

Ideals and Realities

by G.H. Lang

The sermon explores the relationship between grace, personal worthiness, and the believer's role in attaining rewards in the kingdom of God.

Scripture: Genesis 18:19, Numbers 14:34, 1 Samuel 2:27, Psalm 106:26, Galatians 3:15, Hebrews 6:16, Hebrews 8:9

Topics: "Divine Sovereignty", "Human Responsibility"

Description

G.H. Lang preaches about the importance of understanding the conditional nature of God's covenants with His people, emphasizing that while God's promises are sure in His purpose and willingness, the actual attainment of blessings is contingent upon human response and faith. The sermon delves into the concept of foreknowledge and foreordination, highlighting that God's foreknowledge does not equate to foreordination, and that human free will plays a role in the fulfillment of divine purposes. It also explores instances from the Bible where God's promises were revoked or altered based on human behavior, underscoring the principle that God's covenants are contingent upon human conduct.

Transcript

This is a small contribution to a great theme.

At the beginning let it be stated distinctly that this paper assumes and asserts that no person once having been accounted righteous before the bar of God, because of the imputation to him upon faith in Christ of the "free gift of righteousness," can return to his former unjustified standing before God, or can forfeit the free gift of God (which) is eternal life." No redeemed person that left Egypt under Moses ever was permitted by God to get back to the place and state whence he had been freed by blood and by power, not even those who on their part said "Let us make us a captain, and let us return to Egypt" (Num. 14: 4). They missed indeed the best results of redemption, but the redemption itself was never reversed. In the matter of final salvation "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5: 16, 17, 21: 6, 23).

But it is generally agreed that in the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ rewards will be proportionate to service now rendered. And by some it is further urged that this principle of recompense applies also to the matter of entering that kingdom at all. It is held that Scripture teaches that some believers may be accounted unworthy of any place in that kingdom.

Involved of necessity in this is the further suggestion that to rise in the first resurrection is not guaranteed, but is a privilege open indeed to every believer, but which may be forfeited by unworthy conduct. Thus, if attained, it is of the nature of a prize, as Paul says in connection with the resurrection from among the dead, "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God" (Phil. 3 : prize offered indeed by the grace of God, and also to be won only through the working of that same grace, but which, like all prizes, is possible of forfeiture if grace be neglected or abused.

These suggestion ought not to be dismissed so lightly as by some is the case. With variations in detail they have been held by many devout and able teachers, including R. C. Chapman, Hudson Taylor, Robert Govett, and G. H. Pember, to mention some well-known names of orthodox saints and scholars. Lists of names do not establish doctrine, if only for the reason that they can be cited on all sides of all questions. But where equally honest and able servants of God, all true to the faith of the gospel, avow differences of judgment the case is one for toleration, not condemnation, for enquiry, not bigotry.

The appeal must be to the Word of God alone, and each student should seek its meaning for himself, imploring the illumination that the Spirit of truth alone can give, yet not forgetting that He may be pleased to give it through some fellow-student of the Word, Yet should one never pin oneself to any single teacher or any one school of interpretation. And if one's results do not always or at first agree with those of his brethren let him be patient, pray further, search further, and on no account denounce those who differ from him or separate from them. There are truths so fundamental to faith and salvation that no divergence upon them can be tolerated without disloyalty to Christ, but the matters here discussed are not of that class.

The discussion should not be left at the endeavour to determine the meaning of particular texts, though this is truly of first importance; and an endeavour is here made to elucidate the principles involved. The treatment is very condensed, and is therefore suggestive, not exhaustive. It is addressed to serious readers, and it is supposed that these will read and weigh the passages cited though not quoted. The Revised Version is quoted as a rule, which the reader should note.

WORTHINESS A CONDITION OF ENTERING THE KINGDOM.

At the outset it must be noted that Christ intimated that sharing in that first resurrection which will lift dead believers into the kingdom in glory requires that the individual shall have "attained" thereto and be accounted worthy" thereof (Luke 20: 34, 35). Negatively He had taught plainly that practical righteousness of high degree, acquired and marked by strict obedience to the least divine command, as also true humility, were indispensable to entering that kingdom at all (Matt. 5: 20; 18: 1-3), so indicating the conditions of being accounted worthy and attaining.

Peter, concluding his ministry, addressed those who had obtained a like precious faith with himself in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1: 1-11); even persons to whom had been granted the precious and exceeding great promises of God, with the view that they might not only have the life of God (which every believer has immediately upon faith in Christ), but also might become partakers of the divine nature. Thus the character, disposition and tendencies natural to God might become so in them through claiming in faith the fulfilment of the promises pertaining to sanctity of nature and of walk. But for this to become fact they must add on their part all diligence in developing out of faith other dominant christian virtues, Thereby they should make secure their calling and election of God unto His eternal glory in Christ. For the calling of which Peter speaks is not simply unto deliverance from wrath, but to share the eternal glory of God (1 Pet. 5: 10), a prospect far nobler, belonging to the people of the heavenly calling

only.

No true preacher of the gospel would say to unregenerate men, "If ye do these things you will secure eternal life," for that is the "free gift of God" (Rom. 6: 23), "a righteousness of God apart from the law" (Rom. 3: 21). But, addressing believers, as above noted, and referring to the matter of their calling to glory, Peter distinctly puts the issue upon the ground of works, saying, "if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus richly [emphatic] shall be supplied unto you the entrance into the "eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ " (2 Pet. 1:10). Thus did he enforce this portion of what his Master had taught.

Similarly Paul, ever most emphatic upon the acceptance of sinners by God being solely through the imputing to them by grace of the righteousness of Another, is equally definite that the final obtaining of the glory of God is not a guaranteed certainty, but demands the fulfilment of conditions. So he prayed unceasingly for the Thessalonians that "God may count you worthy of your calling," for which prayer there could be no call if they were already secure of the same (2 Thess.1 : 11).

But he knew otherwise, and therefore he most earnestly exhorted, encouraged, and testified "to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2: 11, 12). As with Peter, so with Paul also, the "calling" is not to exemption from wrath, but to entering the kingdom and sharing in its glory.

Thus the words of Christ as to being "accounted worthy of that [next] age " are adopted by Paul -"that God may count you worthy"; and he knew that this could only be on the ground of works done, and so his prayer proceeded that God "would fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith with power, in order that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you [now], and ye in Him [in His day]." And that this can only be, yet can be, "according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" he knew well and taught clearly, as did Peter also (" the God of all grace Who called you shall Himself perfect you" (1 Pet. 5: 10)). Yet both knew that while grace enables, it does never coerce, so that the utmost diligence on our part in godly living must be added in order that no man should "fall short of the grace of God" (Heb. 12: 15), and not obtain the whole of what grace made possible in Christ.

Finally, the Lord had attached this condition of attainment and worthiness to the specific matter of rising in the first resurrection, and so did Paul also. For to the Philippians (3: 11) he wrote of his own strenuous efforts in the service and fellowship of Christ that they were directed to the end "if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead," which sentence is a repetition of the words of the Lord in Luke 20: 35, "they that are accounted worthy to attain to that age, and the resurrection from among the dead."

WHAT CONSTITUTES WORTHINESS?

It has been said that in the three places (Luke 20: 35; Acts 5:41; 2 Thessalonians 1 : 5) where the verb kataxioo is found it means fitness, not worthiness in the sense of merit. In fifteen English and five German versions, five lexicons, and a number of standard commentaries, we do not find anyone who suggests any other translation than "worthy." This word, as the dictionaries show, includes the possessing merit, having desert, by reason of actual qualities possessed. It is the possession and display of these qualities which constitutes the "fitness" that the word no doubt also implies.

Granted that the prefix kata does not in this instance carry its intensive force, and that the word is equal to the simple form axios, this will still carry the meaning of worthiness as above defined. The Septuagint at Genesis 31: 28 has axios; the Complutensian edition thereof uses kata, xzoo. The meaning is the same. Laban says: "I was not counted worthy to embrace my children and my daughters." This could not well be changed to "I was not counted fit," etc.

It has been urged that when the centurion (Luke 7 : 7) said he was not worthy to make personal application to Christ, he was thinking, not of his personal merit, but of his Gentile nationality. Probably he was; but then, at the moment, these two were the same. At that time nationality was the one thing that counted as regards anyone gaining the help of Him who was not then sent save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. To belong to that race was the one factor that constituted personal worthiness. The absence of it entailed demerit, for the purpose in view; the presence of it was the only personal factor demanded.

The same word axios is used at 1 Timothy 5: 17: "Let the elders that rule will be counted worthy of double honour": at Hebrews 3: 3: "Jesus hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses": at Hebrews 10: 29: "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be judged worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." Surely no one would substitute "fit" for "worthy" in either of these places: why, then, do so in the other place, 2 Thessalonians 1: 11: "We pray always for you that our God may count you worthy of your calling"?

It is allowed that the adjective (axios) does imply personal merit. We cannot see why the verb does not, in one instance they come together and have the same force, and may properly be rendered alike: "Let the elders that rule well be deemed to merit double honour . . . for the scripture saith . . . the labourer merits his hire" (1 Tim. 5:17, 18).

The Septuagint has the verb at Jeremiah 7: 16: "Count them not worthy to be pitied." Is it correct, as has been said, that God accounts us righteous when we are not? Does He not rather impute to faith the righteousness of Another, and then reckon us to be what we are in that Other? The law deems righteous a man who has paid his just debts. It equally deems him so if another has paid for him. But the law does not reckon him righteous until he is so in fact, either by his own payment or that of his substitute. God also does not deal in unrealities, whether with the unjustified or the justified. He does not deem the justified worthy of this or that reward or honour unless he is in fact worthy.

What, now, constitutes one worthy of the kingdom of God? It seems generally held to be that righteousness of God imputed to man upon faith in Christ, without any other consideration entering into the question. If this were so, it would follow of necessity that all believers, without exception or distinction, being equally endowed therewith, must assuredly all share equally in glory. This would sweep away all distinctions in glory and annihilate the whole doctrine of reward taught in Scripture so repeatedly and emphatically; for the justifying acceptance being uniform to all believers (as is the case) so must be the reward and glory, if it be the sole ground thereof.

We have heard this put baldly at a public conference thus: "No matter how you live as a christian" (emphasized, for it was the very point being urged), "you are certain to be part of the bride of Christ and to reign with Him!" To this no exception can be taken if the ground of being glorified with Christ is only His merit imputed to us. The atoning work of the Lord Jesus, the merit of which is reckoned to the believer therein, has two effects : --

1. It changes his legal standing and relationship with God as judge, removing him from the position of a rebel condemned to death, and setting him in a state of favour, reconciled to God, as if he had been ever a loyal subject. But this is a forensic, a legal matter. It changes, and this eternally, the man's legal status before the law of God, but it does not of itself alter him in himself, or make him personally holy or agreeable.

2. But on this new basis and relationship God is enabled to propose, and by the work of His Spirit to effect, in the believer all manner of new possibilities and advance in holiness, fellowship, service, and rewards of service in the kingdom of His Son. All this is of grace, for God is under no liability so to favour us. But here enters the question of personal worthiness and fitness. In the natural realm all sons are sharers in the father's love and care and possessions; but not all develop equal fitness for business, fortune, honours, or are therefore worthy thereof. Their fitness will depend, firstly, on native endowment ("he gave to each according to his particular ability" - Darby, Matthew 25: 15), and then on the response of each to the call of position, to diligence in using opportunities of education, on the acceptance of discipline, and on profit from training. And for what a son does not thus fit himself he will not be fit, and will not be counted worthy to attain to that. Therefore, Hogg and Vine (2 Thess. 1: 5) rightly enough say: "There was no intrinsic merit in the exercise of faith and patience such as would establish a claim to the Kingdom of God; their faith and patience testified to the call of God (Eph. 2: 12) and to the working in them of the powers of that Kingdom. It was fitting and right, then, that persons in whom those powers were operating, and in whom consequently a character in harmony with that Kingdom was being produced, should be given a place in it at its manifestation."

But now the solemn question arises: What of believers in whom these powers are not operating and in whom consequently a character in harmony with that kingdom is not being produced? That there are such both Scripture and observation testify. There ever have been, there still are, Demas-like christians who have turned back to the world; back-sliders, a fact, alas.

Here enters the element of faith, diligence, attainment, reward; here arises the need for the warnings of loss, disinheriting, chastisement. There is such a solemn state as the not using the grace of God made available in Christ by His Spirit (Hebrews 12: 15; 2 Corinthians 6: 1). Whatever anyone attains it will be wholly "to the praise of the glory of His grace" which gave the opportunity and the ability; whatever loss or chastisement is incurred will be because of misuse of or neglect of the opportunity and the ability grace had provided.

It is manifest that not all loyal women subjects of the king are worthy to be his queen, nor are all dutiful men competent to be cabinet ministers. It was Esther's personal charms that caused the king to choose her to be his queen. Granted most fully that it is grace alone that produces this fitness in us who had no fitness whatever, yet grace must produce it or it will not be there. It is not an imputed, but a real fitness of character, as Hogg and Vine justly show; a fitness produced by the power of God indeed, but shown in faith and patience. Were it a simply imputed fitness, that the Thessalonians already had by faith, why, then, did Paul so earnestly pray and exhort that they might at last be found possessed of it? Either that imputed righteousness may be lost, or Paul's prayers were not in place, or the explanation here offered must rule.

The dying thief (Luke 23: 39-43) is a peculiarly brilliant example of what constitutes fitness for the company of the Lord. That man discerned the true person, character and dignity of Christ in an hour when it seemed inconceivable that He was who He was. His confession was: "This man has done nothing out of

place." He exercised personal faith in Christ just when the whole world cast Him out, when even His own followers failed in faith and forsook Him. He espoused the Saviour when men were deriding Him, and publicly set upon Him only his every hope.

It was easy for Paul to admit the claims of Jesus when he saw Him in glory above the brightness of the sun: the faith of the thief was indefinitely superior; he believed and trusted and confessed in the very hour when the light was being eclipsed in the deepest darkness of a dreadful death. Perhaps no more superb act of faith ever was or can be exercised, and according to his faith it will be unto him, as unto each and all. John 6: 40 does not regard eternal life and the first resurrection as concomitant. The resurrection "in the last day" we take to mean that general resurrection which was the hope of the pious (John 11: 24) before (as far as is shown) a prior resurrection of some of the dead had been clearly taught. What is guaranteed simply to faith in Jesus as the Son of God is resurrection unto eternal life in the last day, the names of such believers being in the book of life for His sake (Revelation 20: 12). What, in addition, is open to every believer is "to be accounted worthy to attain unto the resurrection which is out from among the dead," and so to share the reign of Christ when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory (Revelation 20: 4-6).

We may therefore most readily quote 1 Peter 1: 13 as to the favour that is to come at the revelation of Jesus Christ, but also we should heed the warnings of the Word lest we miss aught that God of His favour is ready to give. And from among the blessings possible to be forfeited we see no just ground to exclude sharing in the first resurrection and the reign of Christ. Scripture, as we read it, plainly urges us not to forfeit these but to attain thereto, according to the distinct statement in Luke 20: 35, "accounted worthy to attain." It is not simply being fit for that out resurrection, but attaining thereto, implying zeal and diligence in pursuit of an object.

IV. GRACE MAY IMPOSE CONDITIONS.

We have pointed out (a) That all gifts come to men from God on the principle of grace, since we deserve nothing but wrath. "To the sinner anything out of hell is a mercy"; (b) That nevertheless there is always possibility that man may not accept what grace offers, and so not benefit by the grace of God.

This is true of the unregenerate: such may refuse or neglect salvation entirely. It remains true of the saved, in so far that they may fail to receive those further benefits to which regeneration opens the way.

No one questions this in relation to this present life, for it is certain that many believers do not enjoy very much of the present portion in Christ available to every believer. Assurance of salvation, conscious relation with God as child to father, priestly access and power in intercession, some heart-sense of sitting with Christ in heavenly places, may be instanced as privileges often missed, of which, indeed, many who own that Jesus is their redeemer have no knowledge at all, not even as possible. Through defective instruction they are like those disciples who had not received the Spirit because they did not know He had been given. (Acts 19: 2).

It is also certain that some who did know these privileges in power have forfeited this experience through carnality and worldliness.

As, then, present privileges may be missed, on what ground are we to hold that future privileges cannot be? Of course, intelligent students of the Word do not so hold. It is generally admitted that rewards in the kingdom will be proportionate to works of faith, to labours of love, to sufferings for the kingdom in this life,

which rewards therefore have the nature of prizes, crowns, and may be forfeited.

Now the important point here considered is that, not only status and reward in the kingdom, but sharing in it at all stands also on this precise footing. No new principle of life or recompense is introduced, but only an extension of the same principle. It thus becomes simply a question of what is the testimony of Scripture upon the point. This testimony we deem to be as plain and abundant as for the truth that there is to be a kingdom of God. We take numerous statements addressed to disciples to mean exactly what they say, as Matt. 5: 20; 18: 3; Rom. 8: 17; 1 Cor. 6:7, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:10, 11; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Rev. 2:27, 28; 3:4, 5, 21; etc.

It is narrated that Queen Elizabeth was dealing with an appeal for pardon by a would-be assassin. She proposed to show grace upon conditions that she would name. The suppliant answered that grace with conditions were no grace. It is said that Elizabeth declared that to be a better lesson in theology than her bishops had ever taught her.

Probably many may deem this a striking thought, yet it is certainly false. Grace is none the less grace if, for good reason, it impose conditions. John Bampton left property for the maintenance at Oxford of the celebrated lectureship that bears his name. This was grace, since he was under no liability so to bequeath his possessions. But for securing a certain standard he imposed the condition that the lecturer should be at least a Mister of Arts, and for secure permanency to the lectures he ordered that the lecturer should not be paid until there had been printed thirty copies of the lectures. These conditions did not impair his grace but they showed his wisdom.

A gift may be absolute or conditional. If it be the former the property can need he reclaimed by the donor or denied to the receiver. But if it be the latter the receiver forfeits his title if the condition be not fulfilled.

Bequests are known which operate only on such conditions as that the legatee (a) shall take the name of the testator, or (b) shall continue to dwell in the house desired, or (c) shall never become a Roman Catholic. Such conditions are of two classes (a) operates before the property devised passes to the legatee ; (b) and (c) continue after the property has passed. In the case of (a), the name having been taken the gift becomes absolute in (b) and (c) it remains always conditional. Now as regards the gifts of God they are of necessity conditional, some are of the (a) class, others of the (b) and (c) class.

Justification and eternal life are the former. The condition required. and which is necessarily indispensable, is repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. If this condition is not fulfilled these gifts offered by grace never pass to the sinner. If, however, this condition is met these benefits operate, and are irrevocable by God and non-forfeitable by the receiver. Thus it is written of the repenting and believing man that he is "justified freely" by God's grace through (out of regard to) the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and that "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3. 2-1 : 6, 23), We take the terms translated freely and free to mean not only free from purchase price to be found by the sinner, but free from after conditions, once upon repentance and by faith these benefits have been acquired.

But we do not find this asserted as regards any subsequent privileges offered by the grace of God. These all are equally gifts of grace but are of the (b) and (c) Class, having conditions attached which require perpetual fulfilment. If God has made reigning with His Son in His kingdom consequent upon suffering with Him now, this does not impair His grace to men in ever opening so magnificent a prospect, but it shows that it is indeed marked by "all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. 1 : 8). for thus His grace cannot be abused to

promote slothfulness and on faithfulness.

V. THE "IF'S" OF SCRIPTURE AS TO PRESENT PRIVILEGES.

It is now further to be shown that the gifts of God offered to believers though granted out of grace, are subject to conditions.

To Israel in Egypt exposed to the Destroyer deliverance was granted solely out of regard by God to the blood of redemption: When I see the blood I will pass over you" (" hover over," as a bird protecting her nest: see Isaiah 31: 5, where the same term is used and the preceding picture shows its meaning). No conditions as to the future conduct of the people were imposed, though God foresaw their coming unfaithfulness. No "if" was then heard from God. The guarantee of deliverance from death was absolute. Justification does not hang upon sanctification; it is absolute, irreversible, solely because of God's estimate of the eternal value of the precious blood of Christ.

But only three days after the now redeemed people were for ever free from Egypt, by their baptism into fellowship with Moses through passing with him through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10: 1), God spake to them His first direct utterance as a saved people, and it commenced with "IF" : "if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His eyes, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee" (Exodus 15: 25, 26). The first blessing promised, bodily health, was placed upon the footing of works, "if thou wilt do," and was conditional upon obedience. This was before they were put under the law of Sinai.

When only the third month was come God gave His second promise. It also commenced with "IF": "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be My own possession from among all peoples; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exodus 19: 5, 6). The second blessing promised--special relation to God as a kingdom of priests, was also conditional upon obedience.

In the fact the nation as a whole forthwith forfeited the priestly dignity, by flagrantly disobeying the first and second commandments of the just delivered decalogue, by making the golden calf, and only the one family of Aaron received it. Again, of that family Nadab and Abihu lost their position and their lives by disobedience on the very day of their consecration to the holy office (Numbers 10); later Phinehas secured the dignity to his family by signal faithfulness (Numbers 25: 10); while still later Eli's family, though of the house of Phinehas, lost it by unfaithfulness (1 Samuel 4). In days yet to come in Israel unfaithful men of the priestly family shall be debarred the office, but faithful men shall secure it (Ezekiel 44 : 10-16). And at that time, in relation to the rest of mankind, Israel as a people shall at last be what God meant them from the first to be as a people, mediators of His blessing to the nations, but of which dignity they have hitherto proved incapable and unworthy : " ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah 3 (Isaiah 61: 6). But at that time they will have been born of God, will have a new heart and spirit, and will fulfil the indispensable condition of obedience laid down for the priesthood.

These typical instances exhibit the place of "IF" in the dealings of God with men. In the matter of redemption, justification, deliverance from wrath, a new standing before God, the declarations of Scripture are positive; the words "The one believing upon the Son hath eternal life" declare present salvation, and the words " cometh not into judgment," as to the question of eternal life or death, cover the future (John 3: 36; 5: 24). But this eternally safe standing having been reached by faith, and the man having been now

called into, and by baptism actually put into, the fellowship of God's Son (our Moses), and being thus set forth into the wilderness upon the path of faith in God, at once God shows that future privileges depend as to their enjoyment upon the obedience of faith.

All believers are Christ's people, but, what is far, far higher, "ye are My friends IF ye do the things which I command you" (John 15: 14). The Lord on His side loves unchangeably every one of His own, but it is "IF ye keep My commandments ye [on your side] shall abide in [the enjoyment of] My love (John 15: 10). The promises of God are available to every believer without distinction, the mercy seat is open to each without discrimination, but it is only "IF ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you [ye shall] ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15: 7).

It is significant that these conditional promises were addressed to the most inner circle of faithful disciples, the apostles, the men to whom the Lord said at that same time, "ye are they who have continued with Me in My trials," and to whom consequently He promised sovereign positions in His kingdom. Yet past faithfulness did not exempt them from the solemn and necessary "IF" as regards the future.

These last scriptures show that for us, as for Israel, the priestly right is conditional. We, as they, are called to the priestly position (1 Peter 2 : 9; Revelation 1 : 6); access to the throne of grace is free to all (Hebrews 4: 16); but we have power in intercession only IF we abide in Christ and His words in us, and so our inner heart be free before God, and our outer life be pure before men, by obedience to the Word (Hebrews 10: 22).

The application of this principle to future dignity and privilege will be next shown.

VI. THE "IF'S" OF SCRIPTURE AS TO FUTURE HONOURS.

The case of Joshua the high priest (Zechariah 3) is a further striking illustration both of the divine and human aspects of matters spiritual and of the place of "IF" in the ways of God with man, Joshua, representing as high priest all his people, is first seen as every man is before God, "clothed with filthy garments," the word "filthy" being "the strongest expression in the Hebrew language for filth of the most loathsome character," (Baron, in loco).

The full details of the process of making such an one fit for the presence and the service of God are given in Leviticus 8. He was stripped, bathed, reclothed in garments of glory and beauty, and upon his head was placed the turban bearing the golden band inscribed "Holiness to Jehovah," signifying his entire dedication to the service of the Holy One. All this was on the basis of sacrifices next detailed. During this process of qualifying a sinner for nearness and service and worship, Joshua does nothing and says nothing; all is done for him and to him, he being only a willing, consenting, but passive party. This is the faith in which a sinner ceases from his own dead works and consents to be justified by God in Christ Jesus.

But immediately Joshua has been thus securely established before God without works, God forthwith addresses him with an "IF" concerning works and declares further privileges to be dependent upon his conduct. This is precisely the place of "if" as before shown. We read: "And the Angel of Jehovah solemnly (Baron) protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: IF thou wilt walk in My ways, and IF thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by."

Here are present privileges in service in the house of God, and they are dependent upon personal behaviour. "But the climax of promise in this verse is reached in the last clause, 'And I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by,' (Baron); and this (which is our more immediate point) has to do with privilege in the age to come and in the heavenly sphere of the Kingdom. Mr. Baron continues:

"These that stand by' - as we see by comparing the expression with verse 4- are the angels, who were in attendance upon the Angel of Jehovah, and who 'stood before Him' ready to carry out His behests. The promise is usually limited by Christian commentators to signify that God would yet give to Joshua, and to the priesthood generally, fuller and nearer access to Him than they possessed hitherto, or than was possible in the old dispensation; but the Jewish Targum is, I believe, nearer the truth when it paraphrases the words, 'In the resurrection of the dead I will revive thee, and give thee feet walking among these seraphim.' Thus, applied to the future, the sense of the whole verse would be this: 'If thou wilt walk in My ways and keep My charge, thou shalt not only have the honour of judging My house and keeping My courts, but when thy work on earth is done thou shalt be transplanted to higher service in heaven, and have "places to walk" among these pure angelic 'beings who stand by Me, hearkening unto the voice of My word' (Psalm 103: 20, 21). Note the 'if's' in this verse, my dear reader, and lay to heart the fact that, while pardon and justification are the free gifts of God to all that are of faith, having their source wholly in His infinite and sovereign grace, and quite apart from work or merit on the part of man, the honour and privilege of acceptable service and future reward are conditional upon our obedience and faithfulness: therefore seek by His grace and in the power of His Spirit to 'walk in His ways and to keep His charge,' and in all things, even if thine be the lot of a 'porter' or 'doorkeeper' in the House of God, to present thyself approved unto Him, in remembrance of the day when 'we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad'" (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

It will be next shown how this principle is asserted in the epistle to the Hebrews concerning the high privileges of being to God as a dwelling and to the Son of God as the personal companions of a sovereign.

VII. THE LETTER TO THE "HEBREWS" IS ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIANS.

The principles of the divine ways which we have noted in the case of Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3) obtain in the epistle to the Hebrews also. Hence they apply to the present age. Moreover, the argument anti warning from the failure of many who left Egypt to enter their inheritance, which is the theme of chs. 3 and 4, are employed in the same form and sense in 1 Cor. 10, addressed to Gentile Christians. This fact sets aside the suggested limiting of Hebrews to "Jewish" believers.

The persons addressed are defined distinctly. They are "holy" - set apart unto God; they are "brethren" - therefore members of the family of God; they are "partakers of a heavenly calling." The very argument of the writer is based by him on the fact that they had surrendered their standing, religion, and association as Jews, with the conjoined calling to earthly privilege, and had turned to Him whom their nation had rejected and crucified, even Jesus, and had found in Him the Apostle and High Priest of their new confession, with its calling to heavenly blessing. Israel had driven Him from the earth as a blasphemer for saying He was the Son of God: these owned Him to be such, and so became joined to Him as banished by men, the Lord from heaven. When a writer thus describes with precision the character of the persons he addresses, it is unfair to him and confusing to the reader to suppose (as many do in this case) that actually he includes another sort of person that he does not describe, namely, such as merely profess to belong to the class in view but do so falsely or under misapprehension. It is an elementary and obvious rule of interpretation that

statements in a letter or document must be presumed to apply to the persons to whom the writing is avowedly addressed, unless the letter itself indicates otherwise as to any portion thereof.

The Word of God does indeed contemplate a class of persons who are professors and nothing more, but when it does so it describes these as distinctly as the other class, as in 2 Tim. 3: 1-9; Tit. 1 : 10-16; 2 Pet. 2; Jude 8-16; etc. To bring these into passages addressed plainly to believers is unwarranted, and is also injurious by turning the keen edge of solemn warnings designed to quicken the consciences of saints and to deter from backsliding of heart and of life. And of this how great and increasing is the need today,

A "mixed multitude" who were not Israelites came out of Egypt and became a source of moral infection to the true people of God (Num. 11). But where do they afterwards appear in the history? It was not to such, but to the real descendants of Israel that the promises were given and also the threatenings addressed. The latter, as certainly as the former, have been fulfilled to the sons of the covenant, telling us to mark for our own instruction both the goodness and the severity of God (Rom. 11:22).

That the writer of Hebrew contemplates true believers, and these of no ordinary spiritual attainment, is plain from his statement following a solemn warning: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak," this confidence being based on the positive fact, which he states as proved by their deeds, that they loved the name of God and showed this by serving His saints (ch. 6:9-11. Comp. 1 John 3:14).

Further, he testifies that they "had endured a great conflict of sufferings"; they had been a gazing-stock to the crowds who saw them reproached and afflicted, and they had openly sided with their fellow-believers when so misused. Also they had so deep, firm, supporting a conviction of their heavenly calling and prospects as to be able to look on joyfully when their houses were despoiled and they were robbed of their possessions, because they knew assuredly that they had a better possession and an abiding one (ch. 10: 32-34). To assume that such bold confessors were hypocrites or self-deceived is surely unjustifiable. The writer at least addressed them as genuine and beloved fellow-disciples, and praised and warned and exhorted them as such. He who wishes to benefit by their promises must honestly accept the warnings also.

The nature of these warnings will be next considered.

VIII. THE WARNINGS IN HEBREWS.

(1. THE HOUSE OF GOD.)

The Hebrews is thus addressed to children of God, "holy brethren," and such are exhorted to concentrate attention upon Jesus as the Son who has been appointed by God His Father as ruler of His "house" (ch. 3:1).

The house of God is that place, or that system of things, or that person, wherein at any time He has a dwelling. In that place or system or person His order is to obtain, His will to prevail, His pleasure alone to be served, This is the law of the house. For the securing and maintaining of this order the house must needs have a ruler; and this ruler is Christ, the Son of God. All authority in the house of God is vested by the Father in Him. In this sense He is the firstborn, for in ancient days the firstborn ruled the family under the father.

In ch. 3: 6 we are told that "we are God's house if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end," and a solemn warning at once follows from the history of Israel in the wilderness, to which therefore we turn to illuminate this passage.

Israel was the chosen people of God; was redeemed by the blood of the lamb; was nourished upon the lamb itself; was freed from slavery at the Red Sea; was fed with bread from heaven, and refreshed with water from the rock; was guided and shaded by the pillar of cloud; was in daily association with God through His appointed mediator, Moses, and walked the path of faith in the desert. Yet it was not till three months beyond the Red Sea that the idea of God dwelling among them, and making them to Him as a house, was first proposed (Exodus 25: 8), and it was a whole year after redemption and liberation before they became to God a house by His descent to the tabernacle (Exodus 40: 1).

It thus appears that persons may be redeemed and delivered, and be brought into true relationship with God as His people, and yet remain some time without His presence indwelling them, without becoming to Him a house. Thus it was with those who became true disciples of Christ while He was on earth; they did not become a house of God before Pentecost, for only then did God dwell in them. And thus it was with some after Pentecost (Acts 8: 14-17; 19: 1-7), Thus therefore it may be still, though it need not now be so.

It is further to be much observed that Israel nearly forfeited entirely this distinctive privilege (as Moses regarded it, ch. 33: 16). For upon their early and gross sin with the golden calf God said to Moses, "Go up hence . . . - I will send an angel before thee . . . for I will not go up in the midst of thee lest I consume thee in a moment" (Exodus 33: 1.3), Thus the penalty, though severe, was proposed only in mercy. Love withholds gifts the possession of which would be injurious.

But in response to the urgent appeal of the faithful mediator, Moses, God relented, and said, "My presence shall go"; not simply with Moses - the words "with thee" are not warranted; but shall go with the people, which was what Moses had asked; and so Israel became the house of God. For by the presence of Jehovah in the Tent He was 9 necessarily in the midst of the whole camp, and so not the Tent only, but the nation itself became His sanctuary, for "when Israel went out of Egypt . . . Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion" (Psalm 114: 1, 2).

This was a beginning of that dwelling of God with men which is realized now in the church and in individual saints, and will again become the glory of Israel (Ezekiel 43) and finally of redeemed humanity (Revelation 21: 3). It is next to be noted and emphasized that later on Israel lost this dignity, for the ark, the place of the Presence, was given into the hand of the enemy by Israel's sin and folly (1 Samuel 4; Psalm 78: 56-64). God "forsook the tabernacle," and so Israel ceased to be His house, though remaining His people.

After a season He graciously returned to them and dwelled in glory in Solomon's temple, and once more Israel was His house. But presently we hear Jehovah warning them to consider "what I did to My place which was in Shiloh for the wickedness of My people" (Jeremiah 7: 12-14). He owns they were His people at the time they were not His house. They disregarded this warning, therefore shortly the glory left the temple and it was given up to destruction (Ezekiel 9), and again the people of God ceased to be the house of God, Is it remotely possible, or rather, not wholly inconceivable, that a believer given over to Satan for his body, which had been a sanctuary of God, to be destroyed in judgment on gross and vile sin (1 Corinthians 5) remains indwelt by God while the Devil effects the destruction? The type now in view repels the notion. While God remained in the temple Nebuchadnezzar could not have destroyed it.

But in due time the second temple was built, though the Shechina did not return. Yet presently the Lord of glory came to it in humble guise, and once more God was among His people, Immanuel. But they had turned His Father's house into a den of robbers, and they would not receive Him; wherefore at length He abandoned them with the sad and fateful words, "Your house is left unto you. For I say unto you, In no wise shall ye see Ale from now until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23: 38, 39). Through the long and weary centuries since, Israel, though still beloved for the fathers' sake, is not the house of God, for He dwells not among them.

In this period of their abandonment, God dwells in christians individually (1 Corinthians 6:19) and in a church corporately (1 Corinthians 3: 16, 17; Ephesians 3: 19-22), and we, as was Israel, are warned that God will destroy those who make His house unfit for His presence (1 Corinthians 3: 17). Some Corinthian believers had already exemplified in their bodies what this threat meant: some were weak, others positively sick, and not a few had died prematurely (1 Corinthians 11: 30-32, and comp. Jas. 5: 19, 20 and 1 John 5: 16, 17). The same dread sentence had been passed upon yet another brother there (ch. 5: 3-5), but seems to have been averted by early repentance (2 Corinthians 2: 5.8).

And as regards the application of all this to a church corporate, the last view the Lord from heaven gives of such an assembly (Revelation 3: 14-22) shows Himself, the Head of the house, outside its barred door, 10 threatening it with corporate rejection and chastening; so that it was not then His dwelling, though He offers in grace to re-enter. Yet the severity threatened is on account of His love, showing that it is His own people that are in question.

All this makes evident: (1) That to be the house of God is not necessary to salvation. No one can become the former till after the latter is. the fact. (2) That it is a privilege based upon but distinctly additional to salvation. (3) That this privilege (a) may never be gained; (b) the offer thereof may be withdrawn; (c) after having been enjoyed it may be forfeited; (d) yet upon repentance may be regained; and (e) may yet again be lost.

By confusing things that differ, and taking "salvation" and "being' the house of God" as the same thing, many misuse these facts to teach that salvation may be gained and lost, lost and regained, many times. But they who reject this false conclusion must certainly acknowledge that the case does so stand as regards the privilege of being a "house' of God," and for truth's sake must accept honestly the consequences as regards present and future privileges. In faithfulness the whole of the ' type ought to be regarded, its history and end, not only its glorious. beginning when the Lord first descended to the tabernacle or temple.

How exactly this corresponds to and explains much variable and sorrowful experience in christians it were easy though painful to show; but here it is only pointed out what the Word of God has to say upon the subject. And all its testimony is concentrated in and explains why it is that believers are to God as a house in which He dwells "if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end." The honour and bliss of being a dwelling for the Most High is open to each by grace, but the privilege is conditional, not absolute. 'We shall consider next this truth as given in verse 14 of this ch. 3..

IX. THE WARNINGS IN HEBREWS.

(2. THE COMPANIONS OF THE KING.)

The translation of Hebrews 3: 14, "We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," teaches, and is used to teach, that our whole saving interest in Christ depends upon steadfastness unto the end, that is, that our final salvation is never sure while life lasts. But the rendering is open to objections. It does not admit of "Christ" being read "Messiah," nor will it admit of the article being translated, "the Messiah"; and it throws the verse into conflict with the many passages which assert the eternal security of the justified. The word "partakers " is that given in chap. 1: 9 as "fellows" God hath anointed Thee (the Son) with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." The Son of God has, then, "fellows." They are those many other sons of God that He is bringing to glory, not whom He is simply saving from destruction (Hebrews 2: 10). In 3: 14 Delitsch and Rotherham use "partners," J. N. Darby the finer word "companions." The verse will better read, "We have become companions of the Messiah (the coming King) if we should have held fast (on the assumption that we are found at last to have held fast) the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end."

We are told of certain "young men that had grown up with Rehoboam, that stood before him" (1 Kings 12: 8). They were the king's companions. And we read of such as had walked through this polluted world without defilement of heart or person that they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Revelation 14: 4), they are with Him all the time. These are "the called and chosen and faithful" (Revelation 17: 14), and are "with Him," sharing His triumph as King of kings. For to such as do not "defile their garments" as they tread this "squalid place" (2 Peter 1: 19), but keep themselves "unspotted from the world " (James 1 : 27), the King has passed His word that they shall walk (about, that is, habitually) with Me in white; for they are worthy," and "he that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments," which is the condition of being part of the wife of the Lamb, for "the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints," by the doing of which she makes herself ready" for the marriage" (Revelation 3: 4, 5; 19: 7, 8). The figure "wife" is a picture of the same privilege as "companions," for she is the closest and most constant companion of her husband. These, then, are the "companions of the Messiah," of the Son of God as the coming King, Theirs is the honour of being ever near to His person. Like the seven princes of Persia they "see the king's face" (Revelation 22: 4), that is, have unrestricted access to him, which the generality of a king's subjects have not, and they "sit first in the kingdom " (Esther 1 : 14; Revelation 22: 5, "they reign "). They have shared His trials now and shall share His glory then. The whole of the loyal subjects of a good sovereign are blessed under his rule, but only the few are His companions. To all believers in this age of Christ's rejection this privilege and recompense is open: "we have be- 25 2 3 .come" Christ's companions in the purpose of the grace of God; but we shall actually take hold of this honour, to bring us to which we have been taken hold of by the Lord, "if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end."

Delitsch on Hebrews 3: 6 is worth quoting. "If the New Testament church holds fast (obtinere, to maintain) the treasure of hope, notwithstanding all the contradictions between the present and the promised future, in the midst of all dangers of offence and falling away prepared for her by the threatenings and allurements of the enemies of the cross, then, and only then, does she continue the house of God." And on verse 14 he says: "The (if) implies that the first proposition holds true in all its content, provided only that the second be added. What Christ possesses belongs also to them, and will continue theirs, now concealed, but to be made manifest hereafter, provided only they remain steadfast in their confidence of faith, and so the close of their christian course correspond to its commencement."

Who would share Abraham's blessing

Must Abraham's path pursue;

A stranger and a pilgrim
Like him must journey through.
The foes must be encountered,
The dangers must be passed;
Only a faithful soldier
Receives the crown at last.

PAUL GERHARDT.

X. GRACE AND FAITH.

Underlying the ways of God with His people before mentioned, and the mass of conditional promises of which specimens have been considered, there are a fact, and a principle resulting from the fact, which belong to the essential mutual relationship of the Creator and the creature. This fundamental feature is given in the Lord's words, "according to your faith be it done unto you" (Matt. 9: 29).

The principle of the divine provision for man is grace; the principle of our attaining is faith; and "according to your faith" is the inflexible condition. Now faith is not merely an apprehending of ideas by the intellect, nor only the assent of the reason, though it includes both of these: faith is a principle of action involving the will, and working out in obedience to God and love to men. Incipient faith obeys God upon the primary point of trusting to Christ for salvation from wrath, and it secures that primary benefit for which it trusts. Developing faith obeys God upon various successive points of His holy will; this issues in sanctity of character and holiness of conduct; and according to this advance of faith in practical godliness will be the weight of glory which the individual will be capable of bearing. "The path of sorrow is, not indeed the meriting, but the capacitating preparation " for glory (Moule on Rom. 8:17).

It is unquestionable that this unchanging, because unavoidable, rule operates undeviatingly as to benefits obtainable in this life: the Scripture shows plainly that it applies also to privileges open beyond this life. Of these, one is the sharing in the first resurrection and so inheriting the kingdom of God. There is not any ground in Scripture or reason why these particular privileges should be an exception to the invariable rule stated. The rule lies in the essential nature of man and his relationships with God, and no suspension or exception seems possible so long as God is God and man is man. Apart from faith it is impossible for man to be pleasing to God or for God to honour man. He cannot be pleased with unbelief or reward it.

The measure of blessing in the possibility is the immeasurable merit of Christ, freely made available to sinners by the grace of God: the measure of blessing in actual attainment is our faith, faith as above defined and evidenced. Therefore both translation and the better resurrection are consequent upon a life of faith that pleases God, as is shown plainly in Heb. 11:5 and 35. "Such faith in us, O God, implant, And to our prayers Thy favour grant, Through Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, Who is our fount of health alone."

XI. THE IDEAL AND THE ACTUAL.

James 1:13-17 shows (1) that God is not susceptible of temptation to do evil; (2) that He tempts no one to do evil; (3) that all His gifts are good; (4) that He is unchangeable. This passage does not speak of men only: it reads, "God Himself tempts no one," and includes every being He has made.

It will follow that neither the introduction of moral evil into the universe, nor its continuance, was part of the original intention of, God. He did not design that evil should come, or He would in that have yielded to temptation to produce evil, which is impossible. He incites no being to do moral evil: it arises in the inward personal desires of the creature. And because God is not susceptible of change, these things must have been always true of Him and must remain so for ever.

Nor can this be set aside by the facts that He foresaw how matters would go, and in grace designed remedial measures. His original determination could not have made evil inevitable, or He would be its responsible author.

Consequently it must have been the desire and willingness of the Creator that all beings should retain always their original purity and excellence, and in this He must have been willing to maintain them. But the actual is less than this ideal: not all creatures have retained their original estate.

Again, when redemption was planned, its scope was to include the whole race of man. (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 John 2:2; 4:14; and 5: 19 shows that the "world" means the whole human race as under Satan's power, not the elect only.) But here also the actual is less than the ideal: not all men are or will be saved.

Once more. When God planned the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, it was His covenant, purpose and promise that all the people should inherit Canaan; but the actual proved less than the ideal (1 Cor. 10; Heb. 3 and 4).

Yet again, it was the first offer of God that all Israelites should be priests unto Him, representing Him before other peoples and being His agents of blessing to them (Exod. 19: 6). In the fact, only one family retained this privilege: the actual was less than the ideal.

Further instances can be given. The principle involved is that God forms an ideal plan, and is very willing to enable all the subjects thereof to attain thereto; but He has granted to angels and to men a determining voice each in his own affairs; therefore, He does not coerce any, avowedly or secretly - it was never in His plan to do so; and in consequence the creature can abuse this splendid endowment to his own loss: "How often would I have gathered . . . and ye would not" (Matt. 23: 37). Thus the will of man is permitted to prevail against the will of God, within the realm of the man's personal interests, and the actual proves less than the ideal.

Now, after regeneration, the believer still retains this determining power in his own affairs. "Would ye also go away" from Me? asked Christ of the apostles (John 6: 67). It was within their power to do so. God in grace grants every possible inducement and provision for our progress and attainment, but He does not coerce His children, for only what is prompted by love has worth to Him, and love must act freely.

Here enters that possibility of the non-attaining of privileges open by the goodness of God, which possibility has been before illustrated from so many scriptures, and which as certainly and inevitably applies to things future as present, to the heavenly as the earthly. "His divine power hath granted unto us all things . . . for this very cause add on your part all diligence . . . give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1: 3-11).

XII. FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FOREORDINATION.

As soon as ever redeemed Israel stood on the resurrection side of the Red Sea they celebrated in advance their entrance into Canaan, The series of past tenses in their song (Exod. 15: 13-15), and the

certainty expressed as to the future (16-18), is arresting. "Thou has: led Thy people . . . Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation Thou shalt bring them in and plant them."

Here are no " ifs," no conditions, no contemplation of failure, either of the nation or even of individuals. The entrance of all then singing is asserted beforehand as if they were already in the land. Yet in the fact, 600,000 there present and singing failed to enter in because of unbelief and disobedience (Heb. 3: 18-4: 6).

In form and in theme this passage is parallel to Romians 8: 28-30: "Whom He foreknew He also foreordained . . . - whom He foreordained them He also called: and whom He called them He also justified: and whom He justified them He also glorified." Here also is a series of past tenses, and the attainment of glory by all the justified is asserted without any hint of possible failure to attain. Yet the very many conditional passages before presented declare clearly the possibility of missing the heavenly inheritance, as so many of Israel missed the earthly, and, indeed, in this very chapter 8, verse 17, the sharing of the glory of Christ has been set forth as conditional: " heirs indeed of God, but joint-heirs with Messiah, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified with Him."

The feature of the Word of God here seen is profoundly important. Where a matter is stated as it lies in the purpose and willingness of God the statement is inclusive of all the subjects of that purpose and has no contingencies expressed, for these latter are not part of the divine purpose, though foreseen by the divine knowledge. It was from no determination of God that the 600,000 did not reach Canaan, though He foresaw it. Foreknowledge does not of necessity involve foreordination. One may get to foreknow that a thief intends to break into his house, but he does not therefore foreordain it. Hence in Rom. 8: 28 it says: "Whom He foreknew He also foreordained," not "He thereby foreordained." Did the one necessarily include the other God would have been the foreordainer of sin, for He foreknew it.

But where the statement includes the human response to the divine call the unavoidable facts of human frailty or perverseness are necessarily found, and possible failure is contemplated and attainment becomes conditional.

Thus 1 Cor. 15 :23 is of the former class: " they that are Christ's at His parousia" will be raised, no exceptions being suggested; but verse 49 (in Nestle text) is of the latter class: "as we have borne the image of the earthy, let us also bear the image of the heavenly." So Jude 24: "He is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory," sets forth the ability of God, which knows no restraint on His side; but 2 Pet. 1, 10, 11 supplies the balance, and the corrective to presumption, by its urgent appeal, "brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never stumble, and thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance, etc."

It has surely been a lamentably successful wile of the enemy of truth to persuade christians to hurl these classes of passages at one another from opposing camps, instead of them being seen as complementary and in full harmony with the facts concerning both God and man.

XIII. A COVENANT EVEN ON OATH MAY BE REVOKED.

It is laid down in Scripture that once a "covenant hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3: 15). Especially does this hold when a covenant has been solemnized by an oath, for "the oath is final for confirmation" (Heb. 6: 16). The argument of these passages implies that since these features hold in the case of a human covenant, how much more must they apply to a divine covenant Now

God made a covenant on oath with Abraham to give the land of Canaan to his descendants, yet in the case of the 600,000 of them who revolted at Kadesh Barnea, God said "Ye shall know My alienation," meaning "the revoking of My promise" (Num. 14: 34); and thus Moses, reciting this history, said: "Jehovah heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see the good land which I swore to give unto your fathers " (Deut. 1: 34, 35).

Thus that which God had first sworn to do He later swears not to do, which arresting fact is noted by the psalmist (106: 26). And this seeming defection of God was a perplexity to Ethan the Ezrahite, as he shows in Psalm 89. He there enlarges upon the sworn covenant of Jehovah with David, setting in contrast with it the deplorable fact of Israel's then experience. Note the "But" of verse 38, and the almost reproachful question of verse 49: "Lord, where are Thy former loving- kindnesses, which Thou swarest unto David in faithfulness?"

A similar instance may be seen in 1 Sam. 2 : 27-36, in connection with the cutting off of the house of Eli from the priestly office. Observe the words of God in verse 30: " I said indeed (see Num. 25: 10-13) that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever: but now Jehovah saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honour Me, I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed,"

In these cases there are features of the deepest nature and most solemn practical importance.

1. The covenants of God with His people are never in disregard of their behaviour as His people, but are always contingent thereon. In this they are in contrast to the unconditional gift of eternal life offered to the unregenerate. But as regards His people God never undertook to maintain them in the enjoyment of their privileges as saints in disregard of their conduct. Such an element has never found place in any divine covenant. Therefore if His people flagrantly violate their duties He is thereby absolved from His promises, and so it is said of one covenant, "They continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord" (Heb. 8 : 9).

In even human law it is a rule that there are conditions so equitable and vital, so inherent in relationships and undertakings, that they are always to be implied as belonging to the contract and do not need to be expressed in the deed of contract. From the nature of God as holy it is of necessity to be understood that He cannot morally undertake to sanction wrong-doing by blessing the wrong-doer as if he were walking uprightly. This is an always implied condition in the covenants of God, 2 and not even by an oath can the Holy One bind Himself to the contrary. As we say, it would be contrary to public policy.

This may be seen in Gen. 18: 19, in the twice repeated words "to the end that"; as al

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