a system of life rising up, not by any necessity, but by divine power, wisdom, and goodness, to beings constituted chief of creation and made in His image after His likeness, before sin brought in death and every woe on the guilty and all subject to them: a system where our feeble eyes cannot fail, save blinded by wilful evil, to see it everywhere, above, around, below, filled with contrivances that disclose the omniscient designs and the inexhaustible benevolence of the omnipotent Designer, yet in no case absolutely, but with a view to moral government, the effects of which afford a handle of objection to those who refuse that divine word which reveals good then and still higher purposes of grace in Christ for all who believe. Even in the lowest point of view, well may we at this place exclaim with the psalmist, "These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give [them] their meat in due season: [that] thou givest them, they gather. Thou openest thine hand; they are filled with good" (Psalms 104:27-28).

06.15. GENESIS 2: 1-3.

Genesis 2:1-3.

These verses are really the necessary supplement and close of Genesis 1:1-31, if we divide into chapters on a sound principle. It is well known that such a division, save in the Psalms, etc., has no authority and is not seldom erroneous. The new title given to God, Jehovah Elohim, indicates consistently a new subject, as will be shown in its place. Hitherto it is simply Elohim, the abstract name of the Creator. Here as everywhere the name has nothing whatever to do with the question of authorship, as ignorant unbelief has suggested with misplaced confidence, but springs exclusively from internal reasons, as may be seen throughout scripture to much interest and instruction.

"And the heavens and the earth and all their host were finished. And God had finished on the seventh day 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 sanctified it; because that on it he had rested from all his work which God had created in making" (or, and made, lit. to make) (Genesis 2:1-3). The last is without doubt a remarkable phrase, falling in naturally with what we have seen in the opening verses, an original creation where man was not, succeeded by catastrophe, and by fresh creative energy, the details of which refer to the scene where and when man was to be brought into being. Here the work and the rest of God are in clear view of the race; and the seventh day or sabbath has immense importance. On its first mention it was unmistakably the witness of God’s rest: His rest, not from weariness of course, but from the work of creation and making. This work was now ended for the life that now is. And as the six preceding days were literal, so is the seventh the closing day of the week. This is amply and strictly confirmed by Exodus 20:1-11. The sabbath is not a but the seventh day, the memorial of creation finished — of the Adamic world. "For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; therefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it." The language is precise. It is not said "created" but "made." This was the right phrase as a whole for the work of the six days, however well creating is said of parts within that work. It was not the original production but a special construction of divine will and power with man in view. That the seventh day is the sabbath is with equal care impressed in Deuteronomy 5:12-15, though the connection of heart here is with the deliverance from bondage in the land of Egypt rather than with creation. Nor is there a commandment on which scripture laid greater stress, when the law was bound on the sons of Israel, than that of the sabbath. All the others were moral in a sense which this was not; for of their own selves they could not but feel and own the duty. But the hallowing of the sabbath was of God’s initiation exclusively, and singularly marked out for His people that they should not even look to gather the manna on that day. His honour was pre-eminently identified with its observance; and so was His blessing. For us, Christians, the first day of the week, and not the sabbath, is characteristic. That only is to us the Lord’s day, as the day of His resurrection, and the witness of our accomplished redemption and of the power of His life as risen from the dead, and our life. It is accordingly as much marked by the new creation and grace as the sabbath day

was by the six-days creation and the law. Yet, though we have to do with the Lord on the first day, as the N.T. makes plain in manifold ways, the sabbath is not done with but will assuredly re-appear, when Zion arises from her long slumber in the dust, and the light of Jehovah shines in Israel for the universal blessing of the earth and the nations, as it never did even in the days of David and Solomon; so the prophets proclaim, and scripture cannot be broken.

Ours meanwhile is a higher call and a brighter hope; for we are by the Holy Spirit united to Him Whom Jew and Gentile crucified, Whom God not only raised but set at His own right hand in the heavenlies, 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; we are the body of the glorified Head. Those who had the sabbath, as a sign between them and Jehovah, rejected their own Messiah, Who, slain by the bands of lawless men, lay in the grave that sabbath, "high" or great day as it emphatically was It was the sin and the death of Israel, the ground of a still more terrible scattering than that of Assyria or of Babylon; yet in God's grace the divine and only efficacious means to faith of blotting out that sin and every other; as we prove who believe the gospel, while hardening in part has befallen Israel. But all Israel shall be saved by-and-by; and when they are, from one moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Jehovah. We now by the Spirit sent down from heaven draw near by faith within the holiest, and this with boldness by the blood of Jesus. Of our peculiar blessing the first day, not the seventh, is the witness. Nor can lack of Christian intelligence be more decided than confounding the Lord's day with the sabbath. But the seventh day is also decisively against the day periods. For what can be conceived more unnatural, save when we let a system of private interpretation carry us away alike from simplicity and from spiritual understanding? Till the days introduced Adam and his world, it could not be said that the heavens and the earth, still less "all their host," were finished. Previous states of the creation had their importance; but till man and his congeners, animal and vegetable, there was a great lack. Neither on earth nor even in the heavens was there a creature made in God's image or after His likeness. This was not a little in itself as bringing in moral ways of and with man, and room for God's manifestation in promise and government, till the infinite fact of Immanuel, the Word made flesh, the Son of God a man, and His work no less infinite of redemption, yet to be the basis not only of the church's blessedness, as also of all saints and of Israel to come, but of the new heavens and new earth through all eternity.

What possible evidence from scripture that "the seventh day is the modern or human era in geology" (Archaia, 235)? or as the author of "Footprints of the Creator" puts it, "God's sabbath of rest may still exist; the work of redemption may be the work of His sabbath day!" Does it need the words of any one to refute such a reverie of self-destroying fancy? The scripture before us points out His rest as cessation from work, not merely from creation, but from "creating to make." No doubt, if six immensely protracted periods of several thousand years each were certainly meant by the six days, analogy would claim a proportionately lengthened term for the seventh. But the doctrine of God's word even then would be thrown into confusion. For sin violated the rest of creation; and as God could not rest in sin, so He would not in misery, its effect. This is not our rest: it is polluted. The argument of Hebrews 3:1-19; Hebrews 4:1-16 is that, even though Messiah is come and the work of propitiation wrought, and we that believe do enter into the rest of God, we are only as yet in the day of temptation in the wilderness. Hence we are exhorted to fear lest any might seem to have failed, and to use diligence to enter in. A sabbatism, then, remains to the

people of God. It is not yet come. It is the day of glory and not before, when God has no more work to do, all being done so perfectly that He can rest for ever. So our Lord pleaded to those who indulged in somewhat similar imagination in His day, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." But work and rest are in contrast. Hence our Lord did on the sabbath what roused the enmity of the Jews implacably. God's rest was in no true sense come. He must work in grace, yea, the Father and the Son; and this has been done beyond all thought of the creature, and God is glorified thereby; yet the rest remains for another day. But that work, infinitely acceptable and efficacious, is the very opposite of His rest, though the foundation of it. Meanwhile the heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ are being called; the delay, the long-suffering of God, is salvation; and the people of God must be by faith fitted to enjoy His rest. In due time they will enter in, in heaven and on earth. But it still remains; it is not yet come. The idea of a sabbath from Adam till now is a dream wholly antagonistic to all revealed truth. It will be at the end when God makes all things new, and the first things have passed away. This is in the fullest sense the rest of God, not the morning cloud that enveloped the entrance into Canaan, nor the dew that passed so early away in Eden. They were but shadows. The reality is to come, the true rest of God. There cannot be rest and work at the same time in the same sense. To view the sabbath or rest of God as contemporaneous with His work is to be in a mist and to lose completely the truth of both in strange fancifulness. The absurdity which thus inevitably attaches to the age-day theory is proved by no consideration more clearly than by the seventh day or sabbath. That the natural day is meant is only the more evident from the fact that scripture leaves no room for a symbolic or age-lasting sabbath, after the Adamic world was made, but casts us only on its sure but still future dawn. It is "a promise left us" which the day of glory alone fulfils. Of this the sabbath, the natural day at the beginning, was the pledge, the blessed antitype, when God and the creature shall (by redemption and resurrection power) enjoy the communion of His own rest, sin, sorrow, and death completely effaced, and love, righteousness, and glory, triumphant for ever through our Lord Jesus. This the scriptures hold out abundantly and unambiguously; but an allegoric sabbath stretching over the fall and the deluge, the kingdom of Israel and the Gentile world-powers (to say nothing of the law, the gospel, and the church), is a mere fiction of some few geologists speculative beyond the rest, for which not a word of revelation has ever been truly advanced.

Reviewing these papers attentively for reproduction in a small volume, I do not feel the need of adding many words. Scripture is to the believer absolutely reliable; and, in my judgment, it refuses to bend to philosophic speculation which is not true science, but the guesswork of some scientists assuming to theorise on what is unknown to science and therefore illegitimate. In such schemes generally proper creation is denied, and evolution of matter (perhaps eternal matter) takes the place of God calling the universe into being as in Genesis 1:1. Next, the state of disorder, so necessary in its results for man when brought into existence, is shown in Genesis 1:2 and connected with the statement of original creation, because both preceded man's world, and cover the enormous periods of geologic time, not only when fossil remains make their records recognisable in themselves and distinguishable one from another, but the more vague Azoic age which preceded.

Hence the least offensive of these schemes, as Prof. Dana's, is not only without, but opposed to, scripture in assuming an original nebula. For this disagrees with both the first verse and the second of Genesis 1:1-31, and conceives the third to mean the earth as a globe of molten rock,

like the sun in brightness and nature, enveloped in an atmosphere containing the dissociated elements of the future waters and whatever else the heat at the surface could evaporate. Such is the first era of philosophic conjecture. A second went forward until first the earth became centrally solid. Long after, a crust was formed outside; and the vapours of the atmosphere were condensed, and a watery envelope made. A third age, or continuation, followed, so as to admit of the simplest forms of vegetable life, and of the crust increasing by contraction, aided by disintegration of the rock, by exposure, to the ocean; and so began the earth's supercrust — the only part of the earth's structure within the reach of direct investigation. As the first introduction of vegetable life is the fourth age, the display of the systems followed in the four grand types of the animal kingdom in the fifth; and in the sixth, Mammals, and Man.

Analogy, with the chief periods of geological time, is admitted. But it is only a measure of analogy as a whole. We have seen on conclusive evidence that the inspired record will not bend to the assumption, either that the first verse of Genesis 1:1-31 is a summary of the chapter, or that Genesis 2:2 contains the original order of creation, instead of being a state of confusion into which, for the wisest purposes to come, the earth was thrown. He created it not a waste (compare Isaiah 14:18). Both verses are incompatible with the hypothesis, fashionable for the moment, that man's world like himself goes forward with a progress steady in the main and slowly advancing to comparative perfection. Nor is the periodistic reading of the days due to the text itself or any light of the Holy Spirit afforded by other scriptures, but to the overbearing influence of unbelieving geologists who take almost equal pleasure in parading the prevalent scheme of their science as absolutely settled among all the intelligent, and in perplexing Christians too easily allured or alarmed, who forthwith set about to adjust the language of Holy Writ to the alleged exigence of modern scientific results. Yet the enormous changes, not merely through the better ascertainment of important facts, but in the abandonment of fundamental principles by one so influential as the late Sir C. Lyell, ought assuredly to impress the need and the value of creation; especially as the change was a yielding to the sceptical spirit of the day, betraying animus against scripture, not to say contempt for all it teaches of man's comparatively recent origin, as well as the utmost self-confidence in that uniformitarianism which logically shuts out God and denies creation in any real sense.

Now, speculate as people may on Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-3, it will scarcely be contested that God in the words of Exodus 20:1-26 did not adopt the language of poetry or philosophy but laid down moral principles in the most liberal and unambiguous terms. What then means His fourth commandment to Israel? "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God. For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day," etc. (Exodus 20:8-11). The accuracy of the inspired word is so much the more to be noticed, as so many commentators wrongly refer to it as "created" instead of "made:" exactly agreeing with the remarkable phrase that closes the account in Genesis 2:3, which combines, yet distinguishes, "all his work which Elohim created to make." Whatever particulars might properly be called creating within the six days, the comprehensive term which embraced the whole is expressly "made" in contradistinction to the equally proper term "created" in Genesis 1:1. Can any nicety of speech more manifestly confirm the interpretation of the days in Genesis as meant exclusively in their ordinary and historical sense? The six days are God's work in view of man; on the seventh is

His rest, the pledge of a better and enduring one, based on the redemption of the Second man, and issuing in glory for heavens and earth, and above all for those who by grace believe. Need one say more?

Chapter 89

07.01. Isaac

Isaac

W. Kelly.

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07.03. Introduction

Introduction

Having already sought to weigh the history of Abraham, I desire to consider what Scripture gives us to learn of Isaac. It is true that much less is said of him than of Abraham on the one hand or of Jacob on the other; even less than of Joseph among the many sons of Jacob. Yet there is not a little, in the spiritual account of him who came between the two chief fathers, distinguished by his own equable, retired, and peaceful way, and indicative of great principles in God's Word and ways, not in the Old Testament only but also in the New.

Isaac was the pattern of sonship, the child of promise, and as Abraham was its depository, elect, called out, blessed, and to be a blessing universally for the earth at the end, though himself looking higher by faith. Sovereign grace wrought as to both father and son. "For the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through law, but through the righteousness of faith." Thus only could it be, as it was, according to grace; that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of Abraham's faith, who is father of us all, before the God whom he believed, who quickens the dead and calls the things which are not as though they were. But the progress of revelation as to this is as interesting as instructive. It was when Lot's choice of the well-watered plain of Jordan severed him from the one to whom all the land was promised that Jehovah renewed the assurance of it all not only to Abraham but to his seed (Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:15). Still had the patriarch to wait; and when, after his disinterestedness on the occasion of his victory, he lays his childlessness before Jehovah, the word came that not Eliezer, his steward, should be his heir, but he that should come forth out of his own bowels, seed numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:1-21). Then after the episode of Hagar in Genesis 16:1-16 comes the revelation of God Almighty, El-Shaddai, in Genesis 17:1-27, and under the outward rite of circumcision, death to the flesh imposed on him and his seed, with a new name to his wife as well as himself; for she too has the promise of the son, whose name was given. Thus however great and fruitful He would make Ishmael, His covenant was to be established in Isaac, whose birth had a time set for it. The exceptional interest Jehovah took in the birth of Isaac has a still more striking witness in Genesis 18:1-33. There in the guise of man He Himself appeared with two angels (compare Genesis 19:1) to Abraham, and deigned to partake of the meal he prepared and set before them under the tree in Mamre. Thus and then He specified the precise certainty of the time when Sarah should have a son. For the difficulty lay, humanly speaking, yet more in the wife than in the husband, and her unbelief was reproved. But Abraham as the "friend" of God, heard not of his son's birth only, but of the world's judgment, which drew out his soul in intercession for his righteous kinsman and his house in ungodly and lawless Sodom. If his advocacy stopped short, "God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the overthrow."

After another failure in Genesis 20:1-18 (more guilty than the first occasion in Genesis 12:1-20), Jehovah visited Sarah as He had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah

conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. Him on the eighth day Abraham circumcised; and Sarah's laughter was now of overflowing joy and gratitude. But the great feast on the child's weaning drew out Ishmael's mockery, and the expulsion of the bondmaid and her son on Sarah's remonstrance, an allegory to which Galatians 4:1-31 gives us the key. The great change is then adumbrated. For instead of Abimelech reproving Abraham justly, Abraham now reproved the Gentile king; who with the chief captain of his host, owns God with him in all that he does. Yet Abraham swears to show him kindness; and they make a covenant. And as the well of the oath was not without significance, so neither was the grove planted there, or the calling on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God. The day was anticipated when "in the wilderness shall waters break out," and "the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it." The blessedness of the coming age for the earth is thus typified.

After these things, and quite distinct from them, God tried Abraham. What is not here for God as well as man! It is the picture, which blind unbelief alone fails to see, of the Only-begotten Son given, of the Lamb which God would provide Himself for a Burnt Offering. Here Isaac gave himself up to die, as Abraham was ready at God's word to sacrifice his beloved son: the sign of a far better thing. But Jehovah arrests his hand when his heart was proved, and confirms to the son raised from the dead in a figure, that in Christ, the Antitype, should all the nations of the earth be blessed, as the apostle reasons in Galatians 3:1-29.

Then after the passing away of Sarah (the covenanted mother of the child of promise), we have the call of the bride for the bridegroom and heir of all. Next are given certain details of Isaac's history, as we shall examine in due time after this preliminary notice. Yet we may notice here the "moderation" of Isaac made known to all men in the question of the wells his servants found (Genesis 26:1-35); and the crisis of his ways when his foot had well nigh slipped in the matter of his two sons (Genesis 27:1-46). Grace here overruled; and he was saved yet so as by fire. How striking it is that such a scene should be singled out to his praise in Hebrews 11:20! "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau even concerning things to come." Isaac lived many years after this; but Scripture records only his death and burial.

07.04. His Antecedents

His Antecedents

Genesis 12:1-20; Genesis 13:1-18; Genesis 14:1-24; Genesis 15:1-21; Genesis 16:1-16; Genesis 17:1-27; Genesis 18:1-33; Genesis 19:1-38; Genesis 20:1-18

Isaac stands in marked contrast with Abraham, though he and Jacob were "the fellow-heirs of the same promise." But Abraham comes before us the unexpected object of sovereign grace. The tales, so plentiful among Jews and Muslims, of preternatural ability and attainments of wisdom and goodness antecedent to his call, are altogether fabulous and excluded by Scripture. All the more therefore did he suit divine election. No prophetic word hailed his birth like Noah's, whose father said, This same shall comfort us for our work and for the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Jehovah hath cursed. Yet no man was given to hold a place as "father of those that believe," like Abraham, a headship of higher character than Adams's. But Isaac has the peculiarity of his own, however personally and in place overshadowed by his honoured father, in that he was gradually introduced before his birth more frequently and signally than any, save that Son of Abraham, and Son of David who was also Son of God as no one else could be, Isaac's great Antitype.

It may be of interest to draw out the evidence of this. In Genesis 12:7 "Jehovah appeared to Abram and said, To thy seed I will give this land; and there built he an altar to Jehovah who appeared to him." Long before in Ur of the Chaldees had Jehovah said to Abraham, "Get thee (or, Go) out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). Therein Abram at first failed, not quitting his father but following him to Haran, from which he did not emerge till his father's death (Acts 7:4).

Then and not before "Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had acquired and the souls that they had got in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." Obedience now had its perfect work, and its result accordingly. The renewed appearing of Jehovah was not only a call to separation, but to the walk of faith, a pilgrim and a sojourner in the land of promise as in [a land] not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the fellow-heirs of the same promise; for he awaited the city that hath the foundations, whose designer and master-builder is God" (Hebrews 11:9-10). What was the possession of an earthly seat compared with this in heaven which dawned on his faith? Now he learns that Jehovah would give it to his "seed." He worships and was content to be a stranger; and as he moved his tent elsewhere in the land, he built an altar to Jehovah and called on His name (Genesis 12:8).

Still "seed" was vague, as it is explained in Romans 9:7 and so appears also in John 8:33-39. But the time was not yet come. Abram failed in his new place, swerving from the revelation which had so happily wrought in his walk and worship. He goes down into Egypt for help under the strain of a famine in the land; and there is not a word of altar or tent. There he denies his wife, who was taken into the home of this world's prince, and got rich by it to his shame. Jehovah failed not, but plagued Pharaoh and extricated Sarai. This was not "all families of the earth blessed" in him: how could it be other than a curse when the depository of the blessing had left his true place with Jehovah and compromised his wife? Delivered by overruling mercy, he returns to the south or Negeb, and thence as far as Bethel, "to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai; to the place of the altar that he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of Jehovah" (Genesis 13:3-4). The humiliation before was blessed to one, whose first wrong step led to worse; but his heart turned to Him who had rescued them, and he again regains his privilege without a fresh appearing to him. But in the strife between their respective herdsmen that followed, Abram is as disinterested as his nephew betrays his worldly wisdom. And "Jehovah said to Abram, after that Lot had separated himself from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that thou seest will I give to thee and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth," etc. (Genesis 13:14-18). Lot has no title here. A fuller view of the land was given to him who looked above: it was secured forever to him and his. Again Abraham moves to Hebron and built there an altar to Jehovah. His worship rises afresh.

Next, after the wondrous episode of Abram's victory over the earthly potentates, who had punished their vassal kings and carried off Lot, and after the still more wondrous scene of the mysterious King-priest of the Most High God, we have (in a new series of Abram's history) the word of Jehovah coming in a vision, to assure him that not Eliezer, but "he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir," and like the unnumbered stars, "so shall thy seed be." And he believed Jehovah, who reckoned it to him as righteousness; of which the New Testament makes fruitful use. So it must be for the earthly seed, as well as the heavenly: flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. It is the earthly which is in view here; as this was what Abram sought, and God bound Himself by covenant based on death of victims, with prophecy and the limits of the land defined according to the Gentile races in present possession. But if the son and heir was now defined to be Abram's, not so yet the mother. For in Genesis 16:1-16 Sarah manifests the haste which is not of faith but the device of nature, to gain the blessing in its way to the sorrow of all and especially her own. This the apostle applies allegorically to Israel under law. In Genesis 17:1-27 Jehovah reveals Himself (not His gifts only) by the new name of El-Shaddai (God Almighty), not His word in a vision, but God talking with him who has His covenant and the enlarged promise to be father of a multitude of nations, and kings to come out of him. Circumcision, death not of victims but of flesh, is imposed; and as Abram's name was now widened, so Sarai's was raised: Abram's son God would give of her. "And thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant to his seed after him" (Genesis 17:19). Ishmael was not to be forgotten of God; but His covenant should be with Isaac, whom Sarah was to bear at this set time in the next year. Thus was the case made increasingly full and clear.

These preparative notices are crowned in Genesis 18:1-33 where Jehovah appeared to Abraham by the terebinths of Mamre, and with two angels, who in human guise deigned to honour him as his guests. He thus emphasizes the importance to be attached to Isaac's birth, which even then Sarah laughs at as too wonderful. But the son and heir will surely come at the appointed time, and Jehovah personally announces it for the last time before it is accomplished. And we may note the proof He gives that He made Abraham His friend by telling him, not only the detail of what so intimately concerned himself and Sarah, but the judgment He was sending the angels to execute on the guilty cities of the plain. This draws out Abraham, not now to ask for himself, but to intercede, and Jehovah answered beyond his faith.

Yet Abraham failed once more after so signal a favour. How often it is so! Flesh is puffed up, not judged: we are off our guard, instead of watching to prayer. No flesh shall glory, but as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The unbelief of the believer led to deceit; and the sin of Abraham was worse now with Abimelech than long before with Pharaoh. He denied his wife's relationship, after Jehovah let him know the soon coming birth of the promised son by her. Yet though inexcusable and reproved by the Philistine king, God does not forget but maintains Abraham's relationship and makes Abimelech seek his prayers.

07.05. The Son and Heir Born

The Son and Heir Born

Genesis 21:1-7 The set time was now come. The child of promise was at hand. Many and various had been the premonitions on the one side, and checks on the other; but at length in the face of weakness and drawbacks, of unfaithfulness with gracious overruling, the divine word is proved to be, as it is, unfailing and worthy of all trust.

"And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did to Sarah as he had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God hath made me laugh: everyone that heareth will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said to Abraham, Sarah will give children suck? for I have borne a son in his old age" (Genesis 21:1-7).

Here the usage of the divine designations comes before us remarkably. To impute the difference to distinct authors is the despairing or malevolent resource of unbelieving ignorance. First of all "Jehovah" occurs with emphatic repetition (Genesis 21:1). Governmental relationship was in question; and as Jehovah had promised, so also did He show Himself faithful to perform. But it was of no less moment in the next place to indicate that He who thus spoke was God in the supremacy of His nature (Genesis 21:2). Hence "Elohim" is employed, and throughout the chapter, till Genesis 21:33 where relative dealings properly demand the name of "Jehovah Elohim," as will be shown in due course. But beyond controversy it was the birth of one who here typifies the Son of Psalms 2:7; Psalms 2:12. This explains why there should have been so many prophetic intimations to prepare the way. This accounts for the serious consequences which followed for such as despised Him when come. So the prophet was given to say, more than seven centuries before the event (Isaiah 9:6 and following): "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And they shall call his name Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of eternity, Prince of peace." The prediction, glowing and glorious as it is, has nothing to do with His being Firstborn from the dead, Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning. It belongs to His other Headship, as born into the world, the Firstborn of all creation. For in all things He must have the supreme place.

Hence we can see that Calvin only expresses the prevalent confusion of these two relationships, when he says that in this chapter God has set before us a lively picture of His church. Not so. It is not "the mystery" which is here foreshown, but the new covenant; it is the mother,* and not the bride. Consequently the Christian has already new covenant blessing in the death of the saviour; but the Scripture which most fully explains it to us (2 Corinthians 3:1-18) points to its being in spirit rather than in letter; it will be formally with both houses of Israel in the day which fast approaches, and for ever. But Israel, however richly blessed in that day, will not have the union with Christ as

His body, which is ours even now with Him who is Head over all things. And this involves the most important differences, as widely apart as heaven is from earth, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly. The distinction however, cannot well be overestimated.

*It may be noticed here that the error in question gave rise to the spurious reading π■υτωυ at the end of Galatians 4:26, and to the no less unfounded misinterpretation of "Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16, as if the phrase meant all the saints, though two classes are here distinguished.

Next in Genesis 21:3 Abraham called his new-born son Isaac. So he was now, whatever had gone before, whatever might come after. Any laughter of doubt had given place to the joy of grace. And Abraham certainly looked on with joy to wide, deep, and enduring results; he rejoiced that he should see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. How blessed will it be for Israel and the earth and all the nations and every creature of God! How different from the day of Massah and Meribah in the wilderness; when man hardened his heart and Jehovah was grieved long years with a generation that erred in their heart and knew not His ways! In that day what singing aloud to Jehovah, what shouting for joy to the rock of salvation, and coming before His face with thanksgiving and psalms! Yea, the heavens shall rejoice and the earth be glad; the sea shall roar and the fullness thereof; the field shall exult and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before Jehovah, for He cometh - for He cometh to judge the earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, and the people in His faithfulness (Psalms 96:1-13). Isaiah bears the same witness at intervals from his first chapter to his last, notably in Isaiah 11:1-16; Isaiah 12:1-6; Isaiah 24:1-23; Isaiah 25:1-12; Isaiah 26:1-21; Isaiah 27:1-13; Isaiah 30:1-33; Isaiah 32:1-20; Isaiah 35:1-10; Isaiah 40:1-31; Isaiah 41:1-29; Isaiah 42:1-25; Isaiah 43:1-28; Isaiah 44:1-28; Isaiah 45:1-25; Isaiah 49:1-26; Isaiah 50:1-11; Isaiah 51:1-23; Isaiah 52:1-15; Isaiah 53:1-12; Isaiah 54:1-17; Isaiah 55:1-13; Isaiah 60:1-22; Isaiah 61:1-11; Isaiah 62:1-12; and Isaiah 65:1-25. So we may say in general have all the prophets spoken. So much the more lamentable is the unbelief which merges all in the church's blessings, only to lose its heavenly bridal place to no end obscured by that groundless confusion. But the joy of Abraham in no way weakened his duty of subjecting his son to the sign of death for the flesh. He circumcised Isaac duly when he was eight days old, "as God had commanded him" (Genesis 21:4). The eighth day points to resurrection in contrast with nature. Circumcision was instituted, not when Ishmael was born, but in view of Isaac, the seal of the covenant. The principle was God's righteousness. Man was judged as evil and flesh mortified.

It is notified in Genesis 21:5 that Abraham was a hundred years of age when Isaac was born. Faith had indeed to wait, but was in no way disappointed: God is faithful. "And Sarah said, God hath made me laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:6). She had laughed at first when Jehovah announced the set time for her to be a mother, and she added the shame of untruth when taxed with it (Genesis 18:1-33). But all is here changed by grace. God, she owns, made her laugh now. It was no longer within herself, but of Him; and others who heard would share her joy. "And she said, Who would have said to Abraham, Sarah will give children suck? For I have borne a son in his old age" (Genesis 21:7). Sarah is thenceforth, old as she was, become a child of wisdom; and wisdom is justified of all her children.

07.06. Isaac Abiding Hagar and Ishmael Dismissed

Isaac Abiding Hagar and Ishmael Dismissed

Genesis 21:8-21

God knows how to rectify the false position that springs from unbelief. We may therefore look to Him and His Word, and have only to obey. But if this ever costs the flesh not a little, blessing surely follows self-denying submission to His will.

"And the child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw Hagar the Egyptian's son, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. And she said to Abraham, Cast out this maid-servant and her son; for this maid-servant's son shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said to Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy maid- servant: [in] all that Sarah saith to thee, hearken to her voice; for in Isaac shall a seed be called to thee. But also the maid-servant's son will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a leathern bottle of water and gave [it] to Hagar, putting [it] on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. And the water from the bottle was exhausted; and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went and sat down over against [him] about a bowshot; for she said, I will not look on the death of the child. And she sat over against [him,] and lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the lad's voice; and God's angel called to Hagar out of the heaven, and said to her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the lad's voice there where he is. Arise, take the lad, and hold him in thy hand, for a great nation will I make him. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became as he grew up an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt" (Genesis 21:8-21). As the child born and the son given typified the Son of the Highest, it was meet that the occasion should be marked by consequences of the gravest. What can distinguish inspiration more than the lesson the apostle in Galatians 4:22-26 draws from that which seems on the surface a mere domestic occurrence? "For it is written that Abraham had two sons; one of the maid-servant, and one of the free-woman. But he that was of the maid-servant was born according to flesh, and he that was of the free-woman through the promise. Which things have an allegorical sense; for these [women] are two covenants: one from Mount Sinai, gendering unto bondage, which is Hagar. For Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to the present Jerusalem; for she is in bondage with her children; but the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother." This was God's purpose, though none apprehend it save those who have Christ's mind. Hence the unbelieving Jews fill the place, not of Isaac, but of Ishmael. They are as far as possible from suspecting that they are only born according to flesh, and persecute him that is born according to Spirit. Yet they cannot deny that their mother is the Sinai covenant, and that they are cast out by God. They have the law's

curse as transgressors; they have not a shred of the promise to cover their nakedness. Their own prophets declare that they are not God's people, and if without a false god without the True, as they have plainly neither land nor prince; and this because they rejected, first Jehovah, next His Christ. But the apostle goes a great deal farther; and though he does not confound the believing Gentiles with Israel, like the theologians of Christendom, he shows that all who take their stand on law come under the curse (Galatians 3:10). Thus the principle applies in all its force, indeed emphatically, to Gentiles, who have not the excuse of inveterate Jewish prejudices. It is to fall from grace, through which alone can souls be saved. Law cannot save but condemn sinners; and if grace be mixed with law, the mixture is unavailing: grace only can save the guilty and lost. The Galatians who were bewitched to tack law on to grace, he solemnly warns of utter ruin, so sure that as many as are of works of law (i.e., on this principle) are under curse. After having begun in Spirit, how senseless for them to seek perfection in flesh! The law itself, in the tale of Abraham's two sons, convicts of folly those who thus abuse the law. Its lawful application (1 Timothy 1:9) is not to a righteous person, but to lawless and insubordinate, to impious and sinful, to unholy and profane, to whatever in short is opposed to the healthful doctrine Paul taught.

Hence the peremptory tone of the apostle to the endangered Galatians. He will have this "leaven" extirpated, whatever it cost. It was a deeper peril than the "leaven" which he enjoins the Corinthians to purge out. Not even a moral man could defend the gross inconsistency with Christ and His sacrifice of having the wicked man in their midst. But the fair show in flesh set up in the Galatians churches was subtler, and a denial of the grace which the gospel proclaims, when law had been proved to be simply a ministry of death and condemnation. What then "saith the scripture? Cast out the maid-servant and her son; for the son of the maid-servant shall in no wise be heir with the son of the free- woman." The Judaizing Gentile is even more blamable than the Jew. Alas! the ritualism of the day is incomparably worse still and growingly apostate; for not content with the legal forms of Israel, it incorporates the idolatries of the heathen also, as in the adoration of the sacramental elements, etc.

Yet is it affecting to know God's goodness to Abraham's seed according to flesh. When the mother yielded to despair, and laid her son down to die at a distance from her, "God heard the lad's voice"; and His angel bids Hagar hold him in her hand. Had not Jehovah called his name Ishmael, because He had heard her affliction? And as she was then by a fountain called Beer-la-hai-roi, Well of the living who was seen (or, seeth me), from the name of Him that spoke to her (Genesis 16:1-16), so now God opened her eyes to see a well of water whence she gave the lad drink. If she forgot the divine assurance of a numberless multitude in general to spring from her, and that Ishmael should dwell in the presence of all his brethren, God remembered him and declares that He will make him a great nation. So it has been. There they are with the same characteristics to this day.

07.07. Jehovah, God Everlasting

Jehovah, God Everlasting Genesis 21:22-34

Though the name of Isaac does not occur in this section, it is in no way a digression, but in strict pursuance of the divine ways on the occasion of his birth, the dismissal of Hagar and her son, and the recognition of Sarah's son as the sole heir of Abraham.

"And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech, and Phichol the captain of his host, spoke to Abraham, saying, God [is] with thee in all that thou doest. And now swear to me here by God that thou wilt not [literally, if thou shalt] deal falsely with me nor with my offspring nor with my son's son. According to the kindness that I have done to thee, thou shalt do to me and to the land in which thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear. And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this, and also thou didst not tell me, and also I heard not but today. And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave [them] to Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe-lambs of the block by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, what [mean] here these seven ewe-lambs which thou hast set by themselves? And he said, For seven ewe-lambs shalt thou take, that they may be a witness to me that I dug this well. Wherefore he called that place Beersheba, because they had sworn, both of them. And they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech rose up and Phichol chief of his host, and returned into the Philistines' land. And [Abraham] planted a tamarisk (or, a grove) in Beersheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah God everlasting. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days" (Genesis 21:22-34).

It was not only that due order of the household was now secured by the expulsion of the Egyptian and her mocking son, and that the child of promise abode without a rival; but an outward event follows of such significance that the Holy Spirit gives it here an imperishable place. The marked blessing that resulted drew the Gentile's heart, and the Philistine with due formality (for the commander-in-chief accompanied him) seeks the pledged friendship of Abraham. So it will be in days to come when the promises are accomplished in the Messiah; and thus far Isaac typifies Him. It was far otherwise when the Lord came the first time, and even the Jew rejected Him in dark unbelief and in bitter hatred that the grace which they refused should be preached to the nations. Unhappy and unholy, they please not God and are contrary to all men; and the wrath is come on them to the uttermost. But the day hastens when they judging themselves shall welcome by faith Him in whom the promises are Yea and Amen unto the glory of God. Then shall Gentile kings be Zion's nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers (Isaiah 49:1-26); then shall ten men take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even 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 you (Zechariah 8:1-23). Nor does Abraham at all repel the Gentiles. The Seed of promise received and honoured leads to a new state of things for the earth. To the king Abraham assents, and forms a covenant on oath and other solemnities. In the Seed are the Gentiles to be blessed. Woe to those that curse in that day!

A witness of the change to ensue on the largest scale is here given by Abraham's reproving Abimelech. Now only does he speak of the wrong done by Abimelech's servants who had violently possessed themselves of a well dug by Abraham. And Abimelech bows meekly. Righteousness will reign in that day, and princes shall rule in judgment; yea, judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. For the Spirit will then be poured on Israel from on high; and He holds the inflexible sceptre over all the earth, the Righteous Servant and Atoning Sufferer, who in that day shall be seen exalted, and lifted up, and very high. And Israel's seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which Jehovah hath blessed (Isaiah 61:1-11). The limper shall no longer halt, but the first dominion be even to the daughter of Jerusalem. The Well-of-the-Oath is the name Abraham gives as the permanent sign of the covenant made then and there. Typically it is a total change from strangership to possession, as it will be really in the days of the coming Kingdom. Nor do we hear of a tent now, though Abraham's calling on the name of Jehovah implies a fresh altar here. Only it is not now as the One who appeared to him in the far off land, and led him at length, separated to Him, into Canaan; nor is it the altar he built at Bethel anymore than at Shechem, nor yet at Hebron. Here only is the striking change, which inspiration alone can account for, to "God everlasting." For so it will be when the displayed Kingdom comes in power and glory. Fallen and fading things will then give place to permanence and peace and blessing. For "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Psalms 102:1-28). In unison with all this is the planting of a grove on Abraham's part. Here only do we read of such an act, the beautiful prefiguration of "that day" when the parched land shall blossom abundantly, and all the trees of the wood shall sing for joy.

07.08. Isaac Dead and Risen in Figure

Isaac Dead and Risen in Figure

Genesis 22:1-14

Here begins an entirely new section of the book, which we may regard as stretching over the death of Abraham in Genesis 25:1-34, though more than once verses seem appended to complete the history rather than higher views. No more profound principle can there be than that which is introduced as the basis in our chapter; for it is death and resurrection in the person of a beloved son, an only-begotten. Such a type is unmistakable save to the blind. The very details are full of living force: what then is the Antitype? All is impressive, lovely, and instructive in the highest degree. As the figure of Abraham looms most in the scene, and as this has been years ago before us in treating of him, it remains to speak here of Isaac.

"And it came to pass after these things that God tried Abraham and said to him, Abraham; and he said, Behold me. And He said, Take now thy son, thine only [one] whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the Moriah land, and offer him there for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he crave wood for burnt-offering, and rose up and went to the place of which God told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship (or, bow down), and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood for burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and knife; and they went both of them together; and they came to the place which God told him of; and there did Abraham build the altar and pile the wood; and he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And Jehovah's angel called to him from the heavens, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Behold me. And he said, Stretch not forth thy hand against the lad, nor do thou anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God and hast not withheld thy son, thine only [one] from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold a ram behind caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for burnt-offering, instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said this day, On Jehovah's mount it will be provided" (Genesis 22:1-14).

We must bear in mind that "the lad" had at least reached his majority, as we say; Josephus (Antiquities 1: 13, 2) makes him 25 years old. His entire submissiveness to his father indeed, but also to the will of God, is exactly in keeping with his piety. If it was beautiful in the type, how much more in that which it shadowed! For it was unsought and infinite love in both Father and Son.

Here it was not merely a test of the strongest claim ever made on the heart of man, indefinitely increased by the promise so long waited for and so singularly accomplished, and by the full persuasion of world-wide blessing which centred in that very son, and yet seemed to be made

impossible by the intensely painful act to which he was called. What was suffered to the full and unsparingly, that God might be glorified, that sin might be condemned in a sacrifice of blessing to sinners without bound or end, that good might surpass where evil abounded, that love might overcome where enmity had wrought its worst, that Satan might be vanquished where he had been a prince and a god, that man might be brought, no longer a child of wrath but of God, out of all iniquity, intense misery, and everlasting judgment to peace and righteousness before God now and to heavenly glory with Christ in the presence of the Father forever? The father and son brought before us so strikingly here furnished an unrivalled occasion to show in a figure or "parable," as it is called in Hebrews 9:17-19, the real death and as real resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The interpretation given, as it has been believed by all saints of New Testament times, rests on no probability however strong, on no tradition of men, however ancient. He that disputes will have to give account of his inexcusable incredulity to the Lord Himself when we are manifested before His judgment seat. Very beautiful is the minute accuracy of this New Testament comment. "By faith Abraham when tried hath offered up Isaac; and he that took up to himself the promises was offering up the only-begotten, in respect of whom it was spoken, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that even from the dead God is able to raise; whence also he received him in a parable." We may not in English easily express the perfect in the first instance of the offering; but the force is evident and points to the subsisting or fixed result of that act. Morally it was done; and the effect abides. The second use of the word in the imperfect corrects all possible misuse of that; for it states that literally Abraham was in the act of offering his only son when arrested as Genesis tells us by Jehovah's angel. The spiritual test was complete, though the act was not completed. So had divine wisdom ordered and accomplished. Nor is this new thing, though only in parable, an isolated and transient fact, but is connected in the declarations and the events that follow with consequences of the utmost importance, as will be shown in due time. This is the most powerful and conclusive proof that the Scripture is in the fullest sense inspired of God. It is not only that a moral pinnacle is here reached as never before; but that the death and resurrection of Christ prefigured by it reflects on what follows a light which shows that what is related stands in perfect keeping with that infinite event, and is a shadow of what we find in the new Testament could only follow it, as it did according to God's counsels and in the development of His ways. The answer of the father to the son (Genesis 22:7-8) was from above and in a wisdom wholly above man's; God's providing Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering is the basis of the new and only justifying righteousness, God's righteousness. In the infinite reality it was the Son become man and on behalf of men yet to God's glory, after proving Himself the righteous Servant, made sin for us, that we who believe might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus was love maintained as fully as holiness, and that new righteousness, God's righteousness which can justify absolutely him that believes on the Lord Jesus, instead of condemning the sinner as he deserves. It was the Father's will, the Son's work, and Holy Spirit's witness, as indeed we read in Hebrews 10:1-39.

Viewed merely on the historical side, what admirable devotedness to God's authority testing the heart to the uttermost! What unhesitating trust in God and His word, that the giving up of what is dearest in possession and hope would result in unimpaired re-establishment of all! And so it truly was in the issue, and beyond all expectation of man as he is.

07.09. Isaac: The Numerous Seed, and the One Seed

Isaac: The Numerous Seed, and the One Seed Genesis 22:15-24

Consequent on the wondrous type of the far more wondrous sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we have Jehovah's angel announcing to Abraham His solemn oath on that which deeply concerned both Jews and Gentiles, and we may add God Himself most nearly, and His title to bless not only in His righteous government but in sovereign grace according to His nature.

"And Jehovah's angel called to Abraham a second time from the heavens, and said, By myself I swear, saith Jehovah, that because thou hast done this and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as stars of the heavens, and as sand that is on the sea's shore; and thy seed shall possess his enemies' gate; and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast harkened to my voice. And Abraham returned to his young men; and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

"And it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also hath borne children to thy brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel father of Aram, and Chesed, and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel (and Bethuel begot Rebekah). These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And his concubine named Reumah, she also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah" (Genesis 22:15-24).

Because of Jehovah's appreciation of Abraham's unreserved surrender to Him of what was most precious to his heart, first comes the assurance of rich blessing and great multiplication of his seed according to flesh. It should be for multitude as stars of the heavens and as sand of the seashore. Nor this only, but with power over their adversaries, as befits the earthly people of His choice. Beyond just question Israel is thus in view (Genesis 22:17). But there follows in Genesis 22:18 a promise intentionally severed, and couched in such terms as point to the True Seed in whom should all the nations of the earth be blessed. And here not a hint was uttered of a numerous posterity; as indeed the evident aim was to indicate the One on whom alone depended blessing of a far higher order, and this for "all the nations of the earth." Here we are recalled to the original promise made to the patriarch and recorded in the last half of Genesis 12:3 : "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." There, as here, it follows the national blessing of the earthly people. It was therefore left open and goes out in unlimited grace as in the gospel. He only could thus speak who knew the end from the beginning. Of this the apostle in the power of the Holy Spirit avails himself in writing to the Galatians (Galatians 3:1-29), beguiled as they then were into that judaizing of heavenly truth which has been and is the sore bane of Christendom. Works of law are a ruinous principle for sinful men; the promise is by faith, whereby alone believers are blessed with the faithful Abraham. For as many as are of law- works are under curse; not merely such as violate the law, but all that take the ground of law before God. As surely as they do, they being sinful fall under curse. Therefore Deuteronomy 27:1-26 is cited, wherein the Holy Ghost passes by all account of the blessings of the six tribes on Mount Gerizim, and only gives in detail the curses of

the other six on Mount Ebal. These alone were effective. The blessings cannot be for guilty man on that ground. It is by faith, says the prophet, the just shall live; and redemption from curse is needed for those under law, that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, as the gospel declares. Nor is this all. For the Seed is arrived, and the covenant is confirmed, as it was typically in Isaac, dead and risen parabolically. Hence the apostle proceeds, "But to Abraham were addressed the promises, and to his seed" — to the father in Genesis 12:1-20, and to his son in Genesis 22:1-24. "He saith not, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to thy seed' [where allusion to stars and sand, as well as 'greatly multiplying,' are quite dropped], which is Christ." The reasoning of the apostle, here as elsewhere, only appears weak to presumptuous men, who are unbelieving and so must fail to understand God's mind in it. Where souls accept the divine authority, not only of the Epistle to the Galatians, but of Genesis which the Epistle assumes, all is seen to be bright, profoundly true, and of living interest. It is no question of mere grammar, but of context; which, in the promise that distinctly contemplates Israel, makes much of numbers; whereas in that which introduces the Gentiles for blessing, it says not a word about anything of the kind, but only of one, "thy seed." It was a covenant confirmed beforehand by God; and the law, which came after four hundred and thirty years, does not annul it, so as to make the promise of no effect. Nor does the law clash with the promise: each has its own object; the one, a ministry of death and condemnation; the other, of blessing by faith. Mixing the two does the mischief; and this is exactly to what man is prone, and what Scripture ever explicitly sets aside. In the light of New Testament facts, how the types of Genesis come out! The woman's Seed is surely man, yet more than man, bruised to bruise utterly and forever the old serpent the devil, fallen angel as he is. Abraham's Seed, foreshown in Isaac dead and risen in figure, portrays the Deliverer in the wholly new condition of man beyond death, able to bless Gentiles in sovereign grace no less than Jews, and unite them to Himself in heavenly glory. And this is just what the gospel now reveals to faith. The closing verses of the chapter bring before us a brief sketch of Nahor's line (Abraham's brother), whose son Bethuel was father of Rebekah through Milcah the wife, not through Reumah the concubine. How closely this connects itself with Isaac's future we shall have before us in due time, carrying out the purpose of God.

07.10. Sarah Dead and Buried

Sarah Dead and Buried

Genesis 23:1-20

Here is given the decease of Sarah with her burial, to which inspiration devotes a considerable place. Is there no instruction beyond the affecting moral that is before all eyes? Where in all the Old Testament is there such a picture of a husband's sorrow in providing a burial place for the departed wife? Where of a father's care and faith in the call of a bride for his son, as in the chapter that follows? We have looked into the deep typical lessons of the chapter that precedes, and we hope to weigh that which is hardly less to be questioned in that which is now to occupy us. Is it to be assumed that our chapter is altogether devoid of similar truth below the surface? Let us at least seek to learn of God through His Word.

"And the life of Sarah was a hundred and twenty-seven years — the years of Sarah's life. And Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba, that [is] Hebron in the land of Canaan. And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, I [am] a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a sepulchre with you, that I may bury my dead before me. And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, Hear us, my lord: thou [art] a prince of God among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre for burying thy dead. And Abraham rose up and bowed himself to the people of the land, to the sons of Heth, and spoke to them, saying, If it be your will that I should bury my dead from before me, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which is his, which [is] at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me among you for a possession of a sepulchre. And Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the ears of the sons of Heth, of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, No, my lord; hear me. The field give I thee; and the cave that [is] in it, to thee I give it; before the eyes of the sons of my people I give it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed himself before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the ears of the people of the land, saying, But if only thou wouldst listen to me, I give the price of the field: take [it] of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, My lord, hearken to me. A field of four hundred shekels of silver, what [is] that between me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the price that he had named in the ears of the sons of Heth - four hundred shekels of silver current with the merchant. So the field of Ephron which [was] at Machpelah, which [was] before Mamre, the field and the cave that [was] in it, and all the trees that [were] in the field, that [were] in all its borders round about, were assured to Abraham for a possession before the eyes of the sons of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. And after this Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah, opposite to Mamre, that [is] Hebron in the land of Canaan. And the field and the cave that was in it were assured to Abraham for a possession of a sepulchre by the sons of Heth" (Genesis 23:1-20). The sketch is so

simple and so graphic as to need few words. Abraham's grief lives before us, as does his noble bearing in such circumstances with the sons of Heth for a cave wherein to bury his dead. It was a delicate affair. For the Hittites were touched, courteous, and friendly; while Abraham, resolute to plead for such, as in Genesis 14:24, was no less resolute to appropriate nothing now as then for himself. Even in the presence of death would he preserve the place of pilgrim and stranger in their midst. He would pay in full for a possession, not of a mansion nor of an estate, but of a sepulchre. Ephron, oriental-like, set his price abundantly high for those days; and Abraham weighed it in presence of all, the then mode of lawful and sure conveyance with a curious anticipation of modern particularity. Otherwise the patriarch had no inheritance in the promised land, no, not so much as to set his foot on, whatever argument the late Bishop of Lincoln set up to the contrary. Even for a grave he would not be unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion has light with darkness? Abraham would be separate and touch no unclean thing. Is this scorn or pride? Not so, but subjection to God, and maintenance of His honour by His children, however weak and unworthy, as some are, but all ought to be, quite willing to allow.

Typically viewed, Sarah was the free mother of the child of promise, in contrast with the bondmaid and her son cast out already, according to the doctrine of Galatians 4:1-31. Now that the Son is seen dead and risen, even that covenant, which Sarah represents, passes away, in order to bring in a yet higher counsel of the Father who would call a bride for His Son in the heavenlies. As surely as Sarah dies, she will rise again; and only then will that covenant of promise and liberty be valid for Israel, who meanwhile are blinded by unbelief and find their pattern in Hagar and her son. Thus did the Jews lose for this long season their privileges; for they were sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with Abraham. But rejecting the one true Seed, their own Messiah, through whom alone any and all could be blessed, they have stamped upon them more deeply than ever Lo-Ammi. Yes, Sarah is dead; and as the next development of rising purposes, we shall see Rebekah called from a far land and conducted across the desert to be the spouse of Isaac in Canaan.

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