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A Few Words On Elijah

1 Kings 17-20.

These chapters set before us several important principles; and we see there pointed out several very different characters; we learn in them also the ways of God.

Ahab and Jezebel appear on the scene; Elijah prophesies; Obadiah is seen and the seven thousand men of God mentioned in chapter 19:18.

The character of Ahab is presented to us in chapter 16:29-33. Ahab, Jezebel, and the four hundred and fifty prophets were at the head of the apostates of Israel, who at that time worshipped Baal. And Obadiah and the seven thousand were mixed up with the people (chap. 18); not that they served the idol, but they were friends of Ahab. As for Elijah, he was the friend of God, and, separated entirely from the apostasy, he was the only witness of the truth in the midst of all the evil.

Let us distinguish then these three different classes of persons: Ahab and Israel, apostates on one side; Elijah, on the other, the faithful servant of God; and again, somewhat different, Obadiah and the seven thousand connected always with the evil. Now let us examine the different characters of these persons.

What were the circumstances of Elijah? This feeble and poor man had no force and strength save what he found in the Lord, his only support (chap. 17:1-9). He was a man of faith and prayer; and, keeping before the Lord, he could boldly testify against the apostasy of Israel and announce the judgments of God.

It is said to him (chap. 17:3), “Get thee hence and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan”; then in verse 5 we read that he obeyed this command. We see already then that Elijah had no power, but had faith in God and knew that all blessing is in obedience. Also from the moment that the word was addressed to him, he submitted to it and went to the brook Cherith where he learnt to depend on God.

Ahab and all Israel were the enemies of Elijah (chap. 18:10); but God was his friend, and in each step that he took in fidelity to the Lord he learnt the fidelity of the Lord to him. By this means he was more and more strengthened for the mission on which he was about to be employed (chap. 18:1). God sent him to be with a poor widow who entertained him during the famine, after he was fed by the ravens at Cherith. During all the time that he was cared for by the ravens at the brook, and by the widow at Sarepta, he learnt to know the riches of the love and grace of God. It is there precisely that we learn to know ourselves also in all the circumstances in which we are placed by the Lord.

We see then in chapter 17 the simple and entire obedience of Elijah. Whether the Lord sent him to a brook to be fed by ravens; whether he was sent to a widow during the famine; whether he was sent before his real enemy Ahab (chap. 18), he made no objection, but counting on the Lord he did that which he was ordered. He was nevertheless a man subject to the same passions and to the same infirmities as ourselves (James 5:17, 18); but he had much of that faith the power of which is infinite. By it he could say that there should be no rain, and there was none; by it he could raise the son of the widow, and overcome Ahab the king and the four

hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. These circumstances shew us clearly that Elijah was in the place where one is blessed, namely, in that of obedience. Men were his enemies; Ahab had sent everywhere persons to find him out: but the Lord was his refuge, and he had learnt to trust in Him.

Let us examine now what concerns Obadiah (chap. 18:3, etc.). He feared the Lord greatly, but, spite of this, he was in the service of Ahab's house and did not bear testimony against its evil. He did not suffer the reproach of Christ. He was not like Elijah, pursued and chased from country to country. He did not know what it was to be fed by the ravens or the widow; that is to say, he lived little by faith, and knew little of the ways of God. He lived at his ease in the world. Ahab was his lord. But who was Elijah's? Jehovah. Compare chap. 18:10 and 15. O what a difference! Obadiah knew the good things of the earth; Elijah, the good things of heaven.

Let us read now verses 7-11. All the thoughts of Obadiah were about his master, whom he dreaded; but all the thoughts of Elijah were centred on the Lord, his only Master. The superiority of his position to that of Obadiah is further indicated by this circumstance, that the latter fell on his face before Elijah when he met him (v. 7). And when Elijah tells him to go and announce to Ahab, Obadiah is all frightened. Yet Obadiah was a child of God; he had even hid the prophets; but he had no strength whatever to bear testimony to the Lord, because he was associated with evil. As to Elijah, he could say fearlessly to Ahab and to all the people, "If the Lord be God, follow him," v. 21. Whence did, therefore, this boldness and power come, as seen in Elijah, a poor and weak man, who had been straitened to this point,

that he depended upon ravens and upon a widow for his food? From the fact that he stood aloof from the apostasy, that he lived by faith and had a single eye fixed upon his God. O how far better his position was than that of Obadiah!

There is in these things an application for us to make to ourselves. Let us gather from them this lesson, that since the Lord is God, it is He whom we must serve, and that, in order to be faithful to Him, we have to separate ourselves from all the principles of the apostasy by which we are surrounded.

We know how Elijah triumphed over his enemies: there is therefore no need of repeating the issue of the scene on Carmel. But let us observe that, when Elijah prayed the Lord that He might give him the victory, what he asked was, that it might be known that the Lord was God (v. 37). All the desire of his heart consisted in these two things, that the Lord might be glorified, and that His people might know Him. There was not in him the least desire to lift himself up, to exalt himself; it mattered not to him if he was nothing, provided that God might be glorified and His people brought to know Him. O that the same desire may be in us, and that all thought of vainglory may be cast far, far away!

Let us now read chapter 19. Poor Elijah! he had a lesson to learn, which we ourselves, weak and poor as we are, need to learn also. When Elijah stood before the Lord, he could by the Lord’s power stop or send rain to the earth, raise up the widow’s son, etc. But when he stood, not now before the Lord, but before Jezebel, he was then without strength, and this ungodly woman was able to cause him to fear. Downcast, Elijah therefore goes into

the wilderness, sits down under a juniper-tree and asks the Lord to take away his life (v. 4). How different he is here from what he was in the chapter before! How little did he remember what the Lord had done for him; how little did he enter into the mind of God, and expect that chariot of fire which would shortly take him up to heaven! (2 Kings 2:11).

So is it with us. We are downcast, discouraged and weak in ourselves as soon as we fail to live in faith and prayer, and then we cannot say, as Elijah in chapter 18, “The Lord before whom I stand.”

In chapter 17 Elijah by faith could make the widow’s oil and meal last; but here he is weak, and needs that an angel come to strengthen him and give him some food. (Read chap. 19:5-8.) He eats, drinks, and like a man without strength lies down. But the Lord sends the angel back again, for He is plentiful in grace and mercy; He watches over all our ways and feeds our souls according to all our wants and according to all our circumstances. The Lord therefore bore with Elijah and succoured him, and it is also what He is with respect to us. As He was afflicted in all the affliction of His people (Isa. 63:9), so is He with us in ours now.

In chapter 17 God was leading Elijah and telling him where to go, and Elijah obeyed. But in chapter 19 Elijah, fearing Jezebel, flees away and does not wait for the Lord’s commandment to go into the wilderness. See therefore what a sad message is sent to him, as recorded in verse 13, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” In verses 11 and 12 we read that a wind, an earthquake, and a fire are sent; but Elijah did not find the Lord in these things, and they could not bring comfort nor

strength to his soul. God was appearing in His grandeur and power; but what Elijah needed was the still small voice, what he wanted was the manifestation of grace and communion with his God. When, therefore, Elijah had heard the still small voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle and stood ready to obey the Lord. By the power and strength that he had found in this voice he was once again enabled to obey the commandment of the Lord.

What we have said on these chapters is very incomplete; but we believe that the chief thing is to bring out of them the principles calculated to give the intelligence of what the chapters contain. Let us therefore be mindful of avoiding the position of Obadiah and the seven thousand, who were taking their ease in the midst of apostasy, but who were without strength to bear testimony against evil. Let us also remember that, though Elijah was despised and rejected of men, he was nevertheless in the place of blessing. And if like himself we are brought to realise our weakness, let us remember that communion with the Lord can alone give us afresh zeal and devotedness and joy.

Brief Thoughts On 1 Chronicles

Chapters 11-17

There is a great difference between the David of Chronicles and that of Samuel. The king in j Chronicles is the David of grace and blessing according to the counsels of God. The king in Samuel is the historical David exercised in responsibility. In Chronicles we do not find the matter of Uriah nor that of Absalom. Even Joab with all his crimes, who is not cited in 2 Samuel 23, is here mentioned because he took the stronghold of Zion. This makes us understand what value Zion has in the eyes of God, and in what way the Chronicles regard the history. There is absolutely no evil reported, save that which is necessary to make us understand the history. In the book of Kings it is the history of Israel and the conduct of the kings under responsibility. In the books of Chronicles it is a question of God's mind, and in chapters 11 to 17 of the first book as to placing David in Jerusalem, chapter 10 having given us the fall of Saul.

Chapter 11.

David begins to reign over all Israel with the desires of the people; he begins at Zion. Afterward we have his valiant men, and their joy at installing him as king.

Chapter 12.

Here we see the heart of Israel returning to David, as it will return to Christ when He shall have established the throne in Zion. It is the heart of Israel which concentrates itself round the Beloved of God. Certain

persons came when he was a stranger; now it is all Israel.

Chapter 13.

Then it is a question of putting the ark of God in its place. Before this the ark had been taken. (See Ps. 78:59-72.) It is sovereign grace which returns. He chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which He loved.

1st. God was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel, so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand.

2nd. With David God takes up His people and sanctuary. David re-commences all the history of Israel.

Then, if Psalm 132 be looked at, this feature will be seen as to the ark: it was the sign of the covenant finally, and a new thing to be set in Zion. When Moses in Numbers 10 said, "Rise up, Lord," he did not add "into thy rest." The tabernacle in the wilderness could not be the rest of God. But Zion is the place that Jehovah chose for His rest. He desired it for His habitation (v. 13). And David enters into the mind of God. Compare verse 4. ("I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until," etc.) We see in the Psalms generally all the deep feelings in the heart of David for God. On the other hand God makes Himself respected, as we see in His dealing with Uzza.

We have thus as a summary of all this: first, that God had rejected His tabernacle, Shiloh; and, secondly, that meanwhile He gives prophets to sustain sovereign relations with His people till Messiah comes. Samuel had truly begun prophecy, which is not anything

established, but only serves meanwhile. See the song of Hannah who figures the remnant there. Prophecy declares that God is all, come what may, and that He sustains all things till He have raised the house of His anointed. Thirdly, at last in His anointed He accomplishes His mind. The people no more wished to have God working by prophecy than when He wrought by priesthood. They demand a king, and God gives Saul. Meanwhile God prepares His anointed by affliction. Hebrews 2 is just the counterpart of David's history. So, too, Jesus will reign over Judah before reigning over all Israel. In the Chronicles we have no history of David's reign in Hebron.

Chapter 14.

David king over all Israel renders himself terrible to the nations (v. 17), as the Lord will in due time (Zech. 9; Micah 5). Victory follows dependence and obedience; and as the blessing of Jehovah comes, the fame of David goes out everywhere. Psalm 18 finds its place here: in taking it all, one must place it a little later.

Chapter 15.

David now has no rest till he has prepared a resting-place for the ark of Jehovah; even as the Lord also, in the midst of conflicts, will have no rest till He establishes the tie between God and His people.

Knowing that the tabernacle was abandoned, David did not dream of putting the ark in the tabernacle. This would have been to restore things on the spoilt footing of the law. The external routine had quite fallen short of God's glory. The king takes the lead, as priesthood had failed; and the ark is put in the seat of kingly power; as

Christ the deliverer in grace will order all by-and-by in Zion, whence the rod of His power is to go forth.

Then (v. 16) David institutes choral worship or psalmody: Heman, Asaph, and even David himself in an ephod of linen danced and played. It was he that recalled the due place of the Levites, and summoned the priests in their due order, who also had the singers appointed with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals sounding by lifting up the voice with joy. All is new here and in relation to David's mind touching Zion, the centre chosen, after having left aside the tabernacle at Gibeon and all the order established primitively by Moses. "So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of Jehovah came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart," v. 25-29. Nevertheless David was not king and priest like Solomon, though it be true that his faith made all the joy of the people of God. It is a sort of anticipation of the true Melchizedek.

Chapter 16.

This song is composed of several Psalms. We find here all the principles on which God founds the blessing of His people for the last day. But there is a remarkable difference—that He does not put them in the definitive blessing. There is, to begin, a part of Psalm 105. He shews how He kept Abraham. He recalls the faithfulness of God toward them until then and bids them recollect it. Only He bids Israel be mindful always of His covenant without saying yet that He remembers it, because it is not yet the full blessing.

From verse 23 we have Psalm 96. It is always an invitation. It is not yet Psalm 98 where all is accomplished. The temple is wanting. From verse 34 we have the beginning of the Psalms which celebrate the faithfulness of God, 106, 107, 118, and 136. Psalm 106 is His goodness, faithful for ever, in presence of all the unfaithfulness of Israel. Psalm 107 is that which He has done to gather at the last day. Psalm 98 is the celebration of the Messiah come back. It is the psalm in which it is said that the stone rejected by the builders is become the head of the corner. Psalm 136 is the celebration of God’s goodness which begins from the creation, and goes through to the millennium. In this psalm mercy occupies the place from one end to the other. After this (in verses 35, 36) he cites still the end of Psalm 106. One sees by verse 35 that at this moment, as in Psalm 106, all Israel is not yet brought back and everything not yet restored. Only the pledge of the covenant is there. All the scene of the re-commencement of the relations of God with Israel is found in the Chronicles.

In verses 39-43 the altar was still with the tabernacle at Gibeon. It was a high place which one had to condemn in following David who had the fresh truth. Faith did so, though Solomon did not, but clung to the altar. However, David with the priests to offer burnt-offerings established Heman and Jeduthun, etc., to give thanks to Jehovah because His mercy endures for ever. It is thus that one can judge what is old system in the church; though we can also say, His mercy endures for ever. The altar there was a testimony to the fallen state of the people, for the ark was not in the tabernacle.

It is touching to see that the Chronicles were written in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. At that time it »/as less necessary to tell all the sins of the people than to say, His mercy endures for ever. A basis is laid for all in Chrises death, and by His resurrection all are sure mercies to be displayed at His coming and kingdom.

Chapter 17.

Here the condition laid upon the seed of David is not found as in 2 Samuel 7. God did not allow David to build the temple; because, when He would glorify Himself in the midst of the people, it was necessary that it should be in peace and that there be no more enemies. The warrior was the character of David, though at that moment there was rest all around. Because of that David could not build the house of Jehovah. Nevertheless as depositary of promises he learns that Jehovah will build him a house (v. 10), and that his son should build Jehovah a house, as He would establish David’s house for evermore (v. 12-14). How touching is the prayer of David on this occasion! (v. 16-27).

Notes On 1 Chronicles 13-17

God is graciously pleased to reveal Himself in different ways and at different times. He formerly made Himself known by prophets, but in these last times He has manifested Himself in His Son; and in whatever way He has chosen to reveal Himself, He has been rejected in them all.

For instance, the ark was the sign of the presence of Jehovah in the midst of His people. Well, the ark was abandoned (1 Sam. 7:2); just as to-day the Holy Spirit, by which God is in the midst of His people, is despised. God was then present by the ark as He is to-day by the Holy Ghost, and as He was rejected by the abandonment of the ark, He is rejected to-day in as far as the Spirit is not honoured.

But although the people might thus have forgotten and despised Jehovah, David could have no joy nor rest until the ark was brought back, and the presence of the Lord recognised. He knew that peace and blessing are only to be had where God is, and longed ardently for His presence. We have the cry of David's soul in Psalm 63. "And let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we inquired not at it in the days of Saul," 1 Chron. 13:3.

The king's great occupation was to seek how he could accomplish that which he had in his heart; and we see in verses 1 and 4 that he consulted all the people, and that they agreed to his proposal. But although it was a holy desire in David and in Israel for the return of the ark, it ought only to have been accomplished according to the will of God, who alone could teach them how they ought to set about it in order that His name might be glorified.

But David's having consulted the people, instead of consulting the Lord, caused the ark of God to be brought upon a new cart from the house of Abinadab, "and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart," v. 7.

All this was bad, for it was against the commandment of the Lord, and God could neither recognise nor bless this act. He had said that the ark ought to be borne by the children of Kohath, that is to say, by the Levites (Num. 4:15); and if David had consulted the Lord, he would have been taught about this, and the ark would have been neither placed on a cart nor conducted by Uzza and Ahio. But David took counsel with the people and they executed their holy desire according to their own thoughts, and not according to God's. Uzza acted also on the same principle; he was not led by the Lord to hold the ark, but by his own judgment. He was not a man who felt his weakness and who allowed himself to be ruled and guided by the Lord; and consequently he put forth his hand and touched the ark. Thus every child of God who puts his hand to the Lord's work, presuming that he is able to act in his own strength, resembles Uzza. It is God alone who is to be glorified, and it is He alone who can say how He wishes to be glorified; and if David had inquired of Him, he would have learnt that God would glorify Himself.

We see in verse 10 what were the sad consequences of Uzza's conduct, and in verse 11 we see that David was greatly afflicted at the breach the Lord made upon Uzza; but it was needful for him in this way to learn, that we have to wait and let the Lord do His work in His own way. May we also keep this instruction, of which we all have need, and not act in our own strength! Let us remember that Uzza drew upon himself the wrath of

God by putting his hand to the ark. All the work was spoilt by his folly: the ark instead of being brought in triumph was put aside and placed in the house of Obed-edom; and all this because in the first place David had not consulted the Lord, and secondly Uzza acted himself instead of letting the Lord act. These circumstances were calculated to humble David greatly: he was first afflicted, then afraid of God (v. 11, 12); but all that happened taught him wherein he had failed.

Thus we see in the following chapter (14) that he acted very differently. The Philistines having spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim (v. 9), did David assemble all his army and prepare immediately for battle? No, he consulted God, saying, “Shall I shew myself against the Philistines, and wilt thou deliver them into my hand? “Now it is no more the people that David consults, it is the Lord; thus the consequence is very different from that of the first circumstance. In chapter 13:11 the breach is made in the midst of David’s people; but here it is made in the midst of his enemies, for God acts for him (chap. 14:11).

We may be very zealous for the glory of God; but the greater our zeal is, the more harm it will do if it is not according to knowledge; we shall spoil everything, like David in chapter 13, if we do not understand our incapacity and dependence; and we can only acquire the knowledge that we need, in order that our zeal be not destructive, by consulting the Lord.

A remarkable thing is, that trials and chastisement are always needed to bring us back to God’s order: it was in the midst of much affliction that David learned God’s intention, and these afflictions served to make the lesson

he had received penetrate deeply into his soul. In chapter 14:13, 14, we see that, the Philistines having again returned, David again consults the Lord. This time the Lord does not tell David to go up to the Philistines and that he will have the victory, for God wished to prove him still more. God told him not to go up to his enemies, but to wait for a noise in the tops of the mulberry-trees. What had the mulberry-trees to do with the battle? Nothing, but God wanted to be recognised: this was the lesson that David further learnt. He obeyed the Lord; and we see the consequence was, that the Lord was glorified and David's reputation spread abroad. David having owned the Lord, the Lord could everywhere own David.

What magnificent instruction is found in these chapters? May we keep it and be led by it every day in order that God may be glorified in us. Let us remember to leave God to do His own work, and if He wish to use us for something, what we have to do is to consult Him about it, and not so-and-so. Thus, instead of putting obstacles in the way of His work, we shall be blessed in that which He will do through us.

In chapter 15:2 David says, "None ought to carry the ark of the Lord but the Levites." He remembers his fall, and the lesson is learned; he applies himself now to act according to God's intention. Thus we see, the work of man no longer spoils that of God, and God is glorified, the people are joyful, the ark of the Lord has again taken its place in their midst, and the blessing is so great that the psalms which they sing are those which will be sung in the millennium, when the Lord will return to Israel (v. 25-29). In chapter 16:8-22 they sing Psalm 105 and from verses 23 to 33 they sing Psalm 96. How different are

the results which we find in chapter 13, where David acts by himself without consulting the Lord, and he and all his people are plunged into affliction! But, here, where it is God who acts, the blessing is so great that David and all his people call on the heavens and earth to rejoice at it.

In chapter 17 we again see a holy desire in David: he wished to build a house for the ark, but was this the will of God? Nathan told David to do all that was in his heart (v. 2). Ah, Nathan had not learned the lesson, for he answered without learning from Jehovah His intention, and in the same night God charged him to go and tell David, “Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in.” David wished to give something to Jehovah, but Jehovah was going to give to him. David wanted to build a house for Jehovah, but Jehovah was going to build one for David {v. 10). “For it is more blessed to give than to receive,” Acts 20:35, and giving is God’s part. This is another lesson that David learnt. The Lord does not need us to bless Him, but He is pleased to bless us: what He asks of us is to sit at Jesus’ feet and receive the abundant grace He bestows on us. From verse 16 to 21 one sees that David has understood this lesson; his thoughts are no more, as at the beginning of the chapter, occupied with the construction of a house, but with God Himself [v. 20); and he is humble and grateful before Jehovah. All that he says in these verses shews that he has learnt of God; he thinks no more of himself, nor his zeal, nor his projects, he has forgotten all that is of himself in thinking of Jehovah. Oh let us imitate David in this! May our thoughts centre in God and we shall no longer be occupied with ourselves, nor with what we wish to do (v. 5, 6-8).

Let us remark another very touching truth in these verses. So long as Jehovah's people crossed the desert and had enemies to fight, Jehovah had no resting-place on the earth, and journeyed in the tabernacle with His people, "In all their affliction he was afflicted," Isa. 63:9. And it was only when His people could rest that God allowed them to build Him a house wherein He might rest.

Notes On 2 Chronicles 18-20

We have seen in 1 Kings 17, 18, that Ahab and Jezebel worshipped the idol Baal, and now we read the judgments of God on Ahab and apostate Israel.

It is necessary for us to know the circumstances mentioned in this chapter, as they are of grave importance. Let us consider in it especially the characters of Jehoshaphat and Micaiah. This last was separated from Ahab and apostate Israel; he entered into God's thoughts and was declaring to Ahab and Israel the judgments which were ready to come upon them. Read verses 16-23. In verse 26 we see the consequences of his fidelity: Ahab and Israel are his enemies, and he is put into the place of affliction. Jehoshaphat's circumstances were very different; he was a child of God as well as Micaiah, but he was rich and great, and had made alliance with one of God's enemies —with Ahab. Ahab knew him to be a child of God, and, in order to tranquillise his conscience, caused sheep and oxen to be killed for him in abundance. It mattered not to Ahab what he did if he succeeded in persuading Jehoshaphat to go with him to Ramoth-Gilead. But Jehoshaphat's conscience was not satisfied by the sacrifice of all these sheep and oxen; and he said to the king of Israel, "Inquire, I pray thee at the word of Jehovah to-day." Ahab then assembled the four hundred and fifty prophets who cried, "Peace, peace," although God's judgment was ready to break over him and apostate Israel; but the words of these false prophets did not satisfy Jehoshaphat's conscience any more than the sacrifices. Thus it is ever so when the child of God is

found in the midst of evil of any kind: although four hundred and fifty prophets and the whole world would seek to satisfy his conscience, they could not attain this end. See what is said of false prophets in Ezekiel 13:1-16.

But the king of Israel was satisfied with what the lying prophets said; and, as God punished Pharaoh by giving him up to a delusion, He did the same to Ahab. And the same thing will happen to many others at the end of this dispensation; men will preach “peace, peace,” and judgment will break forth upon them (Rev. 16:14; 2 Thess. 2:7-13). Here is a solemn truth. This is why we ought first to be very grateful because the Lord has revealed Himself to us; then we ought to take care not to become like Jehoshaphat who “joined affinity with Ahab.” How good the Lord was to put it into the king of Judah’s heart to seek counsel of a prophet of Jehovah! It was a means by which he might have been instructed about the judgments which were going to happen, and have been able to warn his people. But alliance with evil blinds to such a degree, that Jehoshaphat did not discern that Micaiah was a true prophet of Jehovah; and he did not believe his word, but went in spite of it all up to the battle in which Ahab was to meet with the judgment of God. O may we be separated from evil in order to be capable of judging all things and to hold fast that which is truth!

We have also to remark Micaiah’s faithfulness: although he was engaged by the messenger to speak the same words as the false prophets, he replied, “What my God saith, that will I speak,” v. 12, 13. Micaiah told Ahab that he should be killed in the battle; but the latter, thinking to escape by his own prudence, disguised himself, and

told Jehoshaphat to wear his robes (v. 27-30). O what a magnificent proof we have of the love of God in these verses! Jehoshaphat is surrounded by the Syrians on all sides, but he was a child of God; and although he had joined with Ahab, nothing could separate him from the Lord whose faithfulness to His own endures notwithstanding their unfaithfulness. Jehoshaphat cried to the Lord who became his protector; and although, humanly speaking, it seemed all over with him, nevertheless his enemies were not allowed to touch him.

But as surely as the child of God will be preserved by the love of his Father, so sure is it that the judgment of God will fall on those who reject His mercy. We see this in a remarkable manner in this chapter. Ahab, notwithstanding his precautions, could not escape; he might have disguised himself from the Syrians, but he was not able to bide himself from God (v. 33). Thus it is with poor sinners: even if they should succeed in not being seen by" man, the eye of God will find them. May the Lord make this example of use to us!

It is well to consider how much more advantageous Micaiah's position was than that of Jehoshaphat. It is true he was afflicted and persecuted by Ahab and the false prophets, but he was not like Jehoshaphat to be found in the midst of God's judgments. The latter was as ignorant as Ahab of what was going to take place; be it that even Micaiah had announced it to them, and that these judgments were, as it were, suspended over their heads, yet Jehoshaphat did not expect them. And why? For he was a child of God as well as Micaiah. Had he-not the Lord's thought and a clear view of His intention? It was because he had joined himself to God's enemies and that his affections were with the things of the world,

whilst Micaiah had separated himself to the service of God. O how ashamed Jehoshaphat ought to have been, to be thus found amongst the Lord's enemies! and how grateful he ought to have been for the gracious help which he so little merited!

We see in chapter 19:2, that, although Jehoshaphat had been delivered by the compassion and love of God, he was spoken to in words of reproach, after which the Lord encouraged him by adding, "Nevertheless there are good things found in thee"; which shews us, that if God disapprove that which is evil, He owns the good which He has put into His own people. In Jude's Epistle, which speaks of the apostasy of the present dispensation, we see at verse 23 something similar to that which happened to Jehoshaphat. Like Lot, he was saved so as by fire.

All these circumstances in Jehoshaphat's life were calculated to humble him deeply and teach him the incomprehensible fulness of God's mercy. He ought to have drawn from these experiences deep instruction both about God and himself. Let us read in 2 Chronicles 20:2-13 what were the fruits of these instructions. Jehoshaphat is here very different; he is not now in affinity with Ahab, he is depending on God alone in whom is his strength and his joy. "Our eyes are on thee," he says to Jehovah. Will Micaiah be now separated from him as he was in the preceding chapter? Let us read from verse 15 to 18 of chapter 20. In the preceding chapter Jehoshaphat is found in the ranks of God's enemies, and he is only saved by the intervention of Jehovah; but here we see him dependent upon God and blessed, not afraid, and knowing that Jehovah is with him. He goes to the battle, and God orders it all in such

a way that he has no anxiety (v. 17). What a precious lesson he had received in all this! And should we not be disposed to think that from this time forth he would keep near to God and in separation from His enemies? He had learnt by experience the grief there is in sin, and it seems impossible that he should fall again into the same fault which had brought him into such trouble; but we see in verses 35-38 that it was not so.

The lesson which we may take from the second fall of Jehoshaphat is that, although we may have been punished, we fall again into the very same sins if we do not keep in communion with the Lord.

The Work Of The House Of God And The Workmen Therein

Ezra 3.

The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah hang together. In Ezra, we get the temple built and worship restored; in Nehemiah, the restoration of the city; Haggai opens out the secret of the hindrances to the work; in Zechariah we have truth presented by which God strengthened the hearts of the remnant.

Truth meets persons in our days in external things; it is common to see Christians opening the scriptures and being struck with the fact of how unlike the things there presented are to what they see around them. Man would set to work to put things in order. God's remedy is to meet practical departure in oneself, to begin with self. We have "the word of the Lord,"1 are we bringing our consciences to it—not asking for increase of light, increase of power, but more honest, holy obedience to what we know, just doing that, in all our weakness, which God teaches us to be right? I read Philippians 2:13, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"; if I am waiting for more power, before I work out that which it is His will I should do, I am denying that He is working in me to accomplish it by His power—to will and to do.

We are to walk, step by step, as God gives the light. Some will say, "Yes, when the door is opened, as it was for the Jews—when power is put forth, as it was for the Jews, then we will go forth, not seeing that, when the Jews walked disobediently, God raised up enemies from

without, standing by to sanction their captivity." The Jew could say, "We must be in bondage until the years of the captivity be ended." Not so the Christian. God has set him free from all captivity, in Christ. If he get into bondage, through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, the moment God gives him light to see where he is, that moment the word to him is, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." The question at the Reformation (and so now), was, "Is the word of God to be obeyed or not?—the Lord hath spoken, and shall not we obey? "It is for God to see in us obedience to His word, so far as we know it, and more knowledge will be given— "to him that hath shall more be given."

But, here, it is necessary for us to see that conduct may go beyond faith. If it does, it will break down. Right conduct on a wrong motive must fail. In Ezra 3, we have the Jews working for God, and that from the written word; for what Moses commanded, they observed (v. 2), and what David did, they set themselves to do (v. 10). But they failed. The adversaries of Judah came and stopped the work (chap. 4). Looking at the outward form, we should have said, "Now here is obedience." But God's eye saw through it all. Self-complacency was there; the corrupt heart was there. Haggai furnishes the key. The heart was unpurged. These adversaries, what were they? The remnant had escaped, had got into the land, had begun to build—and why did they not go on? God was using the adversaries of Judah, as the occasion, to shew the cause of their failure. Circumstances bring out the cause of failure; but occasion and cause are constantly confounded. The cause of failure was not in the adversaries of Judah, but in the hearts of the people which were set upon their own things and not upon the

things of God, upon their own ceiled houses, and not upon the house of the Lord. And so, we find, through the whole of the word of God, the occasion one thing, the cause another. That which is not done to the Lord, is not done in faith.

Have we a purpose?—Jesus had a purpose to which He ever turned. O how little purpose of soul have we for God! The Jews had plenty of thoughts; but, when difficulties sprang up, they had no purpose. God, therefore, had to teach them purpose, to teach them whether it was His energy, or their own, they were walking in, to teach them to trust in Himself. Action, in the time of difficulty, is what God expects from us, as knowing and acting in the strength we have in Him—to go forward in the purpose of God, as the channels for His energy to flow in, to shew that there is strength and energy in Him, far beyond all the hindering circumstances, which may come to try our purpose.

Divine energy will never lose its purpose for God. Human energy will say, “the time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built,” (Hag. 1:2), and will be amusing itself with its vineyards and fields and houses, squandering the time, instead of carrying on with untiring energy, the settled purpose of the soul, amidst all the difficulties and dangers which may threaten or oppose.

In Haggai, I find God acting; and there, I get a lesson for myself, for I have to do with God. I see the hypocrisy of man, doing a right thing, but not doing it to God, doing it from a wrong motive. Whatever is not done in faith, to God, will fail. As soon as there is confession, when the people “did fear before the Lord,” there is the gracious

answer, “I am with you, saith the Lord.” Thus, we have three great points brought out:—

1st.—Are we walking in what we know, up to the light we have?

2ndly.—The course of the conduct the light brings into, will not do for the flesh to walk in, but the energy of faith alone.

3rdly.—Whatever connection the circumstances of providence may have with the things of God, they are not of power in the work of God. The providence of God may open the prison-door, lead the people out, raise up Cyrus, Zerubbabel, etc.; but, when they want power for action, we find the Spirit of prophecy opening their eyes to see their departure from God, telling them what was in their own hearts, and then telling of the grace in God’s heart towards them, and the glory that awaited them. (See Ezra 5:1, 2.)

By the mercy of God, the government of this country is favourable; the quietness we enjoy, the privilege of meeting together without fear of interruption or violence has been the boon (under God) of the government. This, to us, is a great responsibility. But there is nothing of real power in service, but a “thus saith the Lord.” There is no power in the floating topics of religion, it must be the truth of God in our own souls —knowing the truth of God, as God’s truth, and then our action, action for God. Are we searching the word of God to find God there? What is the value of seeing all the scenes pointed out in scripture—things past, or things to come—and not seeing God in them? There are two marks of spiritual experience in scripture. First, having studied such a portion, have yqu seen God as presented

in those circumstances? have you met God there? If so, you have been bowed down and humbled; and, if humbled, you have got rest. Secondly, a spiritual reception of scripture will ever produce corresponding action, a going forth, a “Here am I.” If one say, I cannot understand—when the Spirit is teaching, He takes us to what we can understand. Power for service is learned in the presence of God, and there alone; for, in the presence of God, we get humbled and rest in His grace.

Is my study of scripture a drawing out of God’s word of what I am, and of what God is?

1 There was a moral appeal to conscience in the Jew—“you know what Moses says, and, you have departed from it”— “how came you Jews out of the land?”

How The Lord Accepted Job

Job 42.

We see in Job's history the workings of God in the soul in bringing it to Himself, and the exercises the heart passes through when learning itself in the presence of Satan and in the presence of God Himself.

"The Lord accepted Job." It does not say that the Lord accepted his acts, or his works, or anything connected with him; but that He accepted himself. And that is just what we want. The moment our souls are really awakened to a sense of what God is and of what we are, we then want to know that we are accepted of God. Till that is known, we may try to bring our acts and our works to clothe ourselves with them; but when we have really come into God's presence, we clothe ourselves with nothing, and then we get the sense of the divine favour.

The converse of this is also true. We know that our works are unholy; and when our souls are truly awakened, we look at ourselves as being the spring of these unholy works; and thus we learn that in heart and spirit and nature we are fai from God. Then I am grieved, not only for my sins, but because it is I who committed them. And this is a present thing. If I am looking at my works, I may put them off till the day of judgment; but for myself, personally, I cannot be satisfied without the sense of the present and immediate acceptance of God. I must know that I am at this momenf standing in His favour.

It is not said that God accepted Job till the end of his trials And what had his friends done for him during the sifting through which he was passing? Well might he say, “Miserable comforters are ye all.” They had no true apprehension of God’s character, and so were unable to understand His dealings with a soul. They had no proper sense of sin, and therefore knew not that, if God would deal in blessing with man, it must be entirely on the ground of grace. They did not know how to meet his case; and though they had said many true things, yet they had not said one single right thing in its application to Job, for they did not understand him.

Job had never really been brought into the presence of God There had been a certain work in his soul, which produced fruits. But in chapter 29 we evidently see that he had been walking in the sense of blessings from God, and in a measure in the sense of the fruits of grace produced in his heart. He was resting in what he was to others, and not in the favour of God Himself. He owned God, it is true, and bowed under His hand; but notwithstanding he had never been truly in His presence, and consequently his heart had never been searched out. It was not a question of fruits, but a question of what he was. So God goes on dealing with Job, till in the very thing in which Job was most famous he is brought to nothing. Job, the most patient man, curses the day of his birth. Why is this? Because we must be broken down—we must be brought to the sense of what we are, as well as of what we have done; and then God can deal with us out of His own heart. Thus God’s dealings with us are intended to bring out really what we are before our own eyes in His presence, in the presence of that eye which looks on while we see what

sinners we are. Thus God went on dealing with Job till Job was brought to say, “I am vile, I abhor myself.”

In chapter 23, we see Job’s confidence in God, and his desire for God, although the stroke was bitter. He said, “Oh! that I knew where I might find him!” He did not attempt to keep away from God. He had that kind of sense of what God was that he wanted to get to Him, “even to his seat.” It is true he speaks of “ordering his cause before him”; but in chapter 9 where he is speaking of man being justified before God, he says, “If he contend with me, I cannot answer him one of a thousand”; and again, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.” Here we find that Job was thinking of being in God’s sight. There was not the wretched hypocritical attempt to keep away from God; there was the consciousness of having to do with God; and in heart he desired to get to Him, though his conscience kept him away. Thus there was much more truth in Job than in the see-saw truths of his friends; for conscience was in full exercise in him, and not at all in them.

There was also more grace in Job’s heart now than when he was floating along in prosperous circumstances. It was, in truth, trying and miserable work; but still he was finding out what was in him. And what grace it is in God that He should take up a heart, and thus wring it out, that the soul might be brought, such as it is, into immediate dependence on Himself!

The sinfulness of Job was brought out, so that he could not say it was not there. The sinfulness of his heart was brought upon his conscience; it had come fully out; and a terrible thing that is. We know what it is to the unconverted man; it makes him reckless in iniquity. Let

a man think that he has lost his character, and he will then run loose in wickedness. When a man comes to this, it thoroughly breaks him down. It is one thing for a man to lose his character with himself, but it is another and a very different thing to lose it with his neighbour. But when Job has lost his character, when it is entirely gone, then God comes in.

After all the sifting, Job is brought into God's presence, and then "Jehovah accepted Job." In God's presence his mouth is stopped; then he said, "lam vile"; "I will lay my hand on my mouth." But Job must be brought farther, because God is to bring him to Himself; he must be brought to confess not only that there is no good in him, but that there is a great deal of evil. And this he does, as in verse 3, "I have uttered that I understood not." For now it is not a question of condemnation but of sin. When the sinner has judged himself, the fear of condemnation has passed away. "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." Thus Job takes God's side against himself. He laid himself before God, and abhorred himself; and then he repents in dust and ashes; for it is only in the presence of God that we learn repentance. In its fullest sense true repentance is, when our sin is so thoroughly brought out that we are taking God's side of the question in judging ourselves, and in justifying Him. Then it is that He justifies us, and makes us accepted in the Beloved. Then it was that "Jehovah accepted Job." And blessed is the man whom the Lord accepteth. May we indeed feel the need of Him, and not rest in the hypocritical quiet of keeping out of His presence!

On The Book Of Job, Especially Chapter 9

I suppose every reader is aware of the circumstances of this book, of the trials of Job, sent him of God for his good, under which his faith broke down at last.

It just teaches us how good is to be got, how blessing comes and must come, that is, in the real knowledge of self. Men speak of God's goodness; but their only thought of God's goodness is His passing over sin. Were half the people around us put into heaven, they would get out as fast as they could. What is in heaven is not in accordance with them: nothing they like is there, and nothing is there that they like. Not one of us naturally would find a single thing according to our mind in heaven. So that the Lord says, "Ye must be born again."

The goodness of God does not pass over iniquity, but brings us to the distinct definite knowledge of what we are and of what we have done. Hence being good, He is above all the evil and can bless us in Christ. Here we are walking in a vain show, and are aware that everything around will not last. Everybody knows that the fashion of this world passes away, and yet people are occupied with it.

"While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen." What is "seen," everybody knows, will all go to nothing. They must leave it any way (1 Tim. 6); and then their whole life and objects will be entirely done with. Their conduct they will not have done with, unless it be put away by the blood of Christ. You think God has given a revelation; but do we want a

revelation of this world? According to our intelligence and ability we know the world ourselves; but when we pass beyond this world, we want God to tell us, to bring down to us, a sure and certain testimony of what will become of us. This He has done. He has given a full revelation of what our state is and what His holiness is; and He has given a sure, settled and certain foundation for blessing so that there can be no doubt about it.

God would not have us walking in uncertainty; for uncertainty is misery. “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Believing in Jesus we know our relationship with God, we are “joint-heirs with Christ.” “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” God was dealing with Job; but he had to learn himself. What makes Job so interesting is that the book comes before all dispensations.

When I find what I am and cannot tell what God is, of course, I am in misery. When God is ploughing up the ground, this is not a crop. Ploughing comes before harvest. “In all this Job sinned not.” There was none like Job in all the earth, but he did not know himself: a spirit of self-righteousness had been creeping over him.

Supposing God had stopped there, what would have come of it? Job might have said, “In prosperity I was eyes to the blind; in adversity I was patient”: and the whole case would have been worse. He goes on till his friends come, and then, perhaps from pride, or because he could not bear their sympathy, he breaks down. The process was a trying humbling one. “O if I could meet

God," Job says, "He is not like you: there is goodness in Him." His friends stood on utterly false ground; they took this world as the adequate witness of the government of God. This only makes Job the more angry: the world is no adequate testimony of the government of God.

There you see a soul rising under that which is upon him, striving and wrestling, the flesh breaking out so that he should know himself. Job, having been thus wrought in and exercised and ploughed up, passes through all the various considerations as to how he could meet God. Throughout there are certain true sayings, as "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness"; but are we righteous? This is another story. Are you in a condition, if you had to do with God this moment, to say "I am righteous" before Him? Many a one looks at the cross and says "I am a poor sinner, and I have no hope but the cross." But can you say, "lama poor sinner, and the judgment-seat just suits me"?

When we have really known Christ as our righteousness, there is no place where the soul is so clear and bright and certain about the matter as for the day of judgment: we shall be in glory then. Where the heart has not been broken up, the soul does not understand as a present thing what it is to be before God now. You will find in this chapter naughty expressions, but in the main what Job says is true. There was a mixture, that his wrong thoughts might be judged.

"How should man be just with God?" The instant the soul is awakened, it sees with God's eye: and this is the only way of seeing right. When this is the case, the soul in the light of the judgment of God says, "I could not

answer him one of a thousand." God is infinitely good; but His way of goodness is not that of allowing evil. Could you answer for yourself in the day of judgment for everything you have ever said or done?

We were all living in a vain show. I may have a character, which God cares nothing about; but He cares about conscience. Before the day of judgment He says "There is none righteous, no, not one," "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Job goes through several of these cases; then his wrong feeling breaks out. "He … filleth me with bitterness." Then he gets more right, "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me." Can you justify yourself in God's presence? If you cannot justify yourself there, what is the good of doing so anywhere else? You could not stand in the light as God is in the light, and you know it. How comes it that the thought of God makes a man melancholy? He finds out that he is not walking with God. Then, it is impossible to go on longer in that way: we all naturally have got a conscience of good and evil. The crust of the heart has to be ploughed up—the "fallow ground," as Jeremiah calls it.

Then comes another case: "If I wash myself with snow water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Thus, if a man had been brought up in a dirty cabin, he does not feel it to be so. Thus men have habits of thinking according to men, not according to God. You will find that sins against man are thought a great deal of, such as murder and robbery: suppose a man commits sins like these, he is intolerable, not fit for society; but suppose he hates God, men say, Oh! that is his own affair.

Go through the history of all religions: do you see a Mohammedan ashamed of his religion? Do you find a follower of Juggernaut ashamed of his religion? Where is it ever seen, when a man has a false religion, that he is ashamed of it? But take a Christian, a real Christian, and he is ashamed of it. How comes it? What a tale it tells of the world! Man may sing songs in the street, but hymns —that will not do.

If I talk of washing myself “with snow water, my own clothes shall abhor me.” This is where we are brought, all of us. “There is none righteous, no, not one.” If that were all, I could not stand here and speak to you, for we are all the same.

You see Job could not answer God, and he is struggling under this: what does he say he wants? “Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon both.” O I have got no daysman! “Let him take his rod away from me and let not his fear terrify me.” What Job said he had not got is exactly what we have now in Christ. Was Christ a terror in this world? The law was this exactly; there were thunderings and lightnings: even Moses said, “I exceedingly fear and quake,” and the people, “Do not let God speak to us.” The law struck with terror, but it produced no real change in man, and no confidence in God.

The law does not give life, it does not take away sins, nor does it give an object for the heart. The man in Romans 7 says, “I hate sin.” “So do I,” says the law, “and this is the reason that I curse you.” Does this inspire confidence? The law is very useful, it brings the knowledge of sin (what Job was getting here, not that it was law but the same principle). There was no peace, no

rest, but it was sin brought upon the conscience, which never gave confidence.

In Cain we see utter insensibility to man's having been driven out of paradise, to sin, to the curse: he brought to God the very sign of the curse. Man left God and listened to Satan; therefore he is under judgment. People talk as if God had made man as he is. Suppose I make a desk and then judge that desk, what do I judge? Myself. By our sin we turned God into a Judge instead of a Blesser. Abel comes to God, and brings his victim, offering the fat of the lamb. He felt, If I do not get something between me and God, I cannot come near God.

If we look at Christ, we shall find that He exactly meets the need that Job felt. I cannot answer God one in a thousand; but what do I find in Christ? God in His person came to me in this world because I could not do anything. The blessed Lord did not wait up in heaven, but came to these unrighteous people. He never said "Come to me," until He had come Himself.

I see in this Daysman God shewing me that He is above all my sin. He is light to make everything manifest now; but when He has done that in man's heart and conscience, He puts it all away. In the world, where men were sinners, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." I have God that visited me, but not to hide my sins. God came to me, to the woman in the city that was a sinner, to Mary Magdalene. I get Him coming and talking to the Samaritan about a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life. I have Him saying to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

It is God Himself in this world, not terrifying us, but in perfect blessed love as Man amongst men; the holy One, the undefiled that used the undefilableness of His nature to carry the blessed love of God to us. This blessed One is the Daysman. God has visited me just as I am; He came to me just as I am: I know God is for me. But if He comes to the sinner, He lets him feel his sins; “You are so bad you have nobody you can trust; you cannot shew your face to a decent person; then come and shew it to Me,” says Christ. This is the way of God’s dealing. Will He wait for the day of judgment?

The beginning of all sin was losing confidence in God: “He is keeping back that tree.” If I do not trust God, I must do the best I can for myself: then follows lust, transgression, ruin. Christ comes into the world of sinners and says, “Now you can have confidence in Me.”

How blessed it is to trace Christ’s life in this world! He says to the woman at the well, “If thou knewest the gift of God! “and He came to bring the blessing. These two things I get hold of: that God is giving, and who it is that has come down so low as to be dependent on a poor woman for a drink of water. Instead of waiting for the day of judgment He has come down into this world to say, “Now if you just trust Me! You cannot answer in the day of judgment, but I am come in the day of grace.” Did you ever see any terror in Him? Terror to the Pharisees you might in a certain sense see; but did you ever see, when God was in the world (Christ was God in this world), anything but love to sinners? Never. This is what I find in that blessed One, divine love. Who put it into God’s heart? Did you? Nobody but Himself; His own heart was the source of it. I get to know God far better than I know myself; the moment I receive the true

blessed testimony of His love, I know Him; I have my Daysman ("I and the Father are one"), who has come into the world of sinners just as they were, passing through this world of sin to meet every want.

Well, He goes on. In the cross it is not God before men in this world, but Man before God made sin. In the perfectness of this same love He offered Himself to God: He stands before God made sin for us that He might be dealt with according as it deserved. This was the reason He prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He did not speak this of outrages and insults from man, but He could not take the wrath of God thus. If any of us was to be saved, this cup must be drunk. Just as God came out in love to us down here, so Christ has gone up as Man to God up there.

I find all these people that He had met in blessing saying, "Crucify him, crucify him"; the priests, who ought to have pleaded for weakness, crying out against Him; the judge condemning the innocent Man; and His friends who had been with Him continually—one betraying, another denying, and all deserting Him! I find Him setting His face as a flint, bowing to His Father's will. I find Him, if my faith follow Him there, drinking the cup on the cross there: I brought Him: my sin, my wickedness, my neglect of Him for years, brought Him there. What of my sins now? They are all gone. What is there like that atonement? People talk of Him as an example, which we know He was; but if you take Him only as an example, what do you find? The one righteous Man in the world declaring He was forsaken of God at the end! What sort of testimony is that?

The moment I see Christ there, and all the darkness around, and Him made sin for us, the work done alone between Him and God; there only was obedience fully tested, there was the one spotless victim, the blessed Son of God. There is no glorifying God perfectly except in the cross. There I find the whole righteous judgment of God against sin, no patience, no gentleness; Christ was really drinking the cup. If God could pass over sins, where would be His righteousness? Here I find God's perfect righteousness against sin and His perfect love; I get the whole enmity of man rising up against God, and, where it carries out its purpose, God's perfect grace. You never get positive sin dealt with outright before God except in the cross, and perfect love doing it. I find Christ there alone with God. I see Him in infinite unutterable love. He is in the presence of God for me, always in the value of what He has wrought; and when I go up to God now, I go into the holiest as white as snow, because I could not go in there except by the work of Christ.

I go on to the day of judgment: whom do I find there? The very person who put away all my sins. It gives this blessed rest to the heart now; and, when I stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, there is the Man who bore away my sins! How do we get there? When Christ appears, what will He do with me, with you? He comes and changes this vile body: "It is sown in corruption, raised again in glory." To get before the judgment-seat we must be raised or changed: Christ comes Himself, and He raises or changes us, and takes us to Himself.

The first coming of Christ was about the putting away of sin. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the

second time without sin unto salvation." What you want is God-given faith in the person of our Daysman. He brings out love to me where I am, and He has gone in as Man in righteousness to God. The question with me is, whether in that dark hour when all were shut out He finished the work God gave Him to do, and gave His life a ransom for many; and I believe He finished it: do you believe? Now He is sitting there, having finished the work, and God has raised Him from the dead; and I know, not only that He has accomplished the work, but that God has accepted it. Like Abel I come to God with His Lamb in my hand.

"If I wash myself with snow water … yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch"; I shall be like a man come out of a ditch. But I have got my Daysman, and God rests in Him; and we are in Him, the Holy Ghost being sent down that we may know it. "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father and ye in me and I in you." Then I learn what the Lord Jesus says in John 17: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." If I look at my Daysman, I have got to the very spring of God's heart. He has given His Son. Glory is but a natural consequence. And if I find He is a righteous God who cannot look at sin: well, I say, He has looked at it on the cross and judged it fully.

Christ has accomplished the work: God has accepted it; and Christ sits there at His right hand till His enemies are made His footstool. When I say I am in Christ, there is this other blessed truth that Christ is in me. If Christ is in you, walk worthy of Him; being reconciled to God, Christ being your life, you are to glorify God in everything: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." You are

not you own at all; if you want to be your own, you are not Christ's. What we have to do is to detect the evil in the heart, and thus not dishonour Christ before the world. I am no longer my own at all, but the epistle of Christ. People are to read Christ in you as the ten commandments in the tables of stone.

Redemption is perfect; Christ is our righteousness; I have got my Daysman. The Holy Ghost coming down and dwelling in me, my soul is in the consciousness of the value of what Christ has done, and I am waiting in earnest desire for Christ to come and take me there. It is a perfect finished work, and the only part I had in it was my sin.

The Lord open your hearts and turn your eyes on that blessed One; and if you have your heart open, if you are struggling like Job to lay your hands on the head of the Lamb, the Lord give you in this day of salvation not to neglect so great a salvation.

Heads Of Psalms

Book 1.

In the first place we get, in Psalm 1, the righteous man; and, in Psalm 2, the counsels of God as to Messiah. Then, in general, Psalms 3-7 are the sufferings of Christ in the remnant, whether from enemies or from a sense of their own state; and in result, Psalm 8 is the Son of man set over all the works of God's hands.

In Psalms 9 and 10 we have particulars of God's executing judgment against the heathen in Zion, in favour of the needy; and, in particular, the ways of the wicked one, the man of the earth. Then follow, in Psalms 11-15, the sentiments and spirit of the remnant—the moral movements of their heart in this time of trial.

Psalm 16 is the place Christ Himself takes in His dependence, trusting in the time of humiliation, but ending in His joy in God's presence in resurrection. Psalm 17 is His appeal to right, which ends in His being displayed in glory—as man, of course; a lower kind of thing, but still a part of His glory.

In Psalm 18 the sufferings of Christ are made the centre of all God's ways in Israel, from Egypt to the manifestation of the glory of Messiah.

Psalm 19 is the testimony of creation and of the law; according to the letter of which the remnant presents itself in conscience before God.

In Psalm 20 the remnant prophetically see Christ in His day of trouble, and in His sufferings from man; in which God hears Him, in order to His establishment in His

royal rights. In Psalm 21 He is answered with length of days for ever and ever, and excellent majesty; and judges His enemies. In Psalm 22 He is in sorrow, in which no remnant can enter; in which, through all the concentration of evil from without, He finds the forsaking of God within, instead of answer to His confidence. But, when He had drunk the whole cup, He was answered in resurrection, and all flows forth in unmingled blessing: first, to the remnant, immediately consequent on His resurrection saluted as “brethren,” with whom He unites Himself in spirit, as He says, “In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee”; then, to all Israel; then, to all the ends of the world, the testimony of that which is done going down to other generations.

In Psalm 23 He takes the place of the sheep on earth; in Psalm 24 He is saluted as “Jehovah of Hosts,” and “King of glory.”

Psalms 25-28 are, in general, the exercises of the renewed heart (in the remnant always): confidence in the Lord; consciousness of integrity through grace; consciousness of sin; and earnest desire not to be drawn away with the wicked, counting on the Lord’s having called them to seek His face.

Psalm 29 is God’s voice (not the still small voice) the answer to it all. Psalms 30 and 31 are enjoyment in the sense of this interference of God (still though in the trouble). Psalm 32 is forgiveness and guidance (still in the remnant). In Psalm 33 creation and the counsels of God in favour of His people give confidence. In Psalm 34 what God has been for them in their sufferings gives confidence. In Psalms 34-39 we find them in the

presence of the power and prosperity of the wicked, with the sense of having deserved judgments and having been under chastening, though their cry is to the Lord who chastened them.

Psalm 40 is Christ undertaking the accomplishment of the divine will in perfect obedience: His perfectness shewn in waiting, etc. In Psalm 41 which is the last psalm of the book, we see all the humiliation and bitterness to which He exposed Himself in the accomplishment of it; but in which He is assured to be set before God's face for ever.

There is a very distinct principle brought out in the Psalms, that while in connection with the Jews, yet the nation is not the thing owned. The distinction is made by moral character, and not by nation. It is a certain elect remnant in the midst of the mass that is owned, of whom Christ becomes the representative; Psalm 1.

As a general principle the government of God is looked for, and that that government will sanction and establish the righteous, in contrast with the ungodly. Another principle comes up—the counsels of God as to His Anointed, in spite of the heathen who rise up against them.

Psalm 2. As soon, however, as we get these principles laid down, we find that, outwardly, it is not happening so at all. Hence the discussion of this question in the Psalms that follow.

Psalm 3 is faith in what Jehovah is. In verse 7 he sees prophetically that He has done it; therefore he gives praise.

Psalm 4 is dependence in calling on God. Verse 3, the godly are marked out, not the nation.

Psalms 5 and 6 are a great deal more the remnant. In Psalm 5 there is more sense of the evil that is pressing on them; in verse 9 Christ's judgment of the then condition of the wicked. It goes on to the last days. Psalm 6 is quite in the latter day in Israel; it is a question of cutting off. Verse 3, "How long!" is the spirit of prophecy in the remnant. (See Isaiah 6.) The cessation of this is indicated in Psalm 74, there being no one who knew "How long." They were in circumstances like as if cast off for ever; and faith, knowing that it cannot be so, says, "How long!" Verse 4; in the psalms in which the remnant speaks, mercy comes before righteousness. In Psalm 4, where it is more the Lord Himself, righteousness comes before mercy.

In Psalms 3-7 it is much more introductory, and certain general principles. It is Messiah who first speaks, because He has first fully taken, nay, He alone could rightly take apart the place of the remnant, as apart from, and in contrast with, the people. Others had felt it —as having His Spirit, and, as prophets, had portrayed it in Him—but He alone could rightly take it by intrinsic righteousness. Yet in Him it was as forced to it; that is, this righteousness forced out the wickedness in the others, and He wept over Jerusalem when it was done; but then He entered into all that concerned Israel, according to the purpose, love, and revelation of God. The Psalms are the perfect display of all that a divinely perfect heart in the circumstances could feel of, and as to, the relationships of God with Israel, and Israel with God.

Psalm 9 is more the heathen—man; Psalm 10 is more the wicked one among the Jews.

Psalms 11-41 are the development of faith in Christ, or the remnant as associated during the time of tribulation; but before the last half-week. Therefore Psalms 9, 10 come in as a general preface. Psalm 11:2. It is not “privily” in last half-week. Verse 4 is the answer to verse 3.

Psalm 12 is the holy wisdom of owning Jehovah. In verse 6 the words of the Lord are a stay, when everyone speaks vanity with his neighbour. In verse 7 the second “them” should be “him.”

In Psalm 16 Christ comes in to give its full character to hope and faith. This psalm is like a stake in the midst of all these psalms. The moment we get Christ, we get the spirit of calmness and grace.

Psalm 17. Specially Christ in the beginning. In verse 11 the remnant comes in.

In Psalm 16 we have Christ’s own joy in God; Jehovah shews Him the path of life, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore. Psalm 17. In presence of the wicked and the prosperity of the men of this world He beholds God’s face in righteousness, and is satisfied in waking up after His image. Most interesting is it to find that we have what is analogous in the church—the taking up for its own joy, and the display in glory as the reward of righteousness.

Psalm 18:4-6 is evidently the death of Christ. The words may have an application, used hyperbolically, to Israel in Egypt. Verse 15 is the Red Sea.

Psalm 19. The creation testimony is used as a figure of that now given by the gospel, inasmuch as it is universal. The testimony had been given of God, whether man saw it or not. (See Rom. 1.) They did not see it as we find. Verses 12, 13, they are kept in detail, and so kept from the great apostasy.

In Psalms 20, 21, we see human enemies, and judgment, but in Psalm 22 divine wrath and perfect grace. In verse 12, bulls, that is, violent men, who do their own will; in verse 16, dogs, that is shameless ones. In verse 21, the lion's mouth, that is, Satan's power over death. Verse 22 is the congregation, that is, the remnant, which afterwards became the church; only here looked at as the remnant of Israel. In verse 25 is "The great congregation," as in Solomon's day. Verse 30, is the remnant who pass through the trouble. Verse 31, is the millennial people.

Psalm 23. Thesis—Jehovah is my Shepherd; I shall not want. It is not—He has given me good things, and I shall not want; but Jehovah is my Shepherd, etc. Verse 3 is the weakness of man, which needed restoring. We need restoring, because of sin as well as weakness.

Psalm 24:3, 4. "Who?" Verses 7-10 shew the King of glory; verse 6, the remnant coming in when the earth is the Lord's.

Psalm 25 is important as shewing that the remnant do not ignore sin, but look from it to God.

Psalm 26:2. Examine me, O Lord, etc. Verse 3. For Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes.

Psalm 27:1-6 is the thesis; verse 7 and onward, prayer founded on it.

Psalm 29. In the midst of all these exercises of the heart of the remnant, God comes in. The voice of Jehovah comes in, and puts everything in its place.

In the psalms that follow, they have more to do with God; they are more occupied with the Lord Himself than with the circumstances.

Psalm 30 is more God's anger, and so confession; Psalm 31 is the enemies, so insisting on integrity. We constantly find these two things.

Psalm 32. "Be glad," not in the forgiveness, but "in the Lord," etc.

Psalm 34. A call to the remnant to bless Jehovah in their worst sorrows, "at all times," not when they get the blessing, but now.

Psalm 35 is Christ's spirit, in its perfectness, supplying a vent for their feelings in their weakness.

In Psalm 36 the wickedness is such that there is no conscience in the adversary. Verse 5. The answer—God is above it all.

Psalm 37:34. "Wait on Jehovah, and keep his way." The whole secret of what we have to do.

Psalm 38. An important principle in this psalm—the difficulty of looking to the Lord for deliverance from the wicked, when sin is on the conscience. Nevertheless, God is the refuge from the enemy. It is beautiful to see this integrity of heart, when he has not a word to say for himself.

Psalm 39. This leaning on Jehovah, with faults, breakings down, and everything, is very beautiful.

Psalm 40. Beautiful how, in the midst of all these exercises in the former psalms, waves of every kind, Christ is brought in; and He says, I will tell you how I got on. Verse 17, as in Matthew 5, Christ is just giving a description of Himself. And herein is the difference between Matthew and Luke. Matthew tells who enter; Luke says, Ye are the very ones. He gives them the place of the remnant. In this psalm Christ sets aside the Jewish figures, and lays the ground of righteousness Himself.

Psalm 41 is more the Spirit of Christ than Himself personally, though applied to Him in the treachery of Judas.

Book 2.

The second book begins not with Christ, but with the condition of the remnant; and hence has more for its subject the facts of the latter day, Israel being driven out. It is not going through all these states of soul, so that Christ might be brought in. It is like the position, when Christ went out to a place called Ephraim. (John 11:54.) There was a kind of hoping for good, from the multitude before; but now He has done with the wicked, and come out. So now it is not Jehovah, but God. One is cast more simply on God. He is not trusting in the relationship, but in God, in the nature of Elohim.

Psalms 42 and 43. In the two first psalms of this book, Christ takes the place of the godly remnant as cast out of all Jewish privilege by the power of the enemy and the apostasy of the Jews themselves—a nation “Lo-chasid;”—ungodly.

Psalm 42 is more the Gentiles.

Psalm 43:1. “Ungodly nation,” more than Jews. “The deceitful and unjust man” is Antichrist. The whole of this book is applicable to the period during which Antichrist has been received, that is, the last three and a half years.

In Psalms 44-48 we have the appeal of the remnant to God, as the One who, at the beginning, had delivered them, with all the consequences consequent on the intervention of Messiah in Psalm 45, Psalm 49 being a moral comment on human grandeur in view of this.

In Psalm 50 God has summoned all in judgment, and shines out of Zion, owned the “perfection of beauty.” Psalm 51. The Jews own their guilt in connection with the death of Christ.

In Psalms 52-58 we see the wickedness and violence within, that is, among the people. In Psalm 59, it is more the heathen without come against them at the same time. But in Psalm 60 in the midst of this distress, there is the assurance that God Himself will interfere, and claim His own rights in the midst of them.

In Psalm 61 Messiah identifies Himself with the outcast remnant; and, in Psalm 62, expresses His confidence in God so as to lead theirs, and that of all men.

All these psalms are to God, and not to Jehovah; that is, they depend on what God is in Himself.

In Psalm 63 it is the earnest desire of the godly soul after God, as he has known Him in the sanctuary. Psalm 64 is the confidence of the Spirit of Christ in God, though obliged to wait for Him till the judgment is executed. In Psalm 65 his faith is pressing: God has only to give the word, and He will have the praise that waits

for Him; while in Psalm 66 God's intervention in judgment is celebrated, and their state described until it come. In Psalm 67 the face of God, shining on His people, carries His saving health among all nations. In Psalm 68 the heavenly exaltation of Christ is the source of the blessing of His people. In Psalm 69 is all the depth of His distress as man—not exactly the cup of wrath, though it is on the cross. In Psalm 70 he looks for deliverance; and that those who seek God may be able to praise God because of it, however needy he may be. In Psalm 71 he speaks as the representative of the family of David—all dying out. In Psalm 72 we see the son of David in his new glorious reign on earth. This closes the book.

Psalm 44 is the cry of the remnant. Their present confidence is in God, through looking for Him to take the place of Jehovah.

In Psalm 45 Messiah comes in. Verse 6: His divine title is owned. Verse 9: when we have the kingdom on earth, Jerusalem is the bride. Verse 14: the virgins are the cities of Judah. In verse 16 the old thing is not remembered; but the new, which grace has introduced.

Psalm 46. The remnant find that they are owned as the nation, when they have settled in Zion. Messiah having been introduced, God is the God of Jacob.

In Psalm 47 He is subduing the peoples under their feet. The consequence of God's establishment in Zion is His stretching out His hand over the nations.

Psalm 48. Zion takes her place. She is established in blessedness. Verse 8: "As we have heard, so have we seen." It is not merely that He has come there, He is settled there. Not "I had gone with the multitude," but,

“in the midst of thy temple.” Verse 10: “According to the name,” etc. They had trusted the name, and now so is it. Verse 14: Unto death—that is, all their life long. Death not destroyed. The desire of Psalms 42, 43, and 44 is fulfilled in Psalm 48.

Psalm 49 is a moral sermon; a kind of “improvement” of Psalms 44-49. Verse 15 is resurrection, or preservation from death.

Psalm 50. They now come into the covenant “by sacrifice”; not by obedience, as at Sinai. Verse 3 is the way He gets to Zion.

Psalm 51. Their confession. Verse 19: When the heart is set right, their “sacrifices of righteousness” are acceptable. Mercy coming before righteousness is always a sign of the remnant.

As in Psalm 42 we had Israel cast out, and in Psalm 45 the temporal deliverance; so in Psalm 51 is the deliverance within. The secret of the whole we get in Psalms 68 and 69 on to Psalm 72. In Psalm 50:6, the heavens declare His righteousness: in Psalm 68:18, we find that Christ has ascended there; in Psalm 69 we learn how He got there: whilst Psalm 72 gives His royal place in Zion as Solomon.

As Psalm 52 gives faith in God’s enduring goodness for the righteous whilst He would destroy the wicked, so in Psalm 53 we see the wickedness of the people judged by God; and Psalm 54 is the cry to God as such for deliverance, before His name of Jehovah is praised.

Psalm 55 is the horror of Spirit of Christ at seeing the total iniquity at Jerusalem—Judas and Antichrist. Verse 10, Jerusalem. Verse 20, Antichrist.

Psalm 56 is more outward. Verse 8, “wanderings”; that is, up and down, not knowing what to cry; as Psalm 57 directs to heaven for the true source of deliverance.

Psalm 58:11 is the meaning of judgment, establishing God’s government of the earth.

Psalm 59:6. Not within the city yet.

Psalm 60:3. “Hard things” shewn the people. Verse 4, “a banner” given to them that fear, that it may be displayed because of the truth.

Psalm 61. All is outside; when Jesus went beyond Jordan and abode there—the hill Mizar and Hermon.

Psalm 62 is the cry of confidence in God.

Psalm 68 is the cast-out king; and (v. 2) the desire is not as in mysticism after a thing never known, but “to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee,” etc. Verse 3: his life was all sorrow, yet, “because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.”

Psalm 64:3. “They bend their bows to shoot their arrows”; but (v. 7) “God shall shoot at them with an arrow.”

Psalm 65:4. The Jews are blessed; verse 8, then all the earth.

Psalm 66 shews righteous intervention before all; and Psalm 67 the blessing of the remnant as the way of blessing for the nations.

Psalm 68:18 is the secret of it all—Jehovah received up into glory—the mystery of godliness.

Psalm 69 is the utmost distress of Christ in the midst of Israel. Verse 26: The fact of atonement, though not

directly stated as such. He is looking at sorrows from the reproachers (not as in Psalm 22), and therefore the judgment of men.

Psalm 72:16 does not touch heaven; so it is not the Son of man's dominion, but the King's Son's.

Book 3.

I think that the third book gives the ways of God with Israel, not with Judah merely ("unto which [promise] our twelve tribes hope to come"); the result being, Psalm 73, that God is good to Israel, but to the clean-hearted among them; while the prosperity of the wicked is a long sore trial to faith. Hence, in Psalm 74, all that on which their natural hopes rest is smashed and broken down. Flesh cannot build up what God has put under the power of judgment; but faith can wait on God, till He glorifies Himself. Psalm 75: His judgment is clearly unfolded, and Messiah declares the principles on which He will govern in respect of God. Psalm 76: thus God is known in Judah, His name great in Israel, and Jerusalem the seat of His power and glory. Psalm 77: the believing heart blames all distrust of this, as its infirmity, and remembers the previous days of God's right hand.

In Psalm 78 all the perverse ways of Israel are discussed; and the electing grace of God, in the house of David, presented as its only resource.

In Psalm 79 the excesses of the heathen, in the latter days, are brought under God's eye, that He may favour His people, and not remember their iniquities against them.

In Psalm 80, the connection of God, as the dweller between the cherubim of old, and the manifestation of

His power as Son of man, are brought together as the deliverance of the vine once brought out of Egypt.

Psalm 81. On the reappearance of Israel, that is, on the new moon, God shews the rectitude of His ways with that people in judgment.

In Psalm 82 He judges among the gods.

In Psalm 83 we have the last conspiracy of the Assyrians, and those that dwell within the limits of the land, where judgment displays that Jehovah is Most High over all the earth.

Up to this, we have had God, in His nature and character, as such. Now, in Psalm 84, the people in connection with Him as Jehovah think of the joy of going up to His sanctuary, that is, to worship Him.

Psalm 85. In the favour He has shewn to His land, mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, have all been verified and brought together.

Psalm 86 is a celebration of the character of Jehovah, in respect of the needy, bringing all nations up to worship before Him.

Psalm 87. The excellency of Zion is celebrated as a defiance to the whole world, specially because Messiah is reckoned amongst her children.

Now we come to what Christ gets amidst all this. Psalm 88 is the curse of the broken law, which rests on the remnant, entered into by the Spirit of Christ: while in Psalm 89 all the mercies of God are centred in Him.

In the first Book of Psalms we get Christ more as an object: for example, Psalms 2, 16, 20, 22, 40. In the second book, He is presented more as an answer. So it is

more the remnant, and how they are to be delivered; there is as much of Christ, but more in the way of Deliverer. In the third book, it is more entirely the remnant, for it is not David, but Asaph. There is a great deal more of grace here, than of righteousness, for the remnant, and not so much of Christ. We get Israel in the old associations of Egypt, and not Christ Himself in the midst of the thing.

Psalm 73 is Israel beloved for the fathers' sakes, modified by the necessity of personal righteousness. It forms a kind of thesis for the whole book.

Psalm 77 is exercise of soul in this state of things. Verses 13, 19: if you get into the sanctuary, there you will be sure to find God's way; but if you look [for it] outside, it is "in the sea." Verse 16 is the Red Sea.

Psalm 78 is an account of how they behaved under these mercies. Verse 67 is the natural heir refused. Even if God is good to Israel, it is God who is good, not that Israel has claim. Verse 68, He chose Judah.

Psalm 82. If all the deputy-judges go wrong, God judges among the gods.

Psalm 84:4 is the "house" and "praise." Verse 5 is the "ways" and "strength"; both "blessed." Verse 6, "Baca" "weeping"; so, "rejoicing in tribulation."

Psalm 86 is David. A great deal more personal; the consciousness of standing in the gap for Israel.

Psalm 89:1. "Mercies" celebrated. Verse 19 shews them summed up in the person of Christ, Verse 49, Israel is cast oyer on the certainty of mercy in God's promise to David.

Book 4.

In Psalm 90 Jehovah has always been the dwelling-place of Israel; and His greatness, and their nothingness, are used as a plea for His compassion towards them: while in Psalm 91 Messiah comes in, and owns the God of Israel, even Jehovah; and all the blessings of the name of Almighty and Most High are manifested in connection with Him.

This brings in Psalm 92, the celebration of His name in the rest—the Sabbath—of Israel.

The from Psalms 93-100, we have the thesis of Jehovah's reigning brought out from the cry of the remnant, who seek deliverance from the wicked one; the call to Israel to listen; the call to the heathen; the coming in glory to judge; the execution of the judgment; God's establishment in Zion between the cherubim the summons of the world to come and worship there with joy.

Then in Psalm 101 the principles of Christ's government; and in Psalm 102 the expression of His isolated sorrows; and to the inquiry how He, who was cut off in the midst of His days, could have part in the re-establishment of Zion, it is revealed that He is Himself the everlasting Jehovah.

In Psalm 103 he blesses Jehovah as the Forgiver and Healer of His people; in Psalm 104 as the glorious Creator; in Psalm 105 as faithful to His covenant with the fathers, and to His promises.

In Psalm 106, we see His dealings with them in chastening, but His abundant readiness to hear their cry which they now address to Him.

Psalm 90 is a supplication for mercy—a kind of introduction to the book. Verse 9: We are poor and fading things. Verse 14: Make haste to mercy.

Psalm 91. Now comes the deliberate statement of Messiah's taking up the case of Israel; not merely His being found in the position, but a kind of public announcement of it. Verse 1: Whoever takes the secret place, gets the Almightiness. Verse 2: Messiah says, I will take Jehovah as my refuge, etc. Verse 3: The Spirit declares the consequences of this. In verse 9 the remnant address Messiah. In verse 14 Jehovah comes in, and sets His seal on the whole.

Psalm 102 shews the consequence on earth of the trust of Psalm 91.

Psalm 93 has for its thesis, "Jehovah reigneth."

Psalm 94. Mercy of the remnant.

Psalm 95 is the summons to Israel. "To-day" goes on till Christ comes.

Psalm 96 is the summons to the heathen—the everlasting gospel of Revelation.

Psalm 97. He is coming.

Psalm 98. He has come, and executed salvation or righteousness in favour of Israel.

Psalm 99. He is actually sitting between the cherubim, taking His place on the throne.

Psalm 100. Gentiles are called to worship Him. "Rejoice, ye Gentiles," etc., is fulfilled.

Psalm 101 is a kind of supplemental psalm, shewing how Christ will guide His house when He takes it.

Book 5.

In Psalm 107 we get the celebration of the ways of the Lord in the restoration of His people (it is not what they are looking for), which they are specially called to notice; together, with Psalm 108, the celebration of His praises as their Redeemer.

We have then, Psalm 109, at once introduced the sufferings of Christ under the apostasy, whether of Judas or Antichrist: while, in Psalm 110, He is called to sit at Jehovah's right hand, until He makes His enemies His footstool, for the accomplishment of the purposes of this redemption—when His power shall go forth from Zion—while, because of His humiliation, He is exalted for the destroying of him who elevates himself against Him.

Psalm 110:6. "He shall wound the head over a great country."

Psalms in, 112. Then the Lord is praised for this redemption, and the display of His character in it; and the portion of the righteous consequently.

His majesty and grace are celebrated in Psalm 113, as high above all, extending everywhere, and considering the poor and needy. In Psalm 114 God's presence is the real strength of His people. Psalm 115: in contrast with idols, all the glory is given to His name.

Psalm 116. The afflicted one now praises the Lord before all, whom he had trusted in the time of his distress, when brought low. The Spirit of Christ, in the midst of His people, is especially shewn.

Psalm 116:10. In the presence of death, He goes in and speaks. So Paul in 2 Corinthians 4.

Psalm 117. The nations are then summoned to praise the Lord, because of His abiding mercy and truth to Israel.

In Psalm 118 Christ takes up the son of Israel in the great congregation, declaring that “His mercy endureth for ever.” The enemies encompassed Him, the adversary beset Him, Jehovah had chastened Him, but not given Him up. Israel now owns that the stone which the builders had rejected has become the Head of the corner, and their heart is prepared to say, “Save now,” “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah”; and they worship with joy.

Psalm 119. The law is written in Israel’s once wandering heart.

Psalms 120-134. Then we get, in the Psalms of Degrees, various thoughts and feelings of Israel as now restored, whether as looking back and enjoying the blessing; or under the conviction of sin; or as David (that is, really Christ) establishing the sign of Jehovah’s presence in full blessing in Israel— the people being gathered in unity—closing with the blessing of Jehovah from the sanctuary.

Psalm 130. In this psalm they get into the depths, not from circumstances, but from sin. Instead of speaking of enemies as in Psalm 124 (“when man rose up against us”), it is between him and God. It is after the new moon they have the day of atonement.

In Psalms 135 and 136, we have the celebration of Jehovah’s praise for His election of Israel, in connection, on the one hand, with the original promise to Abraham, and the mercy connected with His judgments on the other (compare Ex. 3 and Deut. 32); with the formal declaration that His mercy endures for ever.

Psalm 137. Babylon and Edom come up in judgment before God; and Psalm 138, God's word, the confidence of His people, is glorified in His ways towards them.

Psalm 139. None can escape the searching out of God; but if God creates for blessing, we can praise Him.

Psalm 139. The searchings of God throw you back on the thoughts that God had in meeting you in grace; and therefore you can ask God to "search," etc. We are the creatures of His thoughts, as well as the subject of them.

Psalm 140. We have the cry for deliverance from the evil and violent man; the head of the faithful is covered in the day of his conflict, for God maintains his cause, and delivers him.

Psalm 141. The Lord is trusted to guide them—that is, the poor—in a right path, according to His mind, so as to avoid the snares of the wicked. In the utmost desolation he trusts Him. Then, Psalm 142, however overwhelmed, God knows his path.

Psalm 143. He pleads not to enter into judgment, for no man can be justified, for the enemy has trodden down his soul; but he still looks to the Lord, and trusts that He will guide him in uprightness, and looks to Him in mercy, to cut off all his enemies, that, Psalm 144, full blessing may come in.

Psalm 144 is different from Psalm 18 in not having the death of Christ as a centre; and, moreover, the heathen are not brought in.

Psalm 145. Messiah describes the millennium in the interchange of Jehovah's praises between Him and the people that are blessed.

Then we get the great Hallel.

Psalm 146. Jehovah is praised as the God of Jacob, as the Creator of all things, the Keeper of truth, the Deliverer of the oppressed, and of all from affliction and distress. He shall reign as the God of Zion through all generations.

Psalm 147. Then He is praised as the Builder up of Jerusalem, taking pleasure in them that fear Him, ruling every element by His word; but giving His word, His statutes, and His judgments, to Israel.

Psalm 148. All creation is called upon to praise Him; who exalts the horn of His people (Israel)—a people near unto Him.

Psalm 149. Israel, above all, is called to praise Him in a new song. Judgment is put into their hands.

The last Psalm 150, is a kind of chorus. In His sanctuary, the firmament of His power, everything that has breath is called to praise Him.

In this book we have either the explanation of the Lord’s ways, or hallelujahs. It is a kind of sermon.

The Psalms

Introduction.

The five Books of Psalms are divided thus:—

First, from Psalm 1 to Psalm 41;

Second, from Psalm 42 to Psalm 72;

Third, from Psalm 73 to Psalm 89;

Fourth, from Psalm 90 to Psalm 106; and

Fifth, from Psalm 107 to the end.

The subjects of each are different, and may be thus briefly distinguished.

In the first book the Jews are not driven out, but go up to the temple, and mix with those in the land. The name of Jehovah always occurs. He is in recognised relationship with them.

In the second book they are driven out, and only a small seed is left. The Gentiles combine with the nations against the godly who flee to the mountains. It is Judah driven out. “God “is used here, except when hope is expressed.

In the third book it is not Jews in Jerusalem, or driven out, but all Israel are taken up. The ways of God with the people, as such, are found here.

The fourth book begins another range of subjects. While they own Jehovah the dwelling-place, the bringing of Christ into the world again is celebrated; the progress of His coming in glory; His sitting between the cherubim; and the nations coming to worship.

Then the concluding or fifth book is a review of all, winding up with a chorus, which consists of thanksgivings for the blessings brought in, of which Israel is the earthly centre around and under the Messiah.

Book 1.—Psalms 1-41.

There are two great subjects laid hold of from one end of scripture to the other, founded on the relationships in grace: the government of Grod; and the church of God. When I speak of the church of God, I speak of His grace, that which stands only in grace; and when Christ reigns, the church reigns with Him, the weakest and feeblest saint is taken up, and put in the same place with Christ. Grace is conferred on those who least deserve it. There is also the government of the Father for those in the church, but this is quite different from the government of God in a general sense. It is true that gracious principles come in there; but the church is the body of Christ, members of His body, etc. To be His brethren is another relationship. God's government of this world is quite a different thing from that. It is interesting for us, because we have a personal association with the Lord Jesus in His humiliation and His glory, and there is nothing connected with Christ but should interest us.

The immediate government of God is brought out in connection with Israel, and the Book of Psalms has a peculiar character in relation to this. The Psalms express the feelings and thoughts of those who find themselves in the circumstances that give rise to them. When under government, the power of evil must be set aside, in order for those who are separate from it to get free of their sufferings. With us it is quite different. We

leave the evil, and rise into the glory. There is also the difference of reigning and being reigned over. The government of God for earth is entirely connected with Israel—our home is elsewhere. They are on earth, and government is connected with earth.

In Israel God gives certain laws. Now grace reigns through righteousness which Another has accomplished. There will be righteousness on earth when He comes again. Now it is exactly the contrast. Righteousness is only in connection with heaven now. Christ is exalted in heaven, but rejected on earth. The principle on which all God's dealings with the Jew go is government, although you find mercy put first.

Two things are connected with the Jews in Psalms 1 and 2; God's law written on their hearts (Ps. 1), and their Messiah coming to them, God's king set up on God's throne (Ps. 2). These are two fundamental principles connected with God's people on the earth.

In Psalm 1 we have the effect of godliness, present blessing; and in Psalm 2 the place Christ has as King.

In the first is the application of God's government on the earth, on the godly and the ungodly ones. There will be the cutting off of the ungodly ones like chaff, and those who remain are the godly. There is a godly remnant in the midst of the ungodly, and the ungodly are to be cut off. That is the basis of all we have in the Book of Psalms.

The first characteristic of the godly ones is in contrast with the ungodly. They delight in the law of Jehovah. They have tasted the sweetness of the principles in God's word, and know a Christ come down from heaven. The law characterises all the moral condition of the

godly man (Ps. 119). The remnant in the latter day are associated in character and circumstances with the remnant who believed and followed Christ at His first coming. The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, which is spoken of as a present thing. The godly are in the midst of the ungodly in the presence of judgment, which brings in the day of the Lord.

Psalm 2 is the time when the judgment is ending, and government is made good by the power of the Son exercising His wrath. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings,” for if the Son’s wrath be kindled, all will be over with you. This has nothing to do with the gospel of God’s grace. The kings of the earth are not in relationship with the Father and the Son, but in rebellion against Jehovah and His Christ. It is a direct question of judgment—the closing scene—distinctly brought to the last day, the day of Jehovah. He is setting up the king of Israel, never mind what the kings of the earth do. God’s king shall laugh at them. When Christ was born into this world, God had this purpose in view; and when the King is brought in, the eye will be turned to Him who was before born into the world. He is to be set up King in Zion, and He is to have the heathen for His possession. But what does He do? He breaks their bands in sunder. I can understand this if it is government, but not if it is gospel. Matthew 10 shews the gathering out of a remnant, and passing over this time to the end, when the Son of man will be there. All connected with the gospel is left out, and the kingdom is the subject—those “worthy” (Matt. 10), not sinners. It is the witness of the kingdom that is carried on to the time when He comes.

In John 17 Christ says, “I pray not for the world” (I ask not for the heathen now), “but for those whom thou hast

given me out of the world." He is gathering these now, but He will have the heathen. He is asking for those who are to be with Him, the results of redemption-work; nothing about the world, not even breaking the nations to pieces. Again, in John 20, He says to Mary Magdalene, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended," etc. The time was not come for Him to be King, but He wduld make His brethren know the relationship into which He brought them. He was not coming to take the kingdom yet, but He would give them the same place that He had.

Revelation 2:26, 27 alludes to this psalm. Under the government of God there is law for rule (Ps. 1). Psalm 2 declares that, in spite of all the world, He will bring His Son in again, and set Him King. In the one psalm we get what are the principles of His government, and in the other what are His counsels. The godly ones are exercised amongst these ungodly ones who are in power.

Then, remark that Psalms 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 express the exercises of the godly. In these psalms we find the righteous remnant in the presence of the judgment, looking for the Lord's coming to sustain their faith, and make good His word: but they go through all sorts of trials. Christ is not yet reigning, evil not yet judged; yet the trials and exercises of the godly remnant before God's judgment on the ungodly help their faith. God is standing back, as it were.

Psalm 8 is of another character. Jehovah is to be glorified in this earth, and His glory above the heavens. He has never been so yet. The Father's name is glorified in the hearts of His children, but Jehovah is not glorified universally. 1 Corinthians 15 shews Christ as the Head

of the new creation; government in the kingdom is to come in, and, as in Colossians 1, it is to be as Head of the church, He will take the kingdom as Son of man. Psalm 8 presents Him as thus coming. It is not yet fulfilled. “We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus,” etc. He is now gathering the church, who, when He comes, comes with Him. The only thing in which I can separate myself from Christ is, where He became sin. Looking at His glory is looking at our own.

In Luke 9:21, 22, being rejected as the Christ, He therefore would not set Himself up as the King. Then He takes another name— “Son of man,” and as such He must suffer. He drops for the time the title of Christ, as in Psalm 2, which sets Him forth as the anointed King, and takes the title of Psalm 8— “Son of man.” But He must suffer. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,” etc. As Christ they may say nothing about Him then. As Son of man He is to have all under Him, not only is He to be King in Zion. That will be accomplished too; but, according to Isaiah 49:6, He is to have the Gentiles also. He is to be over everything; and as a man He is to take all things. God will gather together in one all things in Christ, we being in the heavenly part, and Satan under our feet. In the Psalms we get the Christ we are associated with, but not our association with Him. The scheme of the government of God has never yet begun. It has not yet been the new covenant, but the old. Christ is to be King, and this is prophetically, not historically, given in Psalm 2; He is also Son of man in Psalm 8, which is prophetic.

Psalm 9 looks at the wicked as not yet put out. The time is not come for righteousness to be made good. Divine righteousness is accomplished through His death, but

govern-men in righteousness not yet established. Psalm 2 is not fulfilled, only the opposition of the kings, etc. In Psalm 10 there is distress for the remnant until the interposition of God comes.

Psalms 11 to 15 disclose feelings of the remnant; but there is confidence in God in time of trial. Christ puts into their hearts just what they want in the circumstances. Psalm 12 is the extremity of their distress—a godly man scarcely to be found. Psalm 13 is deeper distress of soul because of a sense of its being from God. The faith of God's people cannot go on for ever; they cry, "How long?" "Art thou treating us as if given up? If it goes on thus, I shall faint under it!" Psalm 14 is the character of the wicked to be cut off, as Psalm 15 is the character of the remnant who stand. The practically godly remnant will have the blessing when Christ comes. There is in Psalms 9, 10, the history of the tribulation— the fact of judgment; and then in Psalms 11, 12 and 13, their condition, thoughts, and feelings; and Psalm 15, the character of those on the holy hill, in contrast with the wicked set forth in Psalm 14.

In Psalm 16 Christ is the link between Jehovah and the remnant. He is passing through this world so as to be able to speak a word in season to the remnant in the last day. He could not go and associate Himself with them in that way without the atonement being made. We have the figure in Aaron going into the holy place on the day of atonement. We are associated with Him within. Isaiah 53: "We hid as it were our faces from him "is the expression of the Jews in the latter day, linking themselves with those who rejected Christ when He was here the first time.

In this first book of the Psalms the godly remnant are not driven out of Jerusalem. This applied to Christ personally. He was on this side Jordan, with the poor of the flock, He was walking with them—His path in life. There is more personal association of Christ with the remnant in the latter day. There is more appeal to Jehovah in this book than to God, which characterises the second book. Jehovah is the title God has especially connected with the people of Israel, the seed of Abraham; and their relationship with Him in the land is thus acknowledged. It is better to read “Jehovah” instead of Lord, which we have very vague and undefined in our minds generally, though it is a most blessed title.

In Psalm 16 Christ, before taking His place on high, has experimentally “the tongue of the learned.” “In thee do I put my trust.” This is quoted in Hebrews 2 to prove Christ’s humanity. There are two things make perfection in a man— dependence and obedience. They were in Christ, the contrast of what was in Adam when he sinned. His heart could be moved with compassion, and not only could He shew His power to work miracles, but He could take this place of the dependent and obedient One, and it is there the heart gets food.

God has His food in the offering, but there was the meatoffering, and part of the peace-offering, which the priests ate. He says, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” Then we feed. The Father has given us the very object He delights in for the object of our affection.

In this psalm He first definitely takes His place with the excellent of the earth. He is thus the comfort of His

people in sorrow; and when we have peace, He is the food of our souls—the heart has the perfect good to feed on. He is the object before the soul—He is properly the food of our souls, not in glory, but in humiliation, as here. “I am the true bread that came down from heaven.” It does not say, the bread that went up to heaven. Then His flesh is needed for life, we must know Him as dead. We cannot feed on Him as the living and glorified Christ, but as the dead Christ. What draws out our affections to Christ is, what He was down here, going through all the difficulties, making His passage through everything about which He has to intercede for us now.

“Thou hast said to Jehovah, Thou art my master.” Now I take the place of a servant; I am my Master’s—I am taking the place of dependence, leaning on Thee, looking to Thee. Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament, not excluding the Father and the Spirit (John 12; Isa. 6). “My goodness extendeth not to thee”; I am not taking a divine place now. He became a babe—was growing in wisdom and favour— anointed to service—has the tongue of the learned; then comes fellowship with the excellent. He takes His place as identifying Himself with them (Phil. 2); that is, “to the saints that are in the earth, and the excellent, in them is all my delight.” If His soul disclaimed the one, it had joy in the other. The saints cannot have a sorrow, a difficulty, that is not mine. Proverbs 8: “My delights were with the sons of men.” In the first movement of spiritual life in them, however poor and feeble they are, He goes with them; they are the excellent, it is not what they had, but what they were. During His life He was going with them—at the cross He went for them, they could not go there. If

they begin to live for Him, He lives with them; not one difficulty on the road but Christ has gone before in it; and as to sin, that He has borne. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.” He met the lion on the way, and destroyed him that had the power of death. Every step that the Spirit of God in a man treads through this world, Christ has gone. I cannot get into a trouble that Christ has not been in before.

“Thou maintainest my lot.” This is just what the poor saints will want in the future day. Could the Man of sorrows say that? “Thou maintainest my lot; the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.” Yes, He knew who had given Him all. “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup.” Jehovah was His portion, and always He could say it. This truth of Christ’s entering into all our sorrows, when the Spirit of God works, He going into it, and as to our sins, helping against them, is immense comfort. I get all the sympathies of Christ in this way.

There is not a step of the path of life that Christ has not trod, Jehovah shewing Him the path of life up to blessing. “Thou wilt shew me the path of life.” There was enough in Christ, and He did draw out the affections of the Father as a Man down here (of course as the eternal Son also) in this path of life. How dependent for everything! He does not say, “I will rise up,” but, “Thou wilt shew me.” He passes through death in dependence on His Father; there was the blessed perfectness of a Man with God; and at the close of His career, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came from God and went to God, etc. He could go back unsullied1 to the throne of God,

and take man back with Him into the glory out of which He came: there is manhood now in the presence of God.

Matthew 3 gives John's baptism. They came to him, confessing their sins— "fruits meet for repentance." The beginning of all excellence is to confess we have none; "fruit" was confessing they brought forth none. The instant the Spirit of God is working, Jesus goes to be baptised with them (not having any sin to confess, of course, but) doing His Father's will. He takes His place with them. He had come for that, and the consequence is that He takes His place after death and resurrection to praise in the midst of the congregation.

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life." It is most blessed to hear Christ saying that. It is the path of holy death in verse 10: how did He find that of life? Adam found the path of death in his folly and his self-will, but back from it never! The tree of life was never to be touched in the garden of Eden; he had taken the other path. These two trees set forth that which men are always puzzling themselves about—responsibility, and the gift of God which is life. All that man does ends in death, but it is too late to warn of this now, for he is "dead in trespasses and sins." But Christ came, bringing life into a world that drove Him away, where Satan, the prince of it, reigned, and everything was bearing the stamp of his guilty dominion. In this place of death Christ makes out a path for us. He is shewn by His Father "the path of life." He was "the Life"; but then the path of life had to be tracked through the place of death, where no one thing testifies of God—one wide waste, where there is no way. Christ has Himself gone there before. It is for the Christian I am speaking now; the gospel shews He gives it to those who believe. He had to make out the path of

life through a world of sin and wretchedness, in obedience, up to God. It must be through death, if for us, because we are sinners.. Now he says, “If any man serve me, let him follow me.” We must take up the cross. The cross to Him was atonement; that was the path. As He came for us, it must be by the cross. He has gone through it perfectly and absolutely.

What is the consequence? The end is, “in thy presence is fulness of joy.” He would rather die than disobey. Notice, death is gone to us, the end is gained: we have to tread this very same path that He trod, up to His presence, where there is “fulness of joy.” Why all this? It was for His Father’s glory, doubtless, but it was for these “excellent of the earth.” His identifying Himself with them involved this.

Psalms 17, 18, shew the results of His thus taking His place with them. Psalm 17 is the controversy with man in the path; “Let my sentence come forth from thy presence”; and the end is, “I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

Psalms 16, 17, give us two great principles of divine life — trust and righteousness, or integrity; and we find them running all through the Psalms, and any godly person’s life, as well as that of the Jew: but this does not give the foundation fully on which we stand, according to the New Testament. You do not find in Psalm 17 the foundation of God’s righteousness at this time. Souls in the condition of having divine life, but not knowing their standing in divine righteousness, find the suitability of the Psalms to express their experience.

In Psalm 16 it is divine life in dependence, obedience, and communion. The first characteristic of divine life is trust— Christ putting His trust in Jehovah. As a man He does it. We see Him praying, the true expression of dependence; and in Luke's Gospel this is especially brought out. Then another principle of divine life is the consciousness of integrity, there may be both these— trust in God and consciousness of integrity, without peace with God. Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"; and he pleaded his own righteousness against God. "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." He had the consciousness of sin and the sense of righteousness, integrity in himself at the same time. The soul cannot be at peace in this state. Job was wrong in making a righteousness of his integrity.

This second principle of divine life we have in Psalm 17. It is the kind of righteousness the Jews will have in the latter day—the same which they had of old. God stays up the souls that trust in Him until they see Christ. Having a promise, they trust, but cannot say, "I have the righteousness of God." Christ having taken up their condition, and borne it, they have the consciousness of integrity through him; and it is the stay of their souls, but not peace. They will find such utterances as this, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee," suit their own experience; they will be comforted by finding the word of God giving expression to their thoughts and feelings; it will be a prop and stay to them in the midst of their exercises, but they will not get peace in it. This Psalm 17 applies to the remnant surrounded by their enemies—ours are spiritual enemies. Here is the reality of enemies pressing round Christ. The remnant will find every imperfectly formed feeling of their hearts has

been perfectly gone through and expressed by Him, He having put Himself in their place. In trusting, and in the consciousness of integrity, He has been before them.

In the Psalms mercy always goes before righteousness, and they never meet till Christ appears at the end to the remnant. It cannot be said, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” until the perfectness of redemption is known. I may get hope, but I cannot get peace until I get righteousness. It may be said, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other” for the Jew when Christ comes again. A Jew under law would put righteousness before mercy—that is the law—and Israel stood on that ground. They had made the golden calf before the law was given to them; then God retires into His own sovereignty, and, to spare any, mercy comes in. It was the resource of God when wickedness came in. They have been going about to establish their own righteousness, they would not have Christ who is the end of the law for righteousness, etc., and when they come back, it will be on the ground of mercy and hope.

We, on our proper ground, are not like those who refuse to believe until they see Him; we have the end of our faith now, even the salvation of our souls. We know that righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Christ has gone into the holy place, as the Holy Ghost has come out to us, the proof of it, and we are certain Christ is received within, the full accomplishment of divine righteousness. Romans 3:20: “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified.” But it is said, “In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” It is not “shall” to us, but “being [that is, having been] justified by faith.” God had been forbearing in

mercy with the Old Testament saints, because He knew what He was going to bring in. Now it is declared. It was not declared then.

“Not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things,” etc. “To declare at this time his righteousness.” They could say, “being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform.” I do not simply believe that He is able, but that He has raised up His Son from the dead. I may trust He will help, but not be conscious of being helped yet; that was the patriarch’s portion. Yet I do not expect Him to do it, but know that He has done it; it is the ministration of righteousness. I have the knowledge of accomplished righteousness; righteousness is declared to faith. I am not merely hoping for mercy, trusting, and having consciousness of integrity. They could not judge sin in the same way when they had not righteousness as a settled question, which it now is for ever for those who believe. The Spirit of God now demonstrates righteousness to the world by setting Christ at God’s right hand. Christ said, “I have glorified thee on the earth”; God says to Him, “Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

As regards the believer now, righteousness is on the right hand of God for him. The aifections ought to be more lively now that there is the certainty of accomplished righteousness.

There is another thing connected with righteousness here; righteousness is appealed to on the ground of promises, as well as that mercy goes before it. In their state there must be alternation of feeling, in the sense of hope in His mercy— trusting in God; in the

consciousness of sin—down in the depths. Yet they will find One has gone down into the depths for them. The Spirit of God in Christ going through all these things shews that not one place, from the dust of death to the highest place in glory, but He has been in—sins and all having been gone under.

The weakest saint now knows more than the apostles could when Christ was on earth. They trembled and fled at the cross. We feed on that which frightened them—a dead Christ. When once founded on righteousness, our position is so different. It is sad to see a saint crouching down on the other side of divine righteousness, instead of having on the “helmet of salvation,” having communion with Him in the efficacy of His death.

There is another thing to mark in these Psalms—the character of hope running all through them. Christ looked onward to being in the presence of God, where is fulness of joy; this was the reward He looked for as the end of trusting in God’s love (Ps. 16).

The reward of righteousness is glory: “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.” Christ looked to return into the same glory He had left for the path of humiliation down here; the reward for it would be glory as a crown. The reward of walking with God in communion is joy in His presence (end of Ps. 16); the reward of faithful walk is the place in glory (end of Ps. 17). It is the same difference for us. Paul looked for the crown of righteousness, but his highest hope was to win Christ.

Christ will come to set everything to rights in power; judgment will return to righteousness, and all the meek of the earth shall see. This has never been known yet.

When Christ comes in power, judgment and righteousness will go together. Power will be given to the Judge, who will act in righteousness. The great hindrance to our understanding the Old Testament scriptures is our putting ourselves into them. God's faithfulness, of course, is always true; but when the Spirit of prophecy speaks of the people, and state of the people (for example God hiding His face from them), we know it does not apply to us literally. He cannot hide His face from us. His face is shining on us in Christ. Does He hide His face from Christ?

Psalm 18. Here are Christ's sufferings even unto death. The death of Christ is the ground of all Christ's dealing with the people from Egypt to glory.

Psalm 19 is the witness of creation and witness of the law (v. 7, etc.). Whatever man touches he defiles; but the heavens maintain the glory of God—they are what man cannot reach. Law is broken. Man cannot change it, but he has broken it.

The Psalms that follow, namely, Psalms 20, 21, and 22, are all connected, and shew the result of the position Christ takes in Psalm 16, where He takes the place of caring for "the excellent of the earth," etc.; as though saying, The old world, the people in the flesh, I have done with, and now all My delight is with the excellent. These are they who have received Him. The connection of that, as we have seen, is that He must go through death. He must be the resurrection Man. There must be atonement. Peter was reproved for desiring this to be avoided. Flesh cannot go there; Christ alone can and does. "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now." The moment He has to do with us, it must be Hades, or

death. He cannot bless man with union with Himself in the flesh. In the millennium He governs; and we are blest now, but it is all in virtue of this—He has died and risen; therefore we are told to reckon ourselves dead. The life has come into the world that had power to go through death; the life has gone through death, and risen out of it.

Psalm 20. The remnant sympathise; and, looking on Him in His trouble, pray for Him.

In Psalm 22 the excellent of the earth come to this terrible conclusion—that they must give their Messiah up as to the flesh. They never could understand how it was to be. In the history we know the result of this when He was on earth; they all forsook Him, and fled. Then mark, we have the character of His sufferings brought out—sufferings from man. They hated Him. “Their soul abhorred me,” as Zechariah says. The history of the Gospels is that they would not have Him. They sent a message after Him, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” All this was from the hand and heart of man. One betrayed Him, another denied Him in the hour of trial, even of His disciples. Then look at the priests: what heartless indifference and unrighteousness in Pilate, who was afraid of the Jews, and washed his hands to be clean of His death! Christ looks round for companions, but finds none, for righteousness, none! for sympathy, none! for intercession, none! Mary at Bethany was a single exception; a gleam of light was there in the midst of the darkness. She, spending her heart on Him, was an appropriate witness to the Son of man—the Son of God! All except that was darkness. The more perfect His feelings, the more He suffered. It was a deep mire in which He was standing. He had to prove the wickedness

of the human heart, that it is open and complete enmity to what is good. Such is flesh. Christ experienced what it is on His own person. The result of all that suffering from the hand of man is judgment on man. (See Ps. 16.) "Thou hast given him what he asked of thee." (See Heb. 5 also: "He was heard for his piety.") "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies."

There are two very distinct characters in Christ's sufferings. There was His suffering in the world, and especially in connection with Israel; and there was this other—He came to give His life a ransom. "This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for many": and it is outside all dispensation. We "were by nature children of wrath"; all are one as to that condition. There was a ministration "of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises," etc., and the Gentiles were the objects of mercy; but through Christ's coming into the world there was the end of promise. There are blessed promises made good to us as Christians, and God will fulfil all He has said for earth, but this will be in the world to come. Christ came as the vessel of promise. He came into the world, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Then there was a third party: "As many as received him," etc. The world knew Him not; His own received Him not. But some did receive Him; these were born of God. It was a new thing, not from the first Adam. Every Christian knows we are born anew. It is no modification of the first Adam, but a new life. "The life was manifested, and we have seen it," etc.; and in chapter 2 of John's epistle it is said, "which thing is true in him, and in you." In chapter 1 of the Gospel he had said, "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." John

the Baptist drew attention to the “Light”; the Light comes into the world, and the world knows Him not. Then, again, He comes among the Jews with everything to attract; but they saw nothing in Him to desire Him. This gives a double character to Christ’s coming into the world. He was connected with all who came of Adam, being born into the world. He was the Life and the Light of men. He did not receive life—He was it. He was the Life from heaven. God has given to us life, and that life is in His Son; not life in ourselves. This divine Person comes into the world, “God manifest in the flesh.” This is the first thing—He tries human nature, that is, the world and the Jews. He was a minister of the circumcision, bound to come because of the promises.

Christ’s coming as God manifested in the flesh tests man. Then, secondly, He became the last Adam (I am not now speaking of Him as Head of His body, the church, but as risen man) the Head of everything, the First-born from the dead. In the last Adam—Christ—we have the Man of God’s counsels; as Zechariah has it, “the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.” This is a different thing from His merely testing the old thing, which, even in Him, ends in death. True, He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Even then He could speak of resurrection, and in that resurrection He becomes the Head of a new thing, and He will be that for ever. This new position He never took on the earth. It was in resurrection. We could not have had it with Him without death— “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone,” etc. Such is the essence and centre of all our relationships with God. If man could have had connection with God in the flesh, on this side death, it would prove flesh good

for something. It is the best thing it could be if it could delight in God; but all testimony shews us this is impossible.

Christ was here in perfect graciousness, speaking as never man spake, bringing out all His resources to meet the need of men; but the result of all this is entire and utter rejection. The history gives us Him presenting divine grace and graciousness, but His rejection in consequence. Not only has man broken God's law—that he had done already, made a calf, etc.—but now the question was raised between the display of God's heart and man's heart. He says, For my love I have hatred "they hated me without a cause." That is the whole history of the flesh—God was reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. It is this gives the true character to the world now. Christ has been here, and has been rejected. The people were prepared by prophecy, promise, etc. Messiah came in by the door, was feeding the hungry with bread, doing all things well, as some were constrained to acknowledge; but they would not have Him.

John begins with His rejection; there is no genealogy given by him. The other Gospels give us the history of His rejection, but in these three verses of John I we have the results of what is told in the rest. The Jews are treated as a reprobate people; Christ is taken up as the rejected One. This is the starting-point with John, but grace is brought out. The result of man's treatment of Christ will result in judgment on man.

The result of His atoning work is exactly the opposite. Why did He suffer from man? It was for righteousness. When He suffers from God, is it for righteousness? Just

the opposite. He suffers for sin under the wrath of God. He was made sin! Aye, and He suffers for sin. The moment He was made sin, He had to do with God about it. He was absolutely alone in this; there were none to look on, man could not contemplate. We have not such an expression as that we have in Psalm 20, “Jehovah hear thee,” in this Psalm 22. The disciples were even as the world—they could not go there. The ark must stand in the midst of Jordan until the people are over. There was Satan’s power, God’s wages against sin. When He appeals to God for deliverance, He is not heard on the cross. He tasted death for every man. He must drink the cup of wrath—it is between God and Himself. If He had had the least comfort from God, He would not have drunk the cup. Man had nothing to do with it. If man had been there, it would have been damnation; He must be alone when suffering from God. In the thought of this suffering from sin He prayed against it. Could He say of that, “My meat is to do the will”? etc. No! not on the cross. This was the power of death, and in prospect of it, in the garden of Gethsemane, He said to His disciples, “Tarry ye here and watch”; and to God, “If it be possible, let this cup pass,” etc. Then He takes the cup from His Father’s hands. When on the cross He cries “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? “He is forsaken of God. His soul drinks the cup of wrath due to Him when He is made sin. We have His thoughts and feelings expressed where the facts are going on. In the Psalms we have the privilege thus of knowing how He felt when under them. Psalm 22 gives, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” His feelings—the fact was atonement.

All that was closed in the death of Christ, and now it is another thing, a new thing. He comes out free, discharged, clear of all He bore on the cross, and is the resurrection chief, the heavenly Man according to the counsels of God. It is into union with Him we are brought by faith—a place of unmingled and perfect grace is the result. Verse 19 shews what was the peculiar character of Christ's sufferings through the place He took in this world, and then the place before God which results in this full blessing to us.

"Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." He was transpierced, not saved from it, so as not to be on it; when on the horns of the unicorns (a figure expressing the awful suffering of that moment), He was heard, "Thou hast heard me from the horns," etc. "He hath appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin," etc. All is judged, and this new resurrection Man is now in the presence of God, instead of the sinful man cast out of the presence of God; the risen man heard from the horns of the unicorns. Then He came to give testimony of the place into which we are brought as delivered. Angels had never seen such a thing as this! God had now a new character as Saviour—the Saviour-God. Christ had thus manifestly revealed it. It is not now responsible man; which has been gone through and settled in the death of Christ. Man would not have Him; then there must be judgment on enemies (not only wicked people): this is the result. Now God says, "I am going to do something in the second Adam." "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," etc. "And you who

were dead in trespasses and sins" hath he quickened, etc. "Not of works," etc. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." There is the responsibility of Christians.

This new name of God, Saviour, so often mentioned in Timothy, is made known by that Man who is set at His right hand by divine power, giving new life. God came down in the person of Christ, who went into death and rose again. He is the Saviour. What is the first thing He does after His resurrection? He comes and tells His brethren of the full deliverance He has wrought. He comes to tell them, You are saved—you are brought before God—by virtue of this that I have done. Then He says to Mary Magdalene, Touch me not; I am not here among you as a King, but "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father." He puts them into the same relationship as Himself. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." When He has told them of the blessedness of being saved, the full joy of the deliverance, He is not going to let them praise alone. The first thing is to reveal the new relationship, and then to praise in the midst of them. What is the character of His praise? Can a single note jar in His praise? If He praises, it must be in the power of a full redemption, a finished complete deliverance; and everything not founded on this does not answer to His note of praise.

Speaking of our answering to God on the ground of this redemption, what position are we to take? We can take none but what He has taken. He comes and declares His name to His brethren, and He leads the praise Himself, so that we must in worship acknowledge the full blessing into which He has brought us. We have to

follow Him in His praise in this new relationship, not in flesh but in risen life. People say, But I must be humble! Nothing is so humble as following Christ, and He has left sin behind—death behind; and, blessed be God for it! there is no other position for us.

“Ye that fear Jehovah, praise him.” This goes on to the end of verse 24. But we come in verse 25 and following verses to millennial time— “in the great congregation,” when all Israel shall be satisfied. Not only they are meek, but they praise Him. “They shall praise Jehovah that seek him.” People now are often sorrowful and unhappy in seeking, but not then. Verse 27. All Israel will not do, but “all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to Jehovah.” Verse 31. “They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness, etc., that he hath done this “(borne their sins).

All this latter part (v. 25-31) as we have seen refers to millennial blessing on earth; but we know our position is spoken of as “sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” He has suffered from God, and there is not a word of judgment afterwards; He has suffered for sin, and exhausted it. He is the exalted Man, and as such He will execute judgment as the result of His being rejected of man. As to the saints— “the excellent”—His connection with them is the key to all the blessing for us. Two things are connected with this: first, unbounded grace; and, secondly, the place we are practically set in—a new footing. We have new life from God; we are not of the world, and should be nothing in the spirit of grace, because not of it.

Psalm 23. Jehovah is the Shepherd, going before the sheep in the path. We cannot say Christ was a sheep: He

is Jehovah; but He emptied Himself—went before them—passed through every difficulty and trial yet more than the sheep.

Psalm 24. The consequence is that He is found to be the very Jehovah; the One who in humiliation was trusting is received on high, and owned in His glory.

Psalm 25. Here another point comes in. Up to this there is no mention of sins; they are a tried remnant, but there are no sins confessed till now. This is what makes the great difference for any soul. That they are sinners is a farther part of the history. But atonement and grace come out in Psalm 22. The remnant, before they trust in Christ, cry to Jehovah. There is not integrity lost, but sins are confessed. Christ has combined the expression of confession and trust together. They can look for mercy, expect mercy, and confess their sins. They will be trusting, and yet not knowing how they can trust. The soul is brought into the thorough and deep consciousness of what God is—despairing and hoping (we are the same when under law) alternately. The state of the Jews will be this—not having the application in the conscience of what the cross reaches. All needed is brought out in the cross; but what the cross has done in bringing out to light righteousness and love is not seen all at once. With us it is often by little and little that the blessed picture seen in Christ makes its way into the soul. Then it is all light; but darkness may come in afterwards. At first there is only reckoning on the blessedness of Christ. When that reaches the conscience it brings bitterness: what at first attracted the heart did not reach the elements of good and evil. When it reaches these, it does not minister peace, because the man has not learned the thing to which it applies in his own soul.

It is a wonderful thing to see Christ coming, and saying, “My sins.” Christ made Himself one with me, taking all my debts upon Him— my Surety! He has gone down into the depths. “My iniquities”; any one of the remnant might say that. There is the remnant’s voice in it, but there is Christ’s first. He has taken them. They suffer from them, never for them—it would be eternal condemnation if they did. “He was wounded for our transgressions,” etc.

In this psalm there is confession of sins, and sense of integrity (v. 5). “On thee do I wait all the day,” etc. Integrity, coming back with the consciousness of sins, but confidence of pardon: “Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” God brings in the question of living righteousness, and therefore gives the consciousness of sins: “For thy name’s sake pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” This is strange reasoning, according to man’s thought: men say it is a little sin, but when taught of God we see how great it is.

Another thing is, truth is in the man, because he feels the sin is great; he has given up any thought of justifying himself, “My iniquity is great.” If God docs not forgive me for His own glory’s sake, He cannot do it at all; and not one spot of sin will He leave, for the comfort of my own heart, or the glory of His name. So we see for Israel by-and-by in Isaiah 44:22, etc. They are made to rest in absolute mercy, in sovereign grace. Grace is perfect in getting rid of the sins.

The psalms following Psalm 25 give details of these experiences, as they are going through this time of trial. Psalm 26 gives the other side of the repentant soul, not confidence in grace, but integrity. In Psalm 27 Jehovah is

the desire and refuge, as He had bid them seek. In Psalm 28 evil is felt, judgment looked for, in separation of heart to the Lord. In Psalm 29 the mighty are reminded of the Mightiest. In Psalm 30 trust in prosperity is contrasted with Jehovah, who is above the power of death. From Psalm 31 Christ could quote the words of departing confidence in His Father (not Jehovah only), though it be about the godly and redeemed remnant. Psalm 32 is the answer to Psalm 25. “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” “Covered “is an allusion to the mercy-seat covering. Sins are put away, no more to be remembered. This is held out before them as hope. They will have the consciousness of forgiveness when they see Him. “In whose spirit there is no guile”; in the forgiveness the guile is all gone.

Psalm 33 follows this up with the joy of full deliverance by Jehovah’s intervention, and Psalm 34 shews the soul praising at all times because of the unchanging God who governs all. Psalm 35 appeals to His judgment against cruel crafty persecutors, as Psalm 36 sees good and evil in His light, followed up by Psalm 37, which exhorts the godly to wait on Jehovah in meekness, undisturbed by the passing prosperity of the wicked. Psalms 38, and 39 own Jehovah’s chastening because of their sins; but they are open before Himself, and silent with man, but cry for His help. The latter goes farther and more deeply than the former, the vanity of man being realised rather than their personal feelings.

Then we have the introduction of One who changes all in Psalm 40. “I waited patiently,” etc. Here is the reason why the remnant should trust Jehovah. He has been delivered from the horrible pit and the miry clay

(shewing resurrection). There are some special psalms connected with Christ round which others seem clustered; this is one of them. Here is Christ's actual connection with the people on earth, not only in their sorrows, but bearing their sins, so that all who looked to Him might be blessed with Him. "I, poor and needy, the Lord thinketh upon me." "Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee."

Christ did not take one step to save Himself. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but He was waiting upon God. He appeals to God as Jehovah, not Father, because that relationship had not been brought out as now it is. The Jew did not know the Father as He is now revealed, and Christ was taking the place of a godly Jew among them, therefore He takes up the relationship known to them. One or two verses often bring out the subject of the psalm, and the rest are the development of that. What He did in the position He was in is the great point here—what He went through—what He felt. The grand principle is that He waited on Jehovah. He is undertaking the cause of the poor remnant, goes through all their sorrows, and bears their sin. In the last it is for them, not with them; and He gives them the comfort of being taken up to the same position of praising with Himself. "Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah."

Then there is the great central truth: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire": "Mine ears hast thou digged!" "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second." Christ came to do God's will. Everything centres in Christ. All blessing is connected with relationship to Christ, whether outcast reprobates (Gentiles), or God's people who had broken the

covenant. All is set aside; and Christ, who says “Lo, I come to do thy will,” becomes everything.

“Mine ears hast thou digged” is not the same thing as is spoken of in Isaiah 50, “He wakeneth mine ear.” It has a peculiar character. He is offering Himself before He came. In Philippians 2 we read that He becomes a man, taking the form of a servant, having ears, doing nothing but what He was told, listening to every word that came out of God’s mouth. “By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” He had ears to receive it. Christ had no desire to do anything different from God’s will. God’s will was His motive. Never to stir but as another will guide you is perfect-ness as a man. Christ waited for the expression of His Father’s will before doing anything. Christ on earth was in the form of a servant. How did He get there? By putting off all the glory of having a will—offering Himself before He came. It was His will to come: His love brought Him. “Lo, I come to do thy will.” This was will, but it was the Father’s will. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He told His disciples, in going forth, to say, “Peace, and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; if not, it shall turn to you again.” So it was with Him. He was obedient, because He offered Himself to obey. There was nothing but obedience (power, of course, in Him); He is in the place of perfect obedience. The first word is not from God, “Do you go,” but from Christ, “Lo, I come.” In the counsels of God it was written in the book. This gives us a knowledge of Christ, His intercourse with God, before He came. Here is Christ, the divine person, the source of all the blessing, taking the place of obedience. He is the Servant now! What is He doing for us? Bringing out God

to us, to our eye. He has brought God right down to our heart.

“I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.” He made perfectly good God’s character in the world, and this cost Him His life. He went out to all the people, declared God’s faithfulness, was not hindred, did not hide and got into “miry clay “in consequence, under all that could press a man down. Christ has not failed to bring all that God is to us. How we want it in a world that has got away as far as it can from God, with its artifices, etc., like Cain! Others talked about the thing, but Christ was the thing. In every word and act they might have seen the Father, if they had had eyes to see. Christ can say, I know the world, what it is; I have gone through it all, like Noah’s dove, and never found an echo: now you come to Me! I will give you rest. There is never any rest for a human soul, but in Him. One then learns of Him in the meekness and submission of His soul.

Psalm 41 closes the book with the blessedness of him who considers the poor, not the proud but poor, of the flock, as having God’s mind. This Christ understood fully, as He was it perfectly, and availed Himself of a sentence in it about one who was as far from this mind as could be. But as the wicked do not triumph in the end, so Jehovah favours, even upon the earth, the despised for whom plots are laid, upholds them in integrity, and sets them before His face for ever.

Psalm 4

David, the instrument that God employed to give us the Psalms, as also the other Psalmists, passed through the circumstances of which they speak. Hence there are

found in them more experiences than prophecies. They are all prophetic no doubt, but at the same time characteristically give us experiences. It is the Spirit of Christ which by means of the prophet thinks and speaks of these experiences. The prophet meets with like circumstances, and the Holy Spirit gives him to express his feelings. One knows the circumstances which occasioned several of the psalms; but the Spirit of God has an object to which the circumstances correspond. The first verses of the psalm contain ordinarily the summary.

David, seeing his glory defamed, figures the Messiah here. The circumstances are like those of Jesus before Herod. David is in a strait. The proofs of the power of God with respect to Israel fail him; he was also according to man in despair. All the authorities were against him. He had lost all with those who followed him. The Amalekites had swept everything away. David had nothing left but the Eternal. The soul and the church find themselves in like circumstances.

The latter half of verse 6 is the answer to the demand, “Who will shew us any good? Jehovah, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” When the soul rests entirely on the Eternal and has nothing but God, it enters into peace and joy. It is easy to bless God when the circumstances are as we wish. But if God leaves us there, He leaves us far from Him, preoccupied with the things that perish. Eden is now impossible. If man is content with what he finds here below, he is content with death, with that which passes away. The soul is ever pushed to the point of saying, “Who will shew us any good?” There is nothing that abides as the stay of the soul. One finds oneself outside Eden; God seems not

for us; Satan is against us. One must be driven there to understand that all around is far from God, without seeing any good in self or any resource outside it.

If God reveals Himself to the soul, it feels its condition, and that, instead of escaping from God, it must find Him. Outside Him is no rest. It is then the soul can say, “Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” If the soul withdraws from God, it occupies itself with things here below as its object. God exercises discipline to recall from such a state. Faith finds in Him the same answer. When the soul gets back to God, it no more has other resources or other desires. It says, Lord, lift thou up, etc. It is entirely satisfied with being in the light of God’s countenance. When in the midst of hankerings and difficult circumstances the soul turns to God, a great work is already done in the heart. Sin is come into the world, and there is nothing that is not infected with it. God can find nothing in the world to enrich us with, nothing that does not fill the hand of death which seizes all. He gives and makes known Christ, and thus sets apart the godly for Himself with the confidence that He hears us (v. 3). Thus by Him we learn the truth as to all.

The moment Christ is thus recognised by virtue of the Holy Spirit, the heart attaches itself to Him, and finds its treasure in Him, seeing that there is nothing good in itself. The more one sees in man the ignorance of spiritual things, the more also one feels the necessity of knowing what we are. This discovery of the state of our souls makes us understand that all is vanity by the revelation of that which fixes and attaches us to God in His unchanging goodness. For as Christ has been judged for all that was evil and vain in us, so God discovers to us all that He is in our favour. We have always the

assurance, founded on Christ, that God will lift on us the light of His countenance. There is in Him no variableness nor shadow of turning; and we know that He has before Him the Beloved, and has chosen us in Him, and we cannot seek peace in vanity.

After creating all, God rested from His work; but sin has spoiled it all and turned it into vanity, so that God cannot any longer rest there. There is one only man, Jesus, in whom He finds His good pleasure. He does not change the world, but chooses the Beloved before His face. There is the rock of our assurance—Christ and His work on our behalf. Faith finds its rest and peace in God, whatever be the difficulties. To enjoy the favour of God and the light of His countenance is our sole good. This goes deep into the heart—whether we are content with all if God lifts upon us the light of His face. There is what gives uprightness.

If I look to the countenance of God, the opinions of men do not shake me. If we think there is any good thing in us, we are still in rebellion against God. The world is content to receive good things from God; but the moment they cease, the heart's rebellion and ingratitude are manifest. It is in Christ alone that God has all His complacency, because the world is all alienated from Him. He is also our Beloved, for He has reconciled us to God. The Sop of God loved me and gave Himself for me. The Beloved of God is my Beloved.

Am I content whatever the circumstances provided that God lifts upon me the light of His face? If we are not, there is still in us something which the Holy Spirit condemns. If the heart acts on the circumstances, happiness is lost when they change, and one cannot say,

Lord, lift Thou upon me the light of Thy countenance. When the heart is attached to Christ, we find in Him all that can be conceived, yea, all that God can reveal of blessedness. A Christian ought not day by day to desire any other thing than Christ. Then we enjoy the light of God's countenance shining on us and reject all that is inconsistent with Him and His glory.

Psalm 8

In Psalm 1 we saw the righteous man, delighting in the law and the normal results of the earthly government of God as to just and unjust. Then Psalm 2 declared that, spite of all the world, He will bring in His incarnate Son, and set Him as king on the holy hill of Zion; the latter exhibiting the counsels, as the former did the governmental principles, of God. Psalms 3-7 express the exercises of the godly amongst the ungodly who are in power. In these psalms, consequently, we hear the righteous remnant looking for the Lord's coming in judgment to sustain their faith and make good His word; but they pass through every sort of trial, for the circumstances suppose that Christ is not reigning over the earth, and that evil is not yet judged. God is standing back as it were; nevertheless He turns these trials of circumstances and exercises of heart of the godly to their profit, a blessing much deeper than if the judgment fell at once on the ungodly.

Psalm 8 is of another character. Jehovah is to be glorified in the earth, as well as His glory to be set above the heavens. As a whole, we know this has not been yet. The Father's name has been declared, and is now, to the hearts of the children. The Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. But never yet has

the name of Jehovah become excellent in all the earth. Our psalm announces that it is to be universally glorified here below. It will be when Christ takes the government of the universe. But this depends on His coming (1 Cor. 15), when the dead saints rise, and the living saints are changed. He is head over all things to the church, which is His body (Eph. 1). This we do not yet see with our eyes; but we do by faith see Jesus already crowned, the witness and pledge of all the rest (Heb. 2). The church meanwhile is being gathered. When He enters on the kingdom, we shall come and reign with Him. The only thing in which, as a Christian, I can separate myself from Christ, is where He was made sin. To look at His glory is to look at our own; and He, the glorified man, is exalted above all creatures, and has dominion over all the works of God's hand.

From Luke 9 we learn, that, being morally rejected as the Christ or Messiah, Jesus would not set Himself up as king. Then He takes another title— "Son of man," and as such, He must suffer. He does not permit that He should be proclaimed any more as the Christ of Psalm 2, but falls back on the name of "Son of man," as in Psalm 8. He must suffer before the glory, and be exalted in heaven, before He takes the earthly crowns. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." As Son of man, He is to have all things under Him, and not merely the throne of Zion. That is to be accomplished too; but, according to Isaiah 49, He is to have the Gentiles also. Yea, God will gather together in one all things in Christ, whether things on earth or things in heaven; and we shall be the heavenly Eve of the last Adam—the Lord from heaven. In the Psalms we find the

Christ we are associated with, but not our association with Him. The scheme of divine government there supposed has not yet begun. Christ is to be king, and this over the earth. Psalms 2 and 8 are prophetic. He has not yet broken the nations with a rod of iron. His anger is to fall on the rebellious kings before the predicted reign of blessing commences. We are now, as it were, associated with Aaron in the sanctuary, before He comes out to the deliverance and salvation of His earthly people.

Christ's Association Of Himself With His People On Earth Psalm 16.

I need hardly say that there are many aspects in which we may consider the character of our Lord Jesus Christ; for He is the summing up of all possible beauty and perfection in Himself. But He is more than this. He is the means and measure by which we can judge of everything besides. If I want to know God, I must learn Him in Christ. If I want to know what man is in perfection, I learn it by Christ. In a word, all real truth is learnt, and learnt only, in or by Christ. Whether it be man, or sin, or death, or life, or love, or hatred, all is manifested in Christ, or by Christ. Hence the importance of having the soul occupied with Christ, of feeding on Him, since He is the only transforming power, and the only standard of excellence, and the light by which all things else are made manifest.

It is not the joy of deliverance that is presented in this psalm, nor the work by which deliverance is accomplished; but rather the Deliverer in His humiliation and walk on earth, drawn out as the attractive object of our souls. For Christ is an object in a

double way. He is an object in glory to attract cur souls upward from the earth, as it is said, “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” But He is no less an object in His humiliation as presenting the embodiment of all moral excellence before God, and that in a world through which we are called to pass.

If we contemplate Christ in glory, this gives us the definite-ness of that hope to which we are predestinated, for we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” This awakens the energy of hope, of joy, and gladness. If we are delivered from death, through the blood of Christ, we are also planted in Him as the objects of God’s delight. Christ’s position before the Father, and His relation to Him, mark our position and relationship through infinite grace; for He says, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” We are like Him in the sight of His Father, and our praises should not jar with His.

“We wait [it is true] for the hope of righteousness by faith”; not for “righteousness by faith,” because we have that, or rather in Him are that; but we wait for the hope that belongs to it; and we know what that is, for it is that which has now in glory. And we are to be “changed into the same image from glory to glory.” Christ is our righteousness, and we have it, or rather we are it; “we are made the righteousness of God in him.” But we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness. The Spirit was sent down to witness that Christ is glorified; and hence He becomes an object to us in the glory.

It is not good for the soul only to contemplate Christ as an agent, important as this is in its place. No question, if I am feeding on Christ, dwelling on Him with admiration and delight and joy, as the object of my soul, it presupposes a knowledge of Him as an agent accomplishing redemption by His death, and having taken His place on high for us, and so maintaining the integrity of our position before God and our communion with Him. But if I am looking at the priesthood of Christ, precious and necessary as it is, He is still before me, more as an agent than the object of my soul. As priest, He is a servant in grace. To see Him girded thus for service doubtless draws out the affections, and gives power and energy, and brightens our hearts all along the road. But then all manner of exercise of heart comes in here; because Christ deals with us in this according to what we practically are The priesthood of Christ has to do with weakness and infirmities, with the ever-varying exercises of the soul: and hence it is said, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Righteousness ever abides in God’s presence, and hence the ground of the restoration of communion when it has been lost. If any man sin, we are not driven to a distance but the soul is restored because Christ has prayed for us. It is not that we have to ask Him to intercede, or to exercise His priesthood for us, but that He has done so; for the movement of grace is always on His heart. The priesthood of Christ is for those who are righteous, who are redeemed, in order to carry them on through the wilderness of this world. He is their Advocate, constantly carrying on their affairs, and the Holy Ghost is spoken of by the same title (for “the Comforter” is indeed the Advocate).

Thus Christ applies, in divine wisdom, to the heart, all that we have by virtue of His intercession. He is perfectly cognizant of all that is in us, and knows how to meet it. It is not the idea that I am going to glory, but that, God having set me in perfect righteousness, He teaches me by the priesthood of Christ to discern between good and evil according to His light, or according to His nature. I am utterly dependent in my condition, and He feeds me day by day with manna as I need. As He said of Israel: “Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years,” Deut. 8:2-4.

He never forgot Israel for a single day, because all their supplies in the wilderness depended on His remembrance and faithful care; and His care as our High Priest and Advocate is the same to us now. In all this Christ is an agent; but in this psalm He is an object —an object in His humiliation, and, more properly, the food of our souls. He is not our food in glory, but in humiliation. We feed on Him here, as a living and dead Christ. Christ does not say in John 6, “The bread of God is he” which went up to heaven; but “He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.”

That which especially draws out our affections is the tracing of Christ's passage through this world, through everything down here about which He has to deal with us. When He was on earth, the Father could delight in Him in the beginning of His path, on account of His inherent excellence; and at the close, because of His developed perfection. He could say, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"; and God has given us for delight, the very same object in which He delights. What do we say then? Why, in weakness and poverty, it is true, yet surely, with unhesitating confidence, we say the same! We cannot indeed reach His perfectness in our thoughts; but then the very sense we have of the poverty and weakness of our apprehensions is because the Father has shewn us something of His perfectness.

The Father, in communicating His own delight, does not say, This is My beloved Son in whom you ought to be well pleased, but in whom I am well pleased. How marvellous that the Father should tell us what His thoughts are about His Son, and what His delight is in Him! It was not what was true about Christ that attracted the poor woman in Simon's house (Luke 7:37-50), but it was the beauty and attractiveness of Christ Himself that absorbed her heart. She loved and admired Him for what He was, before she knew what He was for her. When she knew this, she could reflect upon it, and this would give the ground of constancy to her affections and delight. Jesus commended all she did—her tears—her affection—her silence; because all were drawn forth by her contemplation of Himself.

But, before we can properly feed on Christ as our food, we must know Him as our righteousness. Some are attracted to Christ for a while, and have joy in Him, but

for the want of a knowledge of righteousness lose their joy, and know not how to find it again. Righteousness sets us in peace before God, and then we have fellowship, and can speak of it; as the apostle says, “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And on the same ground we have fellowship one with another. Connected with this there are three things: 1st, Walking in the light as God is in the light; 2nd, consequent fellowship and communion one with another; 3rd, being perfectly cleansed by the blood. When the soul has the sense of being perfectly cleansed by the blood of Christ, and His death is thus entered into, there is the ground for feeding on Christ, and occupancy with Him as our object. And this the Lord reckons on as a result of His love. He says to His disciples, “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father.” He reckons on their affections making them glad on account of His joy; and He only refers to His joy, to shew how He looks for their sympathy to be engaged with what concerned Himself. This however cannot be until salvation is known. But Christ should be our object; and dwelling on what He is, the food of our souls.

Two things form perfection in the creature before God: dependence and obedience. Independence is sin—necessarily so. All effort after a freedom of this nature is but an attempt to break away from the sense of creature-dependence on God. The action of our own will is sin.

When Christ became man He took the character of a dependent, an obedient one. His Father’s will was not only His guide in all He did, but His motive in doing it: and this was His perfection. Observe the place of

dependence He takes in verse i of this Psalm: “Preserve me, O God! for in thee do I put my trust.” It is beautiful to see His obedience, and beautiful to see it in dependence too.

Whenever the Father has His rightful place in our affections, He has it in everything. “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Take the example of a child in pleasing a father: love makes it a matter of perfect indifference to the child’s heart as to what the thing is that is to be done; it is done to please its father, and this is motive enough for anything. And how does the heart look back with delight, and trace this in Christ, in all His ways in His pathway through this world! He had all power, but never used it to serve Himself. From the manger to the cross it was the embodiment of the word, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!” Because He was above all evil, He was able to go through all evil, unassailable by it; while at the same time He was capable of touching and dealing with those who were in it.

In the words, “I said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord,” Christ takes the place of the servant to God; and there is not a step in the path of life—divine life—but He trod it, in order to shew it to us. Surely it was enough to draw out the delight of the Father to see the Son, as man, walking down here, in everything dependent upon His pleasure, and in everything obedient to His will. And we know indeed that it was so, from the opened heavens at the baptism of John, and from the voice from the excellent glory— “this is my beloved Son.” In everything He manifested a blessed and perfect dependence. He came out from the Father, and carried back into His presence, a man with the stamp of the same blessed

perfectness which He had with the Father before the world was.

He says, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life”; and He passed through death in dependence on the Father. Adam found the path of death in his folly; but back to the path of life he never could get. The trees of knowledge and of life to this day are perplexing the minds of men; but no reason nor philosophy of man can reconcile responsibility and the gift of life. Man cannot make it out. From the beginning he has tried to stand in responsibility, whenever the mind has been awakened to acknowledge the claims of God, without a knowledge of His grace. But in everything he has failed; and all that he has done by it is to earn death. Christ comes into the place of ruin and death, and makes out and shews us the path of life—that “path which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.” He was the life; and He tracks a path for us in the wild waste— “in the wilderness,” as it is said, “where there is no way.” He finds it and shews it to us, and we have to learn to tread it in dependence and obedience. To Him it must be through death; therefore He says, If any man will follow me, “he must take up his cross.” Christ would rather die than disobey; there is His perfectness. We have to tread in the same steps; but Christ before us is the One we have to look to, to think on, to feed upon, in this wild waste of sin and death. It is not the quantity we do that marks our spirituality; but the perfectness with which we present Christ.

“In thy presence there is fulness of joy.” There are two parts of blessedness—being with Christ, and being like Christ. If we were constantly before God in the consciousness of being unlike Him, it would only distress. But we shall be with Him and like Him; and the

consciousness of this is blessedness. With Him we shall enjoy the Father's countenance; crowned and sitting on thrones, but delighting to cast our crowns down before Him, and to say, "Thou art worthy" —our souls being filled with the excellency of Him who is in the midst.

The saints, the excellent of the earth, with whom Christ associates Himself, are all His delight. No matter how feeble or how failing; He says they are the excellent, and His delight is in them—not in their state, it may be, but in them. And He must have them with Him. "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am." He would have them with Him! He will be in company with them in the glory, in the presence of His Father, where is "fulness of joy." And oh! may it rest on our minds in what way Christ associates Himself with the excellent down here; and may our hearts dwell on God's delight in Him, and on His perfectness down here, that we may make it our delight to trace His footsteps, weigh His words, and feed on Him.

Thoughts On Psalm 16

As Psalm 15 gives the character of those who will have their portion with Christ in His kingdom, when God sets Him as King in Zion, so in Psalm 16 Christ Himself seems to say, I have come down from that place God Himself had assigned Me, and taken My place in the pathway of faith—the very same that you are in—the place of rejection, of sorrow, of suffering, the place that the godly remnant find themselves in. Therefore is His cry to God. He used not His own divine power to escape any suffering; and, remember, it was not suffering for sin, not chastening, but the path of faith—as He says, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Therefore had He

His ear opened morning by morning. He fully entered into the sorrows of the wilderness. There is not a sorrow comes upon a saint, not a trial of faith in which we can find ourselves, but Christ can fully sympathise with us in it. If we only set our foot in the narrow way (it is with the new nature He sympathises), then we find this blessed One has been before us. It is astonishing how much we are sustained by circumstances, how we lean upon the circumstances that the Lord never had in His path. Much of our joy is derived from a thousand things that Christ never had joy in, and that gave Him not a moment's sustainment. We may find ourselves losing, or in danger of losing, not a few things by faithfulness. What then? We shall only be brought nearer to the Lord Himself. If the path becomes rougher than ever it was before, surely we shall find only the more of the sympathy of Him who has trodden it in all its roughness. Therefore can He be called "the Author and Finisher of faith," because He has run the whole course of faith. He has suffered every kind of suffering and trial that besets the path. We may each one of us have this or that peculiar trial or sorrow. Ours is but a taste of that which He drank to the dregs—like a shade of that which in its real depth of grief He knew. The contradiction of sinners beset Him on every side.

We may know somewhat of it in any little measure of faithfulness we shew. We may be called to give up father and mother, or, as the Lord says, to "hate father and mother," etc. But what had He to comfort Him from any such sources? Everything like a prop here was gone, yet could He say in the face of all that, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage. Thou wilt shew me the path of life." Suppose death

comes, Jesus could say, “My flesh also shall rest in hope.” Hezekiah knew and said in his trial, By all these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit.

There is chastening, and the like, needed by us; but Christ never sought to do anything but to please God. His sufferings therefore proceeded only from His walking in the path of life. All that could try faith came upon Him, while He was without anything which we have so fully that could sustain nature. Still we find Him in death trusting in God. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither,” etc. The path of life was perfectly opened out to us in Christ. There is a deep joy in entering in spirit into Christ’s paths. The remnant enter into it in Psalm 20. The thorough realising of what Christ was as a man down here. There is nothing lays hold on the heart, nothing feeds it, like that. Every sorrow that the heart of any can go through, as walking in the path of righteousness, Jesus knew in His path. This renders His sympathy so peculiarly sweet. Any exaggeration would be dangerous on this subject, thus taking away our portion. It is true fellowship with Christ’s sufferings that gives the energy of hope. This is drawn out by the glory being unfolded to us by His sufferings. I am more and more struck in reading the Psalms thus as connected with the Jews.

When I look at the church, I can only say it is nothing but sovereign grace that picks up wretched sinners and links them with Jesus, giving them the same place, the same portion, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” I can only gaze with wonder and adore. It was the counsel of God from everlasting—His sovereign grace. I cannot then talk of God’s government or His dealings

with us, since no principles of government could make us members of Christ's body, etc. It was all sovereign grace. The church is the fulness, the body, of Christ. Once lay hold of that, and what is the consequence? It draws out wonder, admiration, worship.

But that is not all; there is another thing for us. What mercy to know that my salvation is secure! But now as set free from anxiety about myself I am to be occupied with Him by whom all this wondrous work was wrought. I find there is not a sorrow or difficulty in the pathway of life which He is not interested in. This is other knowledge than the knowledge of salvation. It draws out trust and confidence and love, as Job says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." We find Christ Himself going through it all—not suffering for sin indeed, but for righteousness. Only on the cross did He know what it was to suffer for sin—our sins. There indeed He knew the forsaking of God. If I suffer as a saint, I find the full sympathy of Jesus. If for sin, the Lord has no sympathy with sin, though He Himself needed to suffer for us, and thus to become known to us not as the Bread that came down from heaven only, but giving His flesh for the life of the world (John 6). Do you thus feed upon Him? Do you know Him as thus made the food for your souls, that which turns into the substance of life? Then feed on Him. This is what the knowledge of Him leads to. It is another thing from the energy of hope. The effect of being occupied with the glory, where Christ now is, is to enable us to overcome the difficulties that obstruct our way and to reach forward.

Occupation with His walk as a man shews us the path of godliness. We see Him taking it in His baptism. When those whose eyes were opened to see the principles of

the kingdom (conscious that they were bearing anything but the good fruit) took the place of confession, Jesus was there. The One who had so fully taken the place as man as to say to God, “Thou art my Lord,” says also of the saints, “In them is all my delight.” We find this in Hebrews 2— “He is not ashamed to call them brethren, for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

“Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,” etc. His state was not having a will to do something or other that must be stopped; no, He could say, “Lo, I come to do thy will.” Such is christian obedience, and true liberty, not to require checking in our wills, but to have the same kind of obedience as Christ’s. He stands alone in His sufferings in our stead. Nothing equals the glory that 3$6 will have as the Saviour of sinners. Other glory we sharo with Him, but in that He is alone. In His walk He sets us an example. In His trust in God, etc., He never takes a single step to get the reward of obedience, but asks of His Father, as in John 17, “Father, glorify thy Son,” etc.; and here, in the simplest confidence, “Thou wilt not leave my soul,” etc. Patience with Him had its perfect work. He never stirs even when they told Him, “he whom thou lovest is sick.” He waited patiently till the right time; and now His desire for His people is that they might have His joy fulfilled in themselves— that joy which He knew when He said, “My meat is to do the will,” etc. He trod the path of sorrow and rejection here, but He had joy in that very path, as He says, “The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places.”

In Psalm 22 we get the cry of the Lord at the cross. No suffering for sin till then, but the great principle of the

communion of Christ with the sorrows of the new nature in the saints was true before then.

In the measure in which we enter into the path, we get communion with Christ. The affections of Christ more known to us, we become better acquainted, as it were, with the heart of Christ. This is not a question of safety, but of growing up unto Him. The heavens were opened over Him when He took the place publicly of identifying Himself with those who were in reality the godly. When we get into that place, the Spirit of God can lead us into the understanding of these things—taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them unto us. But if one say, I am not there, cannot we delight in tracing Christ in it? Even if we are not walking in the place as we should be, it is most blessed to trace His walk in it. It is our privilege to walk in it, our highest privilege here; and so only shall we be fully able to enjoy our proper portion, Christ, as led and taught of the Spirit.

Psalm 25

There is something to touch us in seeing a soul open out to God without yet enjoying deliverance. It knows well that he who waits on God shall not be confounded; but peace is not there though seen from afar. We must remark the manner in which God receives this opening of heart. He takes cognisance of all that passes in the soul: fear, hope, sins, deliverance. God would have us understand that He occupies Himself with it all.

The Psalms, because of their prophetic character, are the expression of the Holy Spirit’s operation in the soul before it finds peace. They do not give the definitive answer of the love of God. There is in our hearts a depth of hardness, of insensibility, of levity such that it is

needful God should take pains with them to fix them and bring them down to the feeling of their incapacity. God fixes the soul by the sense of its wants. We are so miserable that the only means of giving us the idea of God's love is by fixing the heart through its wants on the contemplation of what God is; so that where the sense of want fails the love of God is totally unknown, as if it did not exist.

In verses 7-11 there is a deep principle. It is only when we are thoroughly convinced that our iniquity is "great" that we feel the need we have of God and of His pardon. One might think of a little iniquity that one had just to remedy oneself, or that God might pass it over. The heart of man upsets everything. He puts the uprightness of Jehovah before His grace, His truth before His mercy, and thinks that, if a man walk as he ought, God will be good toward him. That is just the contrary of what is said here. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great," v. 7-11. Jehovah who is "upright" loves uprightness; but before all He would have the wretched sinner know Him as "good." The ill-enlightened soul that knows its faults up to a certain point desires to arrive at enjoying the goodness of God by its own uprightness. It is the proof of a state of heart which knows not God and which hardens itself against all the history He has given of man's heart, as well as of

Himself, in the word. Hardness of heart rises against the grace of God, and nothing more hinders grace from acting than the thought that, if one is upright, God will be good; and this, because the heart is neither lowly nor softened, and pride is not yet destroyed therein.

Man wishes that one should not speak to him of his sins. The action of the Holy Spirit, on the contrary, makes one own and confess sin in detail. We can speak of sin in general, or yet more of the sins of which we are not guilty; but otherwise a man does not speak of his own sins. Did not Peter say to the Jews, “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just,” although he had done so himself in a manner still more shameful? Why did he speak of that sin without blushing? The Holy Spirit alone could give him to do so through Him who came by water and blood. Paul when converted and in peace speaks freely to the Lord Jesus of the sins he had done against His name and saints. An unconverted man can speak of evil or of other sins than his own, having no confidence in God’s grace for eternal life or remission. A thief may blame a drunkard; but no one naturally speaks of his own sins, because the conscience avoids being upright before God. Men would hide their sins and shew their good qualities; they would pass as honest good sort of people, and get rid of God. In that case one has no need of the goodness of God. People will try to meet the goodness of God by a certain uprightness; but there is no true confidence in God, and every hope of rendering worship to God in this state of things is a fraud. God begins with what we are; He takes us such as we are; and man will not have it so.

God presents to us in the Bible the most extraordinary things. He lays out all His counsels and all His resources

for the evil state in which man is found. We see then all the efforts and the pains God has taken to put Himself in relation with the heart of man. It is the greatest hardness of heart to see, without being thereby touched, all that which God has done, and the action of His Spirit in those who are saved. One sees hearts with God's goodness out before them, yet abiding far from Him, such as they are. The hard heart sees all that and goes its own way. The heart that is thus has not yet received the least seed of life.

But one may also be convinced of sin and seek to recover before God the place one has lost. This soul believes that there is some means other than pure pardon. It has not yet true relations with God. It cannot any longer seek the world; it observes the Lord's day; it attends meetings, and rests on the like. But then the soul is not convinced that God is love, any more than it is in the presence of God with a true knowledge of itself. Not being humbled, it chooses itself a way to arrive at God, and cannot say, "I wait on thee," as in verses 5, 21. It is when we are convinced there is no question of getting to God, but that we are in His presence and lost, that we can say, "For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." There is no more thought of bettering the conduct in order to get to God; there is no more a way to pave. We no longer desire then to avoid God, but we see ourselves before Him such as we are. If God is revealed, we have to understand that which He is Himself, and then comes the knowledge of His grace. It is a question of knowing what God is in respect to the sinner who is always in His presence. God is always "good," and He will not sanction the wickedness of man in leaving him quiet though

hardened. Instead of reproaching with the sin, God brings to the conviction of sin in making it felt that He has seen the sin, that He has thought of it, and that He has found a means of pardoning and of teaching sinners the way they should follow.

“For thy goodness’ sake,” “for thy name’s sake”: there is ground on which the soul founds its confidence. Impossible that God should fail His own name (John 17:6). He is “good and upright.” What does the goodness of God to a trembling and miserable sinner? It does not cast up to him his misery, but takes cognisance of it to inspire him with full confidence and give him courage. God would deny Himself if He failed in His goodness in this case. God cannot do otherwise; He sees to His own name, His glory, His truth, His grace, in a word to all that He is, as we read in the father of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20-25).

God makes us understand that He occupies Himself with our sins long before we ourselves were occupied with them. If the goodness of God is occupied with them, it must be that He is so to get rid of them altogether, and He has given Jesus for this purpose. To blot out our sins completely—there is what God’s goodness would and must do. But if one would arrive at pardon by progress in holiness, it is to choose the road for oneself. God puts the sinner at his ease in His presence by shewing him his sins on the head of Jesus. His glory would not be complete if the believer were not justified. It is a salvation accomplished for ever that God presents to us, and the soul is in peace. All this is for His name’s sake.

If the soul is assured of the goodness of God, would it love to keep some sins? No; the conscience set free from

the thick layer of old sins becomes more delicate. If we are truly quickened, what we find in ourselves after our conversion is much more painful to us than the sins were before conversion. But Jesus is dead, knowing what we were and because of what we are. Such as I am, God loves me; His name is here in question, and His name in goodness. God has condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3), in that Christ, having become man, was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:19-21). He has been sacrificed for us (Heb. 9). The name of God who is love is thus revealed by everything that God has done for us in Jesus.

God is upright also, and He teaches the sinner and leads him. This comes after pardon. The first is He is good; then comes truth, though man's heart thinks the inverse. If we are in relation with a God of goodness, how will that appear? Up to what point should He be manifested to us? He will shew in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7). God has before Him the most wretched of sinners (take the robber on the cross); and what will He do to display to the angels, etc., in heaven the riches of His goodness? He will take us, once wretched, and set us in the same glory as Christ Himself.

It is in us God shews what He is. You who say you are most feeble and miserable, it is you God would choose, if He would shew the immense riches of His grace. He cannot stop in this goodness; and it is not humility to put limits to His goodness by saying we are too little and unworthy. He forgives for the sake of His own name (1 John 2:12). He restores and leads for His own name's sake. He begins, continues, and finishes up to heaven itself and always for the sake of His name (Phil. 1).

There is the only thing which makes the soul upright, sincere, and open before God, because there remains no subject of fear with regard to sin, and there is never uprightness in the heart till our consciences have seen and felt what we are before God as sinners pardoned. The moment that the soul says, “For thy name’s sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great,” it cannot but be that God manifests Himself. One then makes progress in Him, and one finds the sweet assurance that God is ever good and upright for the sinner.

Psalm 40

There are some special Psalms connected with Christ, round which others seem clustered. This is one of them. Here is Christ’s actual association with His people on earth, not only in their sorrows, but at length bearing their sins, so that all who looked to Him might be blessed with Him. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” Christ did not take one step to save Himself. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but He was waiting on the Lord.

He appeals to God as Jehovah, not Father, because this was not then brought out, as it is now. The Jew did not know the Father as He is now revealed; and Christ was taking the place of a godly man made under the law amongst them. Therefore He is spoken of in terms suiting the relationship known to the Jews.

One or two verses often bring out the subject of the psalm, the rest being the development of it. What He did in the position He took up is the great thing here—what He went through, what He felt. The grand principle is, that He “waited patiently for Jehovah” —the relationship

in which Christ as a man was standing on the earth as connected with the remnant of Israel.

It is clear that the different names of God have a most important meaning, because they are the revelation of what He is to all. If I call Him Father, I own what He is to me as His child. If “Jehovah” be employed, it is what He is in caring for and keeping His earthly people, whom He had called out in order to shew His ways in government. If “God Almighty” be used, it is as protector of His pilgrims as Abram, Isaac, and Jacob in going from one country to another, or abiding in presence of hostile races in Canaan. For us it is Father. “Holy Father, keep through thine own name,” etc. It is important for us to know our position, as well as to see what position Christ was in when expressing these Psalms. In Matthew 5 He says, “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” He teaches us that we are to shew forth grace and not law, as the Father was doing in Himself. Therefore we have to act after the same character: and nothing else suits those who belong to the kingdom of heaven and have the revelation of the Father’s name.

Here, in Psalm 40, His heart is with the poor remnant. He undertakes their cause, going through all their sorrow and bearing their sins. In the last it is for them, not with them; but He gives them the comfort of being taken up to the same place with Himself, putting a new song into their mouths, as Jehovah had into His. “Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.” But, moreover He says, in verse 6, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.” These are all put aside. “He taketh away the first to establish

the second." Christ came to do God's will. Everything centres in the Son. All blessing is connected with relationship to Him, whether for outcast reprobates (Gentiles), or for God's people, the Jews, who had broken the covenant. The Levitical system vanishes away as not meeting God's desires any more than man's need. Christ, who says "Lo, I come to do thy will," is everything. Then He "preached righteousness in the great congregation." This cost Him His life. He made perfectly good God's character in the world—went out to all the people—declared God's faithfulness—did not hide His righteousness within His heart, and got into miry clay in consequence, that is, all that can press a man down. "I have glorified thee on the earth." "I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me," for I have been declaring what Thou art in faithfulness; withhold not Thou Thy tender mercies from Me. Then He goes farther (v. 12), for He came to suffer not only with but for us. "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me." Not merely our there, but "mine." If speaking amongst the remnant He might have said our; but when taking them on Himself, standing alone for their deliverance, He says "mine."

Next, there is judgment on the enemies alluded to in verses 14, 15, in contrast with verse 16: "Let all those that seek thee rejoice," etc. It is no more clouds and darkness, fearing the Lord and walking in darkness, not knowing such a thing longer, but rejoicing as well as seeking; for He has met all against us. When we are not rejoicing in the salvation of the Lord, we have not found it; we may be seeking it, but have not found it.

In the Psalms we have the thoughts and feelingsz of Christ expressed, when the facts are going on. We have the privilege thus of knowing how He felt when under them. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? “His feelings are here. The fact was atonement. When suffering from God He was absolutely alone—none to look on. When He appeals to God for deliverance, He is not heard (on the cross). “He tasted death for every man.” If He had had the least comfort from God, He would not have drunk the cup. Never was He so precious to God. Never was obedience so perfect as at that moment. Divine love was mightier than all the sufferings— mightier than sin—mightier than death, Satan, or wrath of God. It was not so with Peter, who was full of joy when going out of the world; and Stephen says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” without any suspending of the favour of God. There was no wrath on them: Jesus bore it all for them—for us. The effect of the cross is a throne of unmingled grace, and it will be open to all in the millennium.

In Psalm 23 Jehovah is the Shepherd; we cannot say Christ was a sheep. He is Jehovah, but still He emptied Himself— went before them—passed through every difficulty and trial.

In Psalm 24 He is Jehovah received on high.

In Psalm 25 sin is confessed. This is what makes the difference for any soul in the present time. The remnant, before they trust in Christ, cry to Jehovah. How can I go to Jehovah when I have been sinning? How can a man trust Jehovah with a bad conscience? Here is combined the expression of confession and of trust together. They can look for mercy. God never allows absolute despair in

His people, though it is often very like it. In Judas it was absolute; and he went out and hanged himself. Then all is brought out to meet this state in the cross. If there were only love where would be the righteousness? If righteousness only, where the love? Both are combined in the cross. When the cross comes in, all is perfectly clear. The righteousness is proved to be as great as the love, and the love as great as the righteousness. This is often not known all at once; but by little and little the blessed picture seen in Christ makes its way into the soul. Then it is all light; but then the man finds darkness comes in perhaps. At first there is only reckoning on the blessedness of Christ, and, when that reaches the conscience, it brings bitterness. What at first only attracted the heart did not reach the elements of good and evil—it was all joy; but when light reaches these, he finds it does not minister peace, because he has not learnt the thing to which it applies in his own soul. The state of the Jews all through these psalms is this—not having the application in the conscience of what the cross teaches.

It is a wonderful thing to see Christ coming to the cross, and saying, “mine iniquities.” Christ made Himself one with me, taking all my debts upon Him; my surety, He has gone down into the depths. “Mine iniquities!” —any one of the remnant might say that. There is the remnant’s voice in it; but there is Christ’s first. He has taken them. They suffer from them, never for them. If they suffered for them, it would be eternal condemnation. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

God brings in the principle of living righteousness, and therefore gives the consciousness of sins. “For thy name’s sake pardon mine iniquity; for it is great,” Psalm 25. This is strange reasoning according to man’s thought— “for it is great.” Men plead that it is a little sin; but when taught of God, we see how great sin is. Another thing is, truth is in the man, because he feels the sin great, he has given up any thought of justifying himself. My iniquity is great: if Thou dost not forgive me for Thine own glory’s sake, Thou canst not do it at all. And not one spot of sin will He leave, for the comfort of my own heart or the glory of His name. In Isaiah 43:22, etc., Israel are made to rest in absolute sovereign mercy. Grace is perfect in the getting rid of our sin in Christ.

Thus Psalm 40, “I waited patiently,” etc., gives the reason why the remnant should trust Jehovah. Messiah has been delivered from the horrible pit and the miry clay by the path of resurrection. Then there is the great central truth— “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire,” etc. The Levitical system vanishes as inefficacious. “Mine ears hast thou digged.” It is not here the same as Isaiah 50, where “he awakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear,” etc. This has a peculiar character. It is His offering Himself before He came. So in Philippians 2 we read He becomes a man, taking the form of a servant, having ears, doing nothing but what He was told, listening to every word that came out of God’s mouth. “By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” He had ears to receive it. Christ had no desire to do anything different from God’s will: this was His motive. Never to stir but as another—God—will guide you, is perfectness as a man. Do you say, What!

am I never to do what I like? Oh! I answer, you want to have your own will, which is sin.

Christ waited for the expression of His Father's will before doing anything. Christ on earth was in the form of a servant. How did He get there? By putting off all the glory of having a will of His own—offering Himself before He came to do God's will. His delight was to come; His love brought Him. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." If that was His will, it was the Father's will. He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." He told His disciples, in going forth, to say, "Peace… And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again." So it was with Him. He was obedient. He offered Himself to obey, and there was pure and constant obedience all through. There was power, of course, in Him, but He came into the place of perfect obedience. The first word is not from God, Do you go, but "Lo, I come": it was from Christ, "in the volume of the book it is written of me." This gives us a knowledge of Christ and His intercourse with God before He came. Here is Christ, the Son of God, a divine person, and the means of all blessing, taking the place of obedience on earth. Nay, He is the servant now, too: what is He doing for us? Bringing out God to us, to our eyes; yea, He has brought God right down to our hearts. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation," not concealed thy faithfulness, etc. Christ has not failed to bring all that God is to us. How we want it in a world that has got as far away as it can from God, with its artificers like Cain and his seed!

Others might talk about the thing, but Christ was it. In every word and act they might have seen the Father, if they had had eyes to see. Christ can say, I know the

world—what it is; I have gone through it all high and low; I have traced it all through, and, like Noah's dove, never found an echo. Now you come to Me: I will give you rest. There is never any rest for a human heart but in Him. One then learns of Him in the meekness and submission of His soul.

"Let all those that seek thee rejoice," etc. "But I am poor and needy: the Lord thinketh upon me." I and the others — I have taken the sorrow for them, and they must rejoice. Can you say, "Let the Lord be magnified"? He says, I have taken it all on myself, I have done it all. "By the obedience of one many shall be justified." If you have not been broken down to feel your iniquity is great, you cannot have peace; you are mixing up something of your own. If you get Christ instead of yourself, because you yourself are so bad, then you can say, The Lord has put away my sin; I am accepted in the Beloved. Are you emptied of yourself so as to say, Christ is everything for me? He has been made sin: is righteousness between you and God now, instead of your sins? Whence did it come? By the love of God flowing in through the Spirit. By Him He says, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." All the emphasis is on "no more." They are not to be brought up another day. Only believe in Christ and rest in grace so truly divine.

Book 2.— Psalms 42-72 Especially Psalms 45 And 68

In the Second Book of Psalms we see the remnant entirely cast out of Judaea; this gives a different character to their state. In the First Book we have seen it was the exercise of patience in the midst of evil that characterised them. That is now over, and they are as a

whole cast out, with the exception of a few. The woman flies when the abomination is set up. The extremity of evil has arrived, and they are looking for judgment to work out deliverance for them.

As a general thing, we find more connection with the person of Christ in the First Book. When in the world, He remained in Jerusalem for a time, then He went out; and when He went back, it was to be crucified and slain. Thomas dreaded this when he said, “They sought of late to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?” Christ had been declaring God’s righteousness, in the great congregation, not “refraining his lips.” They rejected Him for it; but, before man was allowed to lay his lawless hands upon Him, God gives a public testimony to every part of His glory. In the raising of Lazarus there was testimony to Him as Son of God; riding into Jerusalem on an ass, there was testimony to Him as Son of David; and then when the Greeks come up, there is testimony to Him as Son of man. All this led to His crucifixion, and, in the end, to the judgment of the Jews.

Psalm 42 is the utterance of those cast out of Jerusalem. Compare verses 5, 9, etc.

Joel 2:17 shews they have got back again after this, and after the destruction of the beast. Those in Zion are calling for a fast, but the putting down of enemies is not finished. In Ezekiel we read of the Northern and Eastern armies coming up, and they find the Lord there. Sennacherib represents the northern army, not the beast.

Joel 2:20, “His stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.” “Fear not, O land, for the Lord will do great things.”

There is not only apostasy judged in the beast, but there is the government of the Lord Jesus coming in over the rebellious nations. Thus there are two characters of judgment. He overcomes the beast (that which was antagonistic to what was in heaven) making “war with the Lamb”: that which is apostate from what is heavenly goes in rebellion against what is heavenly. Christ comes from heaven and breaks that. Then there is the great northern army: Gog comes up and finds Him there. There are those feeble Jews there, and what are they to do? The man of the earth has all in his hand; but God is going to prove He is God of the earth as well as of heaven. It seems to the tried remnant as if God had forgotten them; but no! He is there to destroy this army, as well as the apostate king who had been already consigned alive to the lake of fire. The Lord comes and says, “Here I am,” and the enemies are destroyed on the mountains. But the same feeling has come out in this case as in the other: they say “Where is thy God?”

There is more historically brought out in this book of the Psalms, and not so much of Christ’s sufferings (there is that too in Psalm 69), and more of His sitting in judgment over them. There is the entire dominion of evil allowed, and then the coming in of power to set it aside. Here you have “God” more than Jehovah. The Unk is broken, for they are out of the land. See the difference between Psalms 14 and 53. In the one it is Jehovah, in the other it is God: contrast also Psalm 14:5; 53:5—the “righteous” and “him that encamped against thee.”

Psalm 43 refers to the apostate Jews, as Psalm 42 to the rebellious Gentiles, from whom they are suffering. Psalm 44 goes back in spirit, “We have heard with our ears,” etc. They did not see, because driven out; but they hear.

It is the past contrasted with the present desolation. Verse 9 is their condition; verse 11, “sheep appointed for meat”; verse 17, sense of integrity; verse 23 is not Jehovah, but Adonai.

In Psalm 45 Messiah comes in; in Psalm 46 all is entirely changed. Psalm 47 is a call anticipative of victory. Psalm 48 is descriptive of how it comes about that the King is there. What they said in Psalms 42-44 you get the answer to in Psalm 48. All they have heard of they now see. It comes to pass again, and more than ever. “We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple” —just what they are longing for in Psalm 42. “According to thy name.” They praise according to what they know He is—they can trust. “Thy right hand is full of righteousness.”

These titles of God, Almighty, Most High, and Jehovah, are connected with God’s government on the earth. The first is connected with Abraham; the second with Melchisedec coming to Abraham. It is a picture of God’s taking possession of heaven and earth in Christ—Christ being King and Priest— Priest on His throne. He will gather together in one all things in Christ in heaven and earth. We know God as Father, who hath “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” We shall reign with Him; we are associated with Him in suffering (little though we have) and we shall be in the glory. Christ is to inherit all things, and we with Him; but the best part is to be with Himself, being children of the Father. Now Christ is sitting within the veil in heavenly places, we in Him, and we shall be associated with Him when He comes to take possession—we shall come out with the Great Heir of all things.

In Nebuchadnezzar's history we find God spoken of as the "Most High." In Psalm 91 whoever dwells in the secret of the Most High (not Father) is safe. Then Christ addresses Jehovah, and in verse 9 the remnant speak and Jehovah answers. All this is when God takes the government of the earth; but He is our Father. Now we may be put to death, and yet not a hair perish. Now is the time to suffer. He is not yet taking to Himself His great power and reigning. Blessed that it is so, because now is the time of His long-suffering; the joint-heirs are being gathered. He will reign, the Prince of peace. Melchisedec was praising from the Most High God and praising for Him. So it will be in Christ, in whom centre all titles of glory. As Jehovah He will be faithful to His promises.

In 2 Corinthians 6 He who is Jehovah says, "Ye shall be my sons and daughters" —I will take a new character towards you. When we have the Father's name as now, we have the Father's house also in prospect.

In Psalm 45 Christ is making good His title as God's King. In Colossians 1 we see His rights as Creator to be heir of all, and as Son of man in Hebrews 2. Here it is the King. In Deuteronomy 32 the Most High, in dividing the lands, makes Israel the centre for the government of the earth. As the church is the centre of blessing in heaven, Jerusalem is the centre on earth.

There are two things to remark in connection with this: first, it is part of Christ's glory; and, next, God wills that this world is to be made, under Christ's rule, a place of peace. It is not so now, though "the powers that be are ordained of God." Christ Himself said, "Thou hast no power against me, except it be given thee from above";

and there was no worse use of power than Pilate's, when he verily washed his hands of Christ's blood.

When the Lord was rejected, the world was not set right. It was more wrong than ever. When Christ went on high, the Holy Ghost came down. Does He set the world to rights? No! He does not interfere with the evil, but says, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Grace comes in, but God does not take His great power and reign. Christ granted the request of the Syro-phcenician woman; but this was an exceptional case of going beyond the children.

It is not an exception when the Holy Ghost comes down: grace is the character of His acting. The proving of man has been closed, Christ is accepted in heaven, and, by the Holy Ghost's coming down, the barriers (confusion of tongues occasioned) are not broken down; but grace overrides those barriers in the gift of tongues. Christ will take to Himself His great power and reign, and He will set things to rights. Many think to set things to rights now, some with Christ and some without; but they will not do it either one way or the other: Christ Himself will do it. If I stop at redemption truth, I am as it were making Christ to act on the world, but He is not; He is in heaven, and links saints with Him up there.

All Christians are saints, not sinners. In ourselves we are all sin; in the flesh is no good thing; but we are not in flesh, but in Christ. When we come in by that door, Christ, we come to sit down in heavenly places. If not come in there, we must remain on earth. Heaven is opened: firstly, for the Holy Ghost to testify of the Son of God on earth; secondly, for angels to minister to Him as Son of man; thirdly, to let Him forth in judgment on the

white horse (Rev. 19); fourthly, for a man full of the Holy Ghost, Stephen, to look straight up into heaven; and so should we.

Psalm 45 is earthly: Christ is judging enemies. The King, Messiah, is God; but He is man also. “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness “applies to His humanity. Hebrews 1 quotes it, where He says He “makes his angels spirits.” He makes them such; but unto the Son He saith (He does not make Him anything)” God, even thy God anointed thee above thy fellows.” Directly there is His manhood, He has fellows. A poor remnant is there ready to suffer with Him. Zechariah 13. See contrast there: God calls Christ His fellow in His humiliation. Verse 5, “I am no prophet,” but I was man’s slave from my youth. He came to be our servant as man. Verse 6. The Jews—He was wounded by them. Then (v. 7) Jehovah speaks, and, passing over His humanity, calls Him His fellow.

The kingdom is founded and is taken in a man. All the figures of Oriental splendour are used in speaking of it. It is Jerusalem on earth that is meant in the Psalms. The Lamb’s wife is the heavenly Jerusalem. The king’s wife is the earthly Jerusalem.

Verse 10. “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house.” That is what the Jews would not do in the time of grace. It was what Christ Himself did when on earth. “Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them that were about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren.” Under the old covenant they will get nothing. They cannot take the blessings even on the ground of promise— all has failed. They must come in as a Ruth to take shelter under the

shadow of the God of Israel. They have no more title than a Gentile. Christ came as a minister of the circumcision, and they rejected Him, so that they have no claim to anything. God will accomplish all on His own account, but they must give up claim entirely, and come in on the ground of grace. Verse 9. “King’s daughters” are companies of Judah.

Verse 16. “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.” If you look to your fathers, you have no claim—you must break with all the old thing. You must come in, not as the mother of the Messiah, but as the daughter. As to the old, you have lost everything: God in His faithfulness must do it. In Romans 3:7, “God’s faithfulness glorified by my lie” is the true interpretation of that passage.

Psalm 46 is a strain of great confidence, spite of threats and danger. In God is their refuge and deliverer. God is there, whatever men say; Jehovah Sabaoth is with us.

Psalm 47 anticipates Jehovah’s reign as a great king over the earth, but withal Israel’s king specially.

In Psalm 48 Zion is celebrated as His city and the answer is triumphant to the distress of Psalm 44 and to the circumstances of Psalms 42, 43.

Psalm 48 is “an improvement” of all.

Psalm 49 closes the little series from Psalm 42 (not the book, which does not close till Psalm 72).

Psalm 50 and 51 are distinct in their character.

Psalm 50 is God summoning all the world—pleading with His people on the ground of wickedness. He will not accept their ceremonial offerings, but the ground of His controversy is their not keeping the law.

Psalm 51 is confession of sin, and goes a great deal farther than David's confession, when Nathan went to him and charged him. It is the nation's confession of their guilt in the death of Christ, not only their breach of the law. You have the same thing in Isaiah 40—the flesh is grass, etc. There is failure; and He takes them on the ground of their being distinct from those worshipping idols, yet guilty of idolatry. From chapter 49 onwards it is controversy concerning Christ.

There is a difference between the Jews and the ten tribes, which are Israel. Israel were never guilty of rejecting Christ. They have been cast out for their rebellion and idols. Zechariah 13:9, Jews; Ezekiel 20, ten tribes.

In Psalms 51-68 we have the thoughts and feelings of the remnant—the expression of their cry to God and their confidence in Him.

Psalm 52 is the expression of faith in God as to the lawless one in power; as Psalm 53 about the wicked Jews in general, the many, for God remained what He is, if they can no longer call on Him as Jehovah (cf. Ps. 14). Psalm 54 is a cry to God for deliverance by His name from strangers and oppressors alike, when His name of Jehoveh should be praised. Psalm 55 from without deplores the wickedness in their Jerusalem, yet God is trusted, Jehovah shall save. Psalm 56 speaks of the tears of the righteous sufferers in God's bottle, but owns Him in hope as the Most High, the name of millennial supremacy, and trust displaces fear: in God and in Jehovah would he praise His word. Psalm 57 follows up in the sense of evil, counting on God as a refuge, but triumphing in the end. Psalm 58 owns that nothing but

divine judgment can meet the case, and so looks for the unsparing but just vengeance of God in the earth. Psalm 59 pursues this judgment on the outside enemies who shall be scattered by God's power.

Then in Psalm 60 the remnant acknowledges that God had cut them off, but pray for His turning to them again, and are assured He will tread down their enemies. Psalm 61 is a cry of depression, but of trust in God that He will hear, if they cry from the end of the earth; as Psalm 62 is a still stronger expression of confidence in Him, and this growingly. Compare verses 2, 6.

In Psalm 63 we see that they are able to find blessing when cast out. When there are no dispensed blessings, they look to God through all the tribulation, longing to go up to the sanctuary. All dispensed blessings fail, but the source cannot dry.

In Psalm 64 the crafty enemy is brought before a God of judgment, and then the righteous rejoice in Him.

Psalm 65 shews praise waiting there. When He has accomplished the victory, praise will flow out. All nations shall be blessed. Their faith had reached the point—trusting, when in circumstances which are against us, is real faith. But once the great deliverance is achieved there is no stint of praise.

Psalm 66 sets forth God's righteous interference; and men are called to come and see His works (v. 5), to come and hear what He has done for the soul. (Verse 16) He has turned away neither the remnant's prayer nor His own mercy.

In Psalm 67 the blessing of the remnant is viewed as the way of making God's way known to all nations; so that

all the people should praise God, and all the ends of the earth fear Him.

Psalm 68. Here we have Christ in glory, as Psalm 69 is Christ in suffering, upon which the glory is founded.

There is a remarkable connection between the beginning of Psalm 68 with Numbers 10. The ark going before, instead of being in the midst to be guarded and honoured by the people, God bends to their need by going before them to find out a place in grace, and He meets all their enemies. (Verse 33) Israel's enemies are scattered by Him. The Lord is coming at their head when there is no help.

It may be well to notice the character of judgment here. There are two kinds of judgment, sessional and warlike judgment. In the end of Revelation we have the two kinds. In chapter 18 we have the destruction of Babylon by God; in chapter 19 Christ executes warlike judgment; in chapter 20 is sessional judgment. "I saw thrones and they sat on them." In sessional judgment we are with Him, as indeed the saints are seen on high from chapter 4.

The Messiah that appears is Jehovah, and then they not only mourn for sins that they have done, but they mourn for Him, etc. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced," etc., and say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah." They never see Him till then. They call on Jehovah about all the sorrow, and when the Messiah comes, they find it is Himself. With us it is the same. The deepest sorrow is not that we have sinned, but for Him. It is the consciousness of what we have done to Him that grieves us most. When we have received Him, repentance has lost its legal character. It

is for love to Him, and all the sweetness of His love poured into the heart makes it see what sin is, and detest itself for not having received Him fully. Then the soul is free to understand the real relationship that exists between us and Him. There is not merely the consciousness of deserving righteous judgment, but self-loathing, and sense of His judgment more and more. They crave His interference, and it comes.

Daniel 7:21. The horn wars with the saints, and prevails against them until the “Ancient of days,” Christ, shall come. God cannot let evil be paramount. “As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.” He comes in the character of judgment. “Through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down … and in every place where the grounded staff shall pass,” etc. (Isa. 30:31, 32.) It is for the deliverance of the poor despised remnant, and it is the proper character of judgment when He will come to be glorified in His saints, etc. It will be the execution of judgment, not the distinguishing character of it, which goes on now. There is to be a judgment of the quick, as well as of the dead. “The wicked perish at the presence of God.”

Verse 9. “Plentiful rain whereby thou dost confirm thine inheritance when it is weary.” We are not the inheritance, we are heirs. Israel is the inheritance. We have the same He (Christ) has Himself—peace, love, glory. He has the preeminence. “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” We see this Psalm is prophetic of His taking His place in power, not only in title. The Lord gave the word— great was the company of those that published it. This is a company of women

[feminine noun] publishing victory like Miriam, not proclaiming glad tidings (v. 11).

Verse 12. Warlike judgment: “though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove,” etc. He is coming to take His place in Zion.

Verses 14-17. God has magnified Himself: it is no use for you to magnify yourselves; God has done it, and there is an end of you.

Verse 18 is the deliverance of Israel in that day by Christ who ascended on high—“received up into glory,” 1 Tim. 3:16. Wonderful to say of Him who is going to execute judgment, He is “received up.” “He that ascended is the same that descended,” etc. It is Christ Himself. The law set up the middle wall of partition. Christ broke it down by His death. It could not be broken down in any other way. We see, first, the incarnation of Christ; next, we have a man rejected, spit upon, who could say, “before Abraham was, I am”; and then He goes up on high.

In Philippians 2 this blessed One comes down taking the form of a man—this was the first way of His, emptying Himself. He proved He had power in the man to deliver this world of all its misery, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils; but He did it all as a servant; and then, lastly, He humbled Himself, and became obedient to death—the death of the cross.

It is “received gifts in the man.” Part of this is quoted in Ephesians 4, shewing its application to the church. The last part, “for the rebellious also,” refers to what will be the portion of the remnant when Jehovah God will dwell among them. These delivered ones, the fruit of the travail of His soul, became the vessels of His power against Satan. It is only after the cross that Satan is

called the god of this world; but the church is now the vessel of the agency of God against Satan by the Holy Ghost sent down, the witness of grace, not of judgment (though judgment was within, for example, on Ananias and Sapphira). We are all (believers) the living witnesses of Christ's victory, while Satan is going about in the world. How far do we realise this?

Verse 21. "Enemies" are to be destroyed. The church does not call for judgment on enemies, but the Jews look for the destruction of enemies, because they are to remain here. There is to be glory recognised—complete deliverance for them. Christ is gone on high as Son of man. He is set in a divine place at the right hand of God, and we are made partakers of the divine nature, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. So too we are to be caught up to meet Him above, instead of being like the Jews delivered by the execution of those who despise us here below.

Here it is the joy and deliverance of Israel on earth. The beauty of holiness reappears on better and more enduring ground—Messiah's grace and the new covenant, not their own vain pledge to the old. The tribes come up to the sanctuary, kings bring presents, princes come from Egypt, Ethiopia stretches her hands to God. "Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: to him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God."

Verse 34. He has taken His place in the “cloud” again. The “cloud” is indicative of His presence, the Shechinah and the pillar of cloud by day. And on the mount of transfiguration they “feared as they entered the cloud.” Christ will come in the clouds.

Psalm 69 is the righteous One, not here forsaken of God in atonement for sin as in Psalm 22, but crushed under man’s hatred and reproach, enemies without a cause in the face of the zeal for God’s house that has eaten Him up. Yet all is taken from God’s hand; and as He owns Himself smitten of God, so He looks and prays for vengeance, not grace.

Psalm 70 expresses what the Spirit of Christ in the remnant will then desire in respect of both foes and friends; as Psalm 71 gives the link with God’s dealings from the first, and prays for His faithful care at last, in order that their lips may shew forth His praise. Finally Psalm 72 presents their desires fulfilled in the reign of peace and blessing under the true Son of David on the earth.

Psalm 63

God wants every thought and desire of our hearts. That is the effect of His coming down to us, and is very blessed. There is another thing, and even a better, that is, His lifting us up to Him where He is. When God meets our thoughts, wants, and feelings, it is His answering according to the measure of our need; in the other He surpasses all the desires of our hearts and minds. See it in Psalm 132 when certain blessings are asked, and each desire is surpassed. See verses 8 and 13; verse 9 answered in verse 16; verse 10 in verse 17. There is trial of faith: He suffers His people to hunger,

etc., that they may know the value of being fed by Him as He will. There is personal relationship between the saint and God— “mine and thine” in John 17—which connects itself with what He is for us.

To Abram God said (Gen. 15), “I am thy shield,” because he wanted protection, “thy exceeding great reward.” It did not go beyond Abram’s want—he wished an heir. This is different from his delighting in God. What God is bringing us to is to delight in Himself. See Abraham in Genesis 17:17: “I am the Almighty God.” This is quite another thing. It was God’s revelation of Himself to Abraham. True, all kinds of blessing are connected with it; but it is a higher thing, because it revealed God, and led him up to communion with Him, while the other threw him back on his own need and wishes.

It is a different thing to have the joy of the relationship, and to have the fruits of it. “O my God, early will I seek thee.” There is activity of soul thus seeking God. The soul athirst for God seeks—there is diligence in seeking God for Himself—the mouth is open for everything. The Psalm does not speak of seeking for water; when a man is thirsty, he seeks for water; but here it is more thirsting for Him who gives the water.

The conscious relationship was founded. “O God, thou art my God.” The more he enjoyed God, the more it was felt to be a dry and thirsty land—not dry because of the weariness of the way. What does it matter, the dry and thirsty land, if I have the living water in my soul? I do not think about the dryness then. It is not being at home yet either. It is the wilderness in Romans 8. If I know I am to be in the same glory with Christ, what will affect me here? What! people going to be with the Lord in

glory; and yet the slightest thing can upset me now! I feel the wretchedness, because I have got the glory—I am not acquiring it, but seeking it because I have it. Think of a person who had seen heaven—knowing all the blessedness of it—going through such a world as this! That is what it was to Christ. What made Him feel it was the joy? “Because thy loving-kindness is better than life,” this world is a wilderness.

“Thy loving-kindness is better than life”; but it brings death upon one. No matter: “In everything give thanks.” What! in sorrow? Yes, to be sure, we have the key to the joy in having Himself. “Thy loving-kindness is better than life; therefore will I praise thee while I live.” “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.” What! in the desert? Yes, that is the very place, because God Himself is His portion. “My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.” Now we often praise, when we are not very joyful (there is a certain pressure on the heart), and it is right to do it at all times; but here the heart is so full of the blessing that it is pressed out of him. We learn from Psalm 42 that the health of my countenance is the effect of the light of Thy countenance. The heart is lifted up above the sorrow because occupied with God Himself.

In Psalm 63 the soul is in the state in which Psalm 42 ends. It is not an oppressed heart looking out for what would make him joyful, but rejoicing because the spring is there. “Therefore I will bless thee while I live.”

There is help in God (see v. 7) for the difficulties of the way. It is not here the enjoyment of God Himself, but His protection. Do I look forward to my life to come? I defy any one to know anything but that His window is open.

God, then, is the only certain thing. I have no certainty that there will be a to-morrow, but there is God. Because the heart is in heaven, we can rejoice in the thing itself we have got for all times. “Jehovah is my Shepherd: I shall not want.” It is not, He has put me in certain circumstances, and I shall be happy there; but it is something to depend on, to know He is my Shepherd. Then there is earnestness of purpose in following after. (Verse 8.) So Paul: “I press toward the mark,” following hard after Him in a “dry and thirsty land.” Paul in prison was pressing on toward Christ, and rejoicing in the Lord; he had nothing else to rejoice in. In nothing too should we be terrified by adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition (v. 9, 10); as on the other hand Christ and they that are His alone shall be exalted for ever (v. 11).

Psalm 72

The second book, of which our Psalm is the last, closes with the blessing of the whole earth: “The prayers of David … are ended.” It supposes and treats of the relationship of God with Judah just at the end of the age when forced to flee. The third book is not so much connected with the personal history of Christ as either the first or the second. It is occupied with Israel, and the circumstances of Israel are entirely different from Judah’s because they were not in the land when Christ was there, and so they had no actual part in His crucifixion. The second book is more historically prophetic than the first, and not so much the sufferings of Christ.

In Psalm 72 we have the Solomon reign, not the Davidical state. The true Son of David is, no doubt, much

greater than Solomon. Here Christ is King. This takes us back to Psalm 2. Jehovah's determination is to set His kingdom in Zion. The kingdom is not confined to this setting up of the King. In Matthew 13:43 we have the "kingdom of the Father." There we get its heavenly character, not setting aside the kingdom on earth, which is to be established; but it goes farther and higher. "Every scribe instructed … brings out of his treasure things new and old." The scribes had the old things concerning the kingdom, but they stumbled at the Christ having to suffer. If they had received Christ, man would not have been proved to be such a sinner. But they hated both Him and His Father, and so proved there is no good in flesh. There would have been something good in flesh if they could have received Him. The kingdom was not set up then through their not receiving Him. Two things came out after that: the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, and the church. What is the kingdom? It is very simple, if we take the word as it is. It is the sphere of the reign, or where the King reigns. If I take the word church as "assembly," which it really means, I can never confound "church" and "kingdom." Compare the word "reign" with "assembly," and the difference is easily seen.

Another thing, often not understood, is the difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. If the kingdom of God had been accepted on earth, it would not have been the same as now, not the actual form of the kingdom of heaven. Matthew takes up the change in consequence of the King's rejection, and speaks also of "the Father's kingdom" for the heirs who follow Christ in His rejection; because He takes it from His Father when rejected. He is set down, not on His

own throne (and so the judgment in this Psalm brought in), but for the present on His Father's throne. Divine righteousness is shewn in God's setting Him there and justifying us according to all He had accomplished. There was righteousness due to set Him on the throne of God. That is what we have. "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me," etc. Christ then sits down there; and there is no judicial kingdom at all now—it is postponed, and known only to faith. The kingdom of the world is not become that of our God and of His Christ. The kingdom of heaven is likened to a sower, etc. He has altered the ground on which He deals with the people—He sows; He brings something with Him, instead of seeking something from man. The King is obliged to take this mysterious character of sowing in the world. Then, mark, He does not sow only on Jewish ground; as to outward nearness to God, that was gone. God does not look for fruit. He is going on ground that is settled by judgment. Therefore He is not seeking fruit from man. This goes against man's good opinion of himself. Man is cut down as the good-for-nothing tree, spite of all culture from God. The trial has been made of all men in the Jew. All flesh is grass; and the grass is withered. He sows; He is not exercising His royal title in sowing. It is a new work, different in kind. All are given up (Matt. 12) and He sows (Matt. 13). The field is not the Jewish people, but "the world." God goes outside guilty Judah to begin a fresh work everywhere. The time of the harvest is the judicial time of the kingdom—not the sowing time. Christ lets all go on as if at the beginning, and He saw nothing of the corruption; but then He begins a judicial character. Personally He deals with it on earth. That is the kingdom in the mysteries of

it, or hidden. Its outward character is a great tree; the sowing is in the world. Pharaoh was a great tree, and the Assyrian was another. Christendom is now a great tree—an influential power in the earth. It is ruled from heaven, if it be the kingdom of heaven, but the sphere is this earth. The sowing— the field—the harvest—the search for the treasure or the pearl—the net—are not in heaven, but on earth.

When the joy of the kingdom is spoken of, it is the kingdom of God. “The kingdom of God (not of heaven) is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The kingdom of heaven is dispensational; the kingdom of God is sometimes a moral thing. Another thing connected with the kingdom is power and not merely law. There will be “the law written in their hearts,” but the kingdom brings in power. It is the setting up of a person in the character of king. The kingdom spoken of in the gospel is in “mystery” during this time; but the thing predicted by the prophets is “a king shall rule in righteousness.” It is the kingdom in manifestation. Power and righteousness were entirely in contrast when Christ was here. He said, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” There was Satan’s power, but righteousness in and as to Christ. Judgment had not then returned to righteousness at all. It was the close of all hope of it for the time, when Christ was rejected. Up to that moment it might have been looked for; but this was the setting aside of God’s kingdom from the earth. The Son tame and they said, “This is the heir: come let us kill him,” etc. Christ is not taking possession of the kingdom on the earth now. He is not sitting on His own throne at all yet. It is the Father’s throne where He is. He is perfectly accepted in divine righteousness, which

is now being ministered by the Holy Ghost to faith, and which is better than any other portion, but there is no execution of judgment. If He had executed judgment when He went away, there would have been no dealings in grace. He must have extinguished the wicked from the earth at once.

The word is, “Sit on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” There He is sitting down and doing nothing as to the kingdom, but sowing, etc., in this mysterious way. Meanwhile the mustard-tree, in which the birds of the air (the emissaries of Satan) may lodge, is being produced; the leaven is spreading in the three measures of meal (that is, formal doctrine extends itself through Christendom). At the close Christ brings in the execution of His power. This has nothing to do with the church. Instead of His having immediate power on earth, He is “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” During this time of waiting the church is being gathered; and when He comes in judgment His glorified ones come with Him. He has accomplished righteousness before this gathering began, and sent down the Holy Ghost, by whom we have the revelation of that righteousness. “We are made the righteousness of God in him.” This divine righteousness is established on the throne and revealed to us in the gospel and therefore by faith.

As High Priest, Christ has gone up within the veil (which indeed is rent), having finished the work for His friends, and waiting for the due moment to put down His enemies. Until He comes out, the Jews do not know that the offering is accepted. Here are the king and priest, represented by Moses and Aaron (Lev. 9:23), but they stand without till His coming out; and while He is within,

to them as a nation He is unknown (to the Jews). The Holy Ghost is sent down to make us know it is accepted. Such is the place the church has—pre-trusters in Christ while unseen in heaven. Righteousness is gone as to earth, but is in the person of Christ exalted on the throne in heaven; and there we know it and are made it in Christ by the grace of God. Compare 2 Corinthians 5 with John 16. While the kingdom is in abeyance, the Holy Ghost has come down to make us know the righteousness of God in Christ, which is fit for the throne of God. We share that righteousness; we do not sit on the throne of the Father, where He now is. This seat He has by virtue of His personal title as the Son of God, and God Himself indeed.

The kingdom of heaven in mystery takes in all Christendom, professors as well as true Christians. Now there are no signs of the kingdom. What sign is it for a king to suffer? But if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Suffering is no sign of a kingdom at all, but it is likeness to the King. The same thing that made Him suffer on earth made Him glorified in heaven. So is it with us. But instead of His reigning over the church, the church will reign with Him.

He is the Bridegroom of the church, not the King of the church. His right and power will be put forth for the earth. Adam could give names to everything brought before him (a proof of his dominion, such as is often shewn in the giving of a name; for example, Nebuchadnezzar giving new names to Daniel, that of Belteshazzar, etc.); but when Eve came, he called her Isha, from himself, Ish because she was part of himself. He gives her the same name, even as God called their name Adam. We have the same place as Christ Himself,

and when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We could not now see Him as He is, and live; but then we shall be like Him, and therefore can see Him. “We shall appear with him” — “be glorified together with him.” The heavenly saints are to be like Christ and be with Him for ever. We shall take the heavenly places, which spiritual wickedness has now (Eph. 6). We shall be “caught up to meet the Lord in the air.” In the parable of the talents, in Matthew 25, there is no allusion to the rule of the kingdom; while in Luke, the use of the pounds is rewarded with cities to reign over. In Matthew, all the servant’s reward centres in “the joy of their Lord.”

Jude speaks of the Lord coming with ten thousands of His saints. So in Revelation 19:14, “The armies in heaven followed him on white horses.” The saints come with Him when He comes to execute judgment. (So chap. 17:14). They are associated with Him in the glory He brings, as also in what is much better, in the Father’s house. While He is on the Father’s throne, the church has no throne, but suffers with Him. When He takes His own throne, we shall be with Him, and share His glory when He appears. It is wonderful to be associated with Him in His glory, but better to be associated with Himself. It is better to be thinking about Himself than about Him as a King or a Lord, important as this too may be. When Christ comes to reign, there will be human righteousness perfect, because Christ will execute it; but now it is divine righteousness, ministered by the Spirit in grace (2 Cor. 3)—grace which associates us in the effect of divine righteousness. When He comes back as King, at first it will be the David character of reign.

So Psalm 101, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment” (always mercy comes first).

This Psalm states prophetically the character of Christ’s kingdom. When He takes the kingdom, all will be judicially set up in righteousness. It will be seen by all that God has laid hold upon this mighty One for His people’s salvation and the world’s blessings. There will be real righteousness here below, but human as to its measure, and divinely ministered. It will be Messiah and the new covenant. The law will be written on their hearts. The law never required the death of Christ; this is entirely outside and above all that the law could righteously demand. By the grace of God He tasted death. Did the law require an agony from the blessed and holy One? What did that prove? Man’s righteousness? Divine love was in it; God (not law) “made him to be sin for us.” It was the unspeakable, unfathomable, love of God who was glorified in it about sin. For God to be glorified, everything in God was to be made good in spite of sin, yea, and in respect of sin. No doubt, the elect angels have been kept by divine power; but what a scene for angels to witness— the way men treated Christ in this world! When Daniel prayed there was an order given to answer him, and the angel could not for three weeks, because opposed by the prince of Persia. What a scene is this world! Is wickedness God’s glory? Is misery His glory? No wonder one of old said, “This was too hard for me until I went into the sanctuary of God.” When I see the end of these men, that will set it right, of course. God will justify righteousness by judgment, which, long severed, will then return to righteousness. Where, how, would love be manifested, if all His enemies were destroyed now? The cross glorifies

God above all law. The announcement of the Man who was God, dying for sinners, is that righteousness? No, it is beyond right; it is love—infinite, divine, and sovereign love.

Psalm 94. God does not strike until there is conscience awake in the hearts of those stricken. With the remnant there will be tabrets and harps, wherever the grounded staff shall pass. Then the Solomon reign begins, “He judgeth among the gods,” that is, those to whom He has given power. “In his days shall the righteous flourish.” Then the kingdom is set up in power. Psalm 72, “Prayer shall be made for him continually,” that is, the desire of all the people is expressed, that the king should prosper.

Psalm 67:7: “All the ends of the earth shall fear him”; and Psalm 72:19, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” It is the close of all the prayers of him that had the promises as to the blessing on earth. Verse 20.

The execution of judgment, on those found to be His enemies when He appears, is different from the time when God will judge the secrets of men’s hearts—that will be for the heathen as well, who have not had special testimony about Christ, but are judged by law’s work written on their hearts.

While things are not set right on earth, we are getting the full fruit of divine righteousness. While to be oppressed in the world, as He was, is the portion of faith; those who are gathered have the full heavenly blessing. When Christ was suffering for sin, it was not to bring in government on earth, but to work out divine righteousness, by which we might have association with Him. His suffering from God for sin was to make infinite grace flow out.

Psalm 84

This Psalm is the expression of the desires of those who had long been deprived of the joy of being in the courts of Jehovah during the captivity. It is the expression of the joy of seeing them again, and of taking the road which leads there, even by the valley of weeping, of Baca. The church also moves forward toward the tabernacle of God, but it is that which is not made by human hands.

The subject of each Psalm is ordinarily expressed at the beginning in the first verses. The tabernacles of Jehovah are His house. The faithful is there at home in His rest. One cannot find oneself at rest when the object of the heart is still beyond the point we have reached, even if the place we have stopped at be the most desirable in the world. The first thing which is here presented to us is that the house of Jehovah is the Israelite's resting place (v. 1-4). "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee."

But blessed also is "the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways," that is, the ways to Jehovah's house. Verse 4 contains our joy in hope; verse 6 contains actual experience along the way. Passing through Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also filleth the pools [or, with blessings]; "they go from strength to strength, appearing [each] in Zion before God." When we begin our course here below, we know God, we learn also more to know Him; it is a feeling which grows and strengthens by communion. God has thereby bound the hearts of Christians. It is the manifestation and accomplishment of His love. The more I know the perfectness of God, the more I know His love, the more

also I feel how precious He is to my soul. If my knowledge of God is separated from the knowledge of the love of God, I have not the life of God. The highest perfection of God is manifested to the heart by the first visit He makes to the heart of sinners, and in this respect it cannot be known more by the most advanced child. Here below the heart of man does not answer to the praise of God. One could not praise Him in the streets of a town: the heart of man is enmity against God. The children of God together enjoy God and prepare to go into a world without an echo to raise the voice of the gospel. It is the desire of the converted heart that God may be praised; and he will be fully satisfied in the house of God. Impossible to find repose of soul till God is praised unceasingly by those that surround Him.

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.” If I have a difficulty, I in my feebleness have need of strength to sustain me in patient endurance. Peter without this strength denied Jesus. We may be weary when we act in our strength, for what is the strength of the flesh? When we act in the power of God, it is impossible. No creature can separate us from the power of God or the love of God. What is stronger? Jesus ever dependent was the strongest, and overcame the world. God has set our rest at the end of a path that we are treading; and it is good for us in order that we may make the experience of our own heart. It is those who are already redeemed who are on the road toward the rest of God. The word of God renders the thing surer than any other testimony could. It is a defile to pass on the other side of which is the glory. Into this defile we must go down. One may there lose sight of the glory; and the way be difficult; but we

have the certainty that it is the road to the glory. God has told us that in this road we shall be despised by the world and in conflict with Satan. He has told us these things before that, when they come, we might believe His testimony to be true.

Here below we find not the rest but the way; but the way should be in our heart. Thus the valley of Baca, a ruined earth, is changed into a fountain. If we are in communion with God, every difficulty becomes the occasion for the display of the glory of God (2 Thess. 1). The timid child finds joy in the assurance of its mother's love when some danger presents itself. We are often overwhelmed because our strength is not in God, who would have His grace sufficient for us; which is more precious than the removal of the thorn in the flesh. "The rain also filleth the pools." It comes not from the earth but from heaven, to which we should be attached and whence we may expect everything. There is no such source of refreshment here below that I may know that God takes extra care of me, to give me water and manna and strength, and in a word everything. It is a blessing that we should be thus brought low: He has not done so either to the Egyptians or to the Canaanites. We ought to live on that which cometh out of the mouth of God (Deut. 8:2-5).

The effect of these things is to make one "go from strength to strength." The difficulties are meant to make us know new strength on God's part. We are not actually capable of enjoying all that there is in God. Also all is not yet given us. God gets more place in our hearts. The empty or hard places of the heart are manifested; and God has to fill or clear them. The Lord God of hosts, that is to say, the God who governs all things, He who is

faithful to His promises, and who has all things at His disposal, the God of His people, God ever the same. God presents Himself in three different ways: Jehovah or the Eternal, God of Jacob, and God of hosts. “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.” There is that assurance, the pledge of divine favour. God regards us in Christ; and all that we ask of Him in the name of Jesus He will do. Better be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the courts of the world. If our confidence is in man, we shall find ourselves sooner or later where man will fail us; and there is what Satan waits for in order to sift us. To trust in God is the hardest thing, as it lays the flesh under our feet, and self can gain nothing by it, but it is inexpressible joy for the heart.

Thoughts On Psalms 91 and 102

The thing we have to learn is Christ. We may learn a good deal in ourselves, but all that is for blessing will be in Christ. This is what the apostle means (Heb. 6:1) when he speaks of going on to perfection. It is vain to learn the first principles over and over again; if we have learnt that, let us go on to learn Christ—learn Him in all His characters, and in all our exercises. To know Christ is to know Him in all His various glories. At one time we have to look on Him as Jehovah; at another, as a suffering Man.

Here comes a testimony concerning the Most High. We have in this verse 1 a general truth: the person that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Verse 2. The words of Jesus are brought out: I will say of Jehovah He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust. The

apostle, in Hebrews 2:13, refers to this and other parts in the Psalms as the words of Christ. The apostle declares, I will put my trust in Him, to be our Lord's expression whilst walking in the midst of trial on the earth. Then (v. 3-13) we come to the testimony of the Spirit concerning Jesus. Verse 9. This was true in its perfectness of the Lord Jesus; it applies in all its extent only to Him. In verse 14 we get the declaration of the Father, "because he hath set his love upon me." This was true, and true only of Jesus. He was the only One who set His love on God. We love Him because He first loved us. In our Lord's sufferings we learn the principle and fulness of love.

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me, but that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." He was shewing this principle of love to the Father. There is deep blessing in seeing our Lord thus. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9).

He knew His name. God's greatness is shewn by despising nothing. His love is so great that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without His knowledge. Christ always trusted Him (Psalms 20, 21). In the case of Jesus is the practical exhibition of this truth—He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High; in us in measure. Being one with Christ, we are able to appropriate this to ourselves. All His actings on earth came from the perfectness of communion with the Father. The promise was, He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I do always those things that please the Father, and abide in His love (v. 2). What He calls for is complete recognition of Himself, then come all the promises. The one thing we have to do is to own

God in all His fulness. Imperfectly, but in principle, we dwell in the secret of the Most High. Why we are often in trial, etc., is because we are not dwelling in the secret of the Most High. Verse 4, “He shall cover thee with his feathers,” etc. As His power covers and shelters us, so His truth is our shield and buckler. God’s truth always comes to us in Jesus. Just so far as we are in the secret of the Most High, we are under the shadow of the Almighty. If we are going our own way, we shall have chastening and trial, and in mercy too. What we have to seek is to make the Lord our habitation. He leadeth us forth in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

This psalm (102) is one of peculiar strength and blessedness to the believer, as it brings, in one point of view, the identity of Christ in spirit with His suffering people, and, on the other side, His identity with Jehovah. His being Jehovah is the basis of all hopes that belong to the Jews, and to the saints consequently. Our Lord’s sufferings become the earnest of glory to those that are His. The triumph of Christ comes to be the pledge of deliverance and blessing to them. This makes the testimony of His deliverance, when suffering for us, so blessed, because the earnest of ours. “In the day when I call, answer me speedily.” The craving of the godly soul in trouble is the Lord’s hearing him: this is their anxiety, for otherwise there would be wrath in the case. Of this the resurrection of Jesus was the great witness.

In this psalm our Lord enters into every protracted suffering of His people. In all His sufferings, as a righteous man on earth, He could say, “I know that thou hearest me always.” I watch, etc.—the very opposite of ease. Verses 9, 10: I never find the deepest sorrow of our Lord spoken of exclusive of indignation. “Thou hast

lifted me up, and cast me down." The lifting up here spoken of was true of Jesus with the Jews. For what nation is so great? who hath God so nigh unto them? etc. Jesus is looked at as the Messiah, as coming in the flesh, most exalted, as Head of the people, yet He had to be "cast down" for the indignation that was come upon this people. He never took the headship, but took the casting down. The Spirit of Christ in us always takes portion with sorrow. "My days are like a shadow that declineth." Then comes the assertion of strength, of all comfort, the perpetuity of Jehovah; "Thou, O Lord, shalt endure; thou shalt arise, and have mercy on Zion," etc. Here is contrasted the way in which Messiah was cast down in the lowest degree of suffering, and, in the midst of it, the certainty of Jehovah's taking mercy on His people.

If Zion be set up, all the nations who disbelieved that it would be set up "shall fear thy name." Then comes another positive declaration: He shall appear in His glory. How Jehovah is to appear brings out the identity of the suffering Messiah with Jehovah. The people which shall be created, etc.—they shall be new creatures then. Messiah's prayer (v. 17) will be then regarded, and fully answered; it was not apparently regarded during His sufferings on earth. The great statements in this psalm are, Messiah cast down, but Jehovah faithful and will build up Zion. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will look down from heaven on what takes place on earth. Then comes in the repetition of the sufferings of Messiah, next His glory, not merely taken in consequence of suffering, but in virtue of His glorious person. The secret of all our strength is this unfathomable mystery—Christ's being Jehovah, and His identity with the sufferings of His people. It is just the

portion of the church to know the glory is His, that He is the Jehovah-God who founded heaven and earth, and to understand how He was on that earth cast down, was bruised, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and to rest in the happy consciousness of the perfect sympathy of Christ in all our trials, in all that in which wrath may appear to us. In all our sorrows and troubles we must find, whilst under them, wrath, although we know it is chastening in love; it produces in us, not merely the sorrow of the world, but sense of the displeasure of the Lord under them, and we shall be looking out for His hearing our cry, just as a child grieves to see the frown of a tender parent, because of his displeasure shewn in it.

Thus should we, not only on account of the trouble it brings us into—then we are thinking of ourselves instead of God. The great comfort of the believer is, that the Lord Jesus having passed through all this trial is itself a witness to us of the love of God in them; and thus we are more than conquerors, not in carelessness, knowing that nothing shall separate us from the love of God. We may ourselves be the occasion of chastisement—then must there be humbling, but love in it surely. One learns in Christ, having gone through all, the faithfulness of God in all the exercises we may have to pass through. We (believers) must take everything as coming from God: otherwise we do not give sufficient value to our sufferings, but give value to ourselves in them. When wicked men cut our Lord down, He took it all as coming from God: “Thou hast cast me down,” etc. Faith always looks to the great source, and not to casual instruments.

Psalm 93

I have passed over the third book, as it treats more of the detail as to the state and condition and circumstances of the whole people of Israel in the last day. There is not so much of Christ in it, Christ as an object of course there is always, but not so much the expression of His experience when on earth. It is not merely the residue of people in Jerusalem where Christ walked amongst them, nor driven out of Jerusalem, but the whole nation, not exclusive of the Jews, but taking in all. Psalm 73, "As for me my feet were almost gone." They are in perplexity until God arises in judgment. Then when He arises all is gone! As soon as the glory comes in they will be blessed. Verse 24, "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel and after the glory receive me," and as Zechariah says, "After the glory, hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you." There is a difference for us, we get it before the glory, and when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. They will not come into blessing till after the glory, because they have not received Him in humiliation. From Psalm 73 to Psalm 89 we have the future character of Israel; their unfaithfulness, tempting God, etc., and in the last Psalms 88, 89, entire failure. Psalm 88 is failure under law, utter darkness of the law on man's spirit. Psalm 89 is failure of David's family, king as well as people, but the godly remnant, in this state of darkness, in and where all is gone, find Jesus who is set before them in this character of Messiah. In the fourth book we see the coming in of God in the way of deliverance very remarkably. He is bringing in again the "first-begotten into the world," therefore the preface is "Jehovah reigneth." The everlasting gospel comes after, but the

general announcement and subject of the book is the reign of Jehovah. Jehovah has never been reigning in the actual exercise of power until this time comes in. His ways and dealings with men have not been on that footing. He is King always, of course, but He has not taken the position of reigning over man, either in connection with Adam, or in the giving of promises, or law. In one sense God has all in His hand, and He says, “do my prophets no harm,” but He has never taken His great power and reigned yet. The patriarchs were patterns of faith, having no possession in the land. Man was set up as king in David; then because of Israel’s failure under the kings, their dominion transferred to the Gentiles, (Nebuchadnezzar). Power committed to man, there is no knowing what he will do. Nebuchadnezzar made an image and called on the people to worship it, instead of God, and then put those who owned God into the fire. When Christ was on earth, things were not set aside, He said, “Give to Csesar the things that are Cassar’s.” Christ became a servant amongst them. Pilate represents the emperor who has God’s appointed authority.

Here our position is “Do well and suffer for it,” because the rule of the Gentiles is going on instead of Jehovah’s reigning. That you see goes on, until the two things meet again, when the mystery of God has gone on to the open apostasy, and power comes out under the form of Babylon, the “mother of harlots.” All the nations in opposition to God’s government will then meet up in open rebellion and nothing can bring in blessing but the Lord coming in judgment. Jehovah reigns. The place of the saints, now suffering with Him, will be to reign with Him then. We shall be called up before He comes, and

when He comes to reign we come with Him to reign with Him. He will reign over the earth; but saints gone up will reign with Him. The character of our association with Christ is like that of Paul, who got his soul into the glory whilst it was in heaven. Peter had seen Christ's sufferings, he shared the sufferings and anticipated the glory. Paul had the sufferings and entered into the glory by faith, he was filling up the measure of Christ's sufferings. You get from him not the fact of glory revealed merely, but our being with Him, the rays of the glory when it is revealed.

Psalm 90. Remarkable the way in which this book is introduced. The eye is on Jehovah coming in, and faith looks back to see the way they have been led. "Jehovah, thou hast been our dwelling-place." Psalm 91 shews what that dwelling-place was. Turning to Jehovah as coming up, He had been their dwelling-place. To Him a thousand years were as yesterday when it is past. He had come to deliver, but Psalm 91 gives Christ, He that dwelleth. He takes His place amongst these people whose dwelling-place Jehovah had been. He takes up the names of Abraham's God (Most High and Almighty), going farther back than Israel to whom He was known as Jehovah, to Abraham the root of the olive-tree. "Blessed be Abraham of the Most High God," looking on the prosperity of God's people on earth. God Almighty is a name God took in connection with coming out of the world, and He that knows the secret place knows where to look. God as a Father watches us, but it is not that we shall always escape suffering, we have something better than promise of that kind. We may indeed pass through the fire, but not a hair of our head shall perish, but here it is personal deliverance promised, and if we look for

that we shall make terrible mistakes. “Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” God will take as much care of the remnant as of Christ. Whoever gets the “secret place of the Most High shall abide,” etc.

Christ says, I will take Jehovah for my refuge, not as the God of the earth yet, and Jehovah comes in as Most High. Verse 9. Israel speaks, “Because thou hast made,” etc. Verse 14. Jehovah takes it up, “Because he hath set his love on me, therefore will I deliver him.” Christ took the place of refusing to be the Jehovah on earth, that He might suffer as Son of man. He dropped His title of Psalm 2, that He might take the place of suffering and claim of Psalm 8, and this is Jehovah’s approval and reward.

Psalm 92. He is in the place where praise flows forth to this great Deliverer. We get the character of the Most High brought out. Then the Lord reigneth (Ps. 93), the floods have lifted up their voice, etc. “Who is this that we should obey him,” the ungodly say: “The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters,” etc., and so it will be they rise against Him, but He wakes up as the Judge of the earth, and puts an end to it all. As He stilled the waves on the lake when they thought He was asleep on a pillow, so now He stills the raging of the nations.

Psalm 94. The remnant in distress calling for judgment. He comes in as the Judge of the earth. He has that character, not Saviour, yet the meek of the earth will be delivered. Wheresoever the grounded staff shall pass, it shall be with tabrets and harps, Isa. 30:32. In order to their getting the blessing they must look for the cutting off of enemies. The “throne of iniquity” must be put

down, and the rightful king set up. Can Jehovah reign with Antichrist? If not, vengeance must be executed to put down his throne. Verse 20.

In the Psalms that follow we get the progressive introduction of Jehovah or Jesus (as Lord) into the place of government. In Psalm 102 the sufferings of Christ on earth are contrasted with the glory into which He comes.

Psalms 95, 96 to 99. His going on from one step to another to bring in deliverance. Psalm 95, a solemn appeal to the Jews, the sheep of His pasture, at the closing moment, “to-day, if ye will hear,” etc., the solemn to-morrow is not come. Psalm 96. The last appeal to the Gentiles; leave your idols and come up to worship Jehovah. Psalm 97. Celebrated prophetically, see the quotation of this Psalm in Hebrews. “Worship him,” that is Christ, worship Him. Nothing more shews the divine Person of the Lord than these Psalms. Here it is Jehovah in the Psalms, and in the quotation it is applied to Christ. He is here coming to judge the world. Psalm 98. It is done. In Psalm 99 He goes a step farther; not only does He display His power, but He takes pleasure in Jerusalem, and He is sitting between the cherubims in the temple.

Then comes Psalm 100, not summoning them from their idols, but inviting them to join in the joy of the whole earth at Jehovah being established. Israel sings this Psalm. Thus we get the whole cause of the First-Begotten coming into the world again, in these few Psalms; then turning back to the human part in Psalm 101 He comes in as Son of David. He announces

prophetically the principles on which He will govern when He takes the throne as Man on earth.

In Psalm 102 the question is raised, How can He who was cut off have a part in this reign? It enters in a peculiar way into Christ's sufferings, as cut off out of the land of the living (not atonement), but how can He who was cut off have part in this land of the living? It takes in the whole scene prophetically. He had been lifted up as one chosen from amongst the people to be Messiah, but cast down, the lowest of the low; God's wrath against Him. Though He came as Messiah, with all the blessings in His hand, He is cast down. "Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Zion," referring to the last days, and then (v. 15) the world is brought in when Israel is blessed. "He weakened my strength by the way"; cut off at thirty-three years, how could He come in to reign? Now we get the answer of the Spirit. "Thy years are throughout all generations"; it is Jehovah Himself. We get that at the very time when He is cut off; in the midst of all the glory He breaks in "but I am cut off," the answer breaks in as suddenly, "Thy years are throughout all generations." The very Jehovah that founded everything (Heb. 1:10), "Thou Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundations of the earth." It is exceedingly beautiful to get the two together in this way; the casting down and the lifting up. If Christ is the centre of our hearts, we take an interest in all that concerns Christ Himself. He appeals to His disciples, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I go to my Father," you would be glad of my going away because of what concerns me. If you love self, you will want to keep me. The moment we have got peace and are free to think of something besides self, every ray of glory we can perceive in connection with Christ

brightens up the interest of our souls in Him. There is no place where Christ speaks of His desolateness on earth as in this Psalm, where He is declared to be the Jehovah. How beautifully the Spirit of God brings out the loveliness of Christ's heart in the world! His very love isolated Him: He must feel for others; He must feel the sorrow of seeing them rejecting His love. Dreadful to go through a world so dead to its own mercies, in rejecting Him!

There was no sorrow that He had not to go through, even to His disciples turning away. Suppose all is very sorrowful with us; if there is any success of the gospel it cheers our hearts, but there was no such comfort for Him. He said to His disciples, Tarry ye here, and watch with me: poorly indeed they watched, for they went to sleep. He was alone in His sorrow, and alone in His joy. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Christ's perfectness was the very reason of the way He felt all the path down here. There was everything that could add to the cup of human sorrow. Now, when all the brightness comes in, He says, "I had to be cut off"; this very one, who is Jehovah!

What a wonderful way the Spirit of God brings these divine truths before us! Speaking of being cut off, why it is the Jehovah! How it breaks in upon all the routing of our thoughts, that such an object should have come in! Surely it is enough to take us out of ourselves. The thread that leads us to it is, the interest that Christ takes in all this. It puts us in a place where innocence could not have put us. God Himself has come into all the evil, bringing in grace above all the evil. That it is which gives the exhaustless source of all blessing; it is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is presented

to us to deliver us out of all the wretched routine of this world's thoughts, being Himself the object for the affections of our hearts. God the Father has given us the very object to delight in, that He Himself delights in; one who went down into it all, that is the reason we can have communion with Him. God is the only One who could come into such a scene. An angel would have fallen in taking it; it would have been a fall for any creature to have come into it!

God's Comforts The Stay Of The Soul Psalm 94.

Psalms 90-100 are connected together, and seem to me to describe the dealings of the Lord with the Jews, etc., in the latter day, on the earth. But I am not going to speak of that now. We may often derive comfort from principles which we find in such portions of the scripture, revealing to us, as they do, God's character, etc.; but it is important to know the mind of the Spirit in the primary sense, as we shall then be able to discern what God is teaching us through them with a great deal more clearness and certainty.

The two principles which form the basis of what is dwelt on here are, that the workers of iniquity are allowed to lift up their heads and flourish, but that Jehovah is, and will be, Most High for evermore. There is the clear perception of this throughout. Under the temporary exaltation and prevalence of wickedness, the godly are in a very tried state, the righteous suffer; but vengeance belongs to God (not to the sufferer): therefore the cry in verses 1, 2.

To such a height are the workers of iniquity allowed to go, that, in the consciousness that Jehovah's throne

could not be cast down, the question comes in, “shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?” (v. 20). So completely has wickedness got place in the earth, that there is a sort of inquiry raised, whether the throne of iniquity could subsist in companionship of judgment with the divine throne. The answer is, judgment is coming— “Jehovah our God shall cut them off,” v. 23. Judgment shall return to righteousness in the place of trial and suffering.

The point on which I would dwell a little at present is the consolation of the saints during this time of trial— God’s “comforts.” In the first place we have the assurance, “Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity,” v. 11. Then “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah,” etc. (v. 12, 13).

As to the pride and purpose of man, it is settled in a word. The “thoughts of man “are not only inferior to God’s wisdom but they are “vanity.” This settles the whole question. All that begins and ends in the heart of man is “vanity,” and nothing else. Whatever the state of things around, though there may be a “multitude of thoughts within,” as ‘what will all this come to?’ ‘how will that end?’ and the like— every barrier we can raise, all our strength, all our weakness, whatever the wave after wave that may flow over us—Jehovah’s thought about it all is, that it is “vanity.” All is working together to one object—God’s plan, that upon which His heart is set—the glorification of Jesus, and ours, with Him. Every thought and every plan of man must therefore be “vanity,” because it has not this, God’s object, for its object; and God’s object always comes to pass. There cannot be two ends to what is going on. Let men break their hearts about it, all simply comes to nothing, the

end of it is “vanity.” God’s object is, that “all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.”

Take a man of the world—the shrewdest calculator, the ablest politician, or the greatest statesman: a poor bed-ridden saint is wiser than he, and more sure of having his plans brought about; for the heart of the simplest feeblest saint runs in the same channel with God’s; and though the saint has no strength, God has.

In this Psalm we find, first, the tumult of the enemies; and then, that God has done it. So with the saint constantly in trial: he sees the work of Satan, then God’s hand in it; and he gets blessing. All the present effect of these dealings of “the wicked” is, “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.” The pit is not yet digged, the throne of iniquity is not yet put down. If, in chastening, the power of the adversary is against us, the Lord’s end in it all is, to give “rest in the day of adversity,” etc.

I speak not merely of suffering for Christ—if we are reproached for the name of Christ, it is only for joy and triumph and glory to us; but of those things in which there may be the “multitude of thoughts within,” because we see that we have been walking inconsistently and carelessly in Jehovah’s ways. Still it is, “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah,” etc. Jehovah does not chasten willingly, without a needs-be for it. And when there has been failure or inconsistency that brings chastisement, He turns the occasion of the chastisement to the working out of the heart’s evil that needed to be chastened.

Jehovah in chastening, throws back the heart upon the springs which have been the occasion of the evil. The soul is hereby laid bare for the application of God's truth to it, that the word may come home with power. It is taught wherefore it has been chastened; and not only so, but it is brought into the secret of God's heart—it learns more of His character, who "will not cast off his people, neither forsake his inheritance," v. 14. What God desires for us, is, not only that we should have privileges conferred upon us, but that we should have fellowship with Himself. Through these chastenings, the whole framework of the heart is brought into association with God. And this stablishes and settles it on the certainty of the hope that grace affords.

Look at Peter after the enemy had sifted him, though his fall was most humbling and bitter, yet by it he gained a deeper knowledge of God and a deeper acquaintance with himself, so that he could apply all that he had learned to his brethren.

The Lord gives our souls "rest from the day of adversity" by communion with himself, communion not only in joy but in holiness. We are thus brought into the secret of God. Circumstances are only used to break down the door, and to let in God. God is near to the soul, when He, in the certainty of love, comes within the circumstances, and is known as better than any circumstance.

Jehovah never chastens without occasion for it, and yet "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah." There is not a more wonderful word than that! I do not say that a man can say this always while under chastening, for, if the soul is judging itself, there will be often anxiety and sorrow; but the effects are blessed.

What we want is that all our thoughts and ways and actings of will should be displaced, and that God should be everything. All chastening must have in principle the character of government in it, for it is His dealing with His people in righteousness (as it is said, “If ye call on the Father who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work,” etc.), not in the sovereign riches of grace. It is God’s allowing nothing in the heart inconsistent with that holiness of which the believer has been made partaker. It is indeed most blessed grace that takes all the pains with us, but that is not the character it assumes.

What we exceedingly need is intimacy of soul with God, resting in quietness in Him, though all be confusion and tumult around us. When the man here had God near his heart, though iniquity abounded, it was only the means of making God’s “comforts “known to his soul; as it is said, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul,” v. 19. Our portion is not only to know the riches of divine grace, but the secret of the Lord, to have intimacy of communion with Him in His holiness. Then, however adverse the circumstances, the soul rests quietly and stedfastly in Him.

If, brethren, you would have full unhindered peace and depth of fellowship with God and one with another, if you would meet circumstances and temptations without being moved thereby, it must flow from this: not merely the knowledge that all things are yours in Christ, but acquaintance with God Himself, as it is said, “being fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God.”

May we, through grace enabling, let God have all His way in our hearts.

On The Psalms, Especially 110

The character of the fourth book of Psalms is marked by the bringing in of the “only-begotten” into the world again. But first He is cut off, and He who was cut off is Jehovah the Creator. The fifth and last book is the only one which speaks of Christ as Melchisedec. This is the first psalm which speaks of Him as man after the restoration. He now takes His throne as Priest. The last psalms are the hallelujahs.

After Psalm 102, which is the centre of book 4, we find the people repassing all the ways and dealings of God, when they gather round Him their centre, the Messiah. All the blessings cluster round Him in this character of Melchisedec. Psalm 103 is a review of God’s moral dealings with the people; Psalm 104, of dealings with creation, celebrating Jehovah, God of Israel, in connection with creation. In Psalm 105 we have God’s positive, special favour to them as His people, and in Psalm 106 their failure under it. “Gather us from amongst the heathen” refers to the last day, etc. There is a summary of all God’s dealings with them, as to forgiveness, creation, special favour, and their failure and cry to be brought forth in mercy.

There is one remarkable feature to be noticed in these psalms; namely, the manner of their connection with Christ. Psalm 102 shews the way in which He was the poor man cut off, yet Jehovah; and Psalm 103 begins, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, … who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.” There is especial interest in seeing how this is connected with

Christ in the Gospels. Jehovah is the One who forgives and heals. This is just what the Lord does with the paralytic. It was an example of God's governmental dealings with man. He healed the palsy, and besides, He forgave the sins. They say, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" He proved that He was the Jehovah who forgave them and healed their diseases. The Gospels, while most simple (the first three especially) in many ways, have the greatest depth in them, if you get below the surface. They shew what He was, if searched into; and it is most blessed to see who He was that thus walked amongst men, going about doing good. In the Epistles the Holy Ghost gives the explanation of the value of Christ's work, and until I get peace I want that which will settle me on that point; and when settled there, I can turn back and see who He was, and the heart finds more food than even in the Epistles. We find Christ Himself. But there is also much relative to Christ in the Psalms and in special connection with the remnant of Israel. He calls Himself the Son of man in the passages about the paralytic referred to; but what He did proved Him to be the Jehovah of the Psalms. We have in them either His own experience; or He is in sympathy with those there (that is, in connection with the remnant).

The fifth book has a peculiar bearing, because it rehearses the circumstances of the remnant, after their restoration. It is their retrospect of all that has gone by. Hence it begins with this formula (107) "Give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever." That was the set phrase for the celebration of the faithfulness of God in Israel. David used it when he brought the ark back (1 Chron. 16); and again they used it when they

came from Babylon (Ezra 3). “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,” etc. This refers to Israel brought back, and goes back to their history in the wilderness—deliverance from Egypt; “they that go down to the sea in ships,” Ps. 107:23. Israel is being brought back; and it ends in God’s setting “the poor on high from affliction.” What we get as a sort of preface to the book is that all these are gathered from different places, in the midst of humbled circumstances. They are minished and brought low—enemies are in the land; and the result of all is, that God pours contempt upon the proud, and iniquity in the earth is entirely cleansed.

In Psalm 108 is praise in taking possession. “Through God we shall do valiantly”—“Thou art the glory of their strength.” The subject then turns back to Christ’s sorrow in the wilderness, Antichrist literally being represented by Judas. See how Christ got Himself in spirit into the very same circumstances in which they will be in the latter day.

There are but few of the psalms apply wholly and entirely to the Lord in His personal sorrows. Psalm 22 applies thus exclusively to Christ, as also Psalm 102, but not many others. Those referring to His glory at the end of course are different. There are a great many in which some passages apply to the Lord and others to the remnant. For instance, Psalm 69 (“They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”), refers to Christ; but the subject of Psalm 69 is first Israel. In verse 5 He speaks in the name of His people. The one in whom the Spirit works takes up the sorrows of the remnant. It is the Spirit of Christ; but some are the expression of what Christ Himself went through. In Psalm 22 you have not only what exclusively

belongs to Him, but atonement—that which man could have nothing to do with, except in needing and getting the blessing of it. When we find His Person as Creator and His atoning work, we find Him alone; but in all others, others could come and do come into them. No sorrow was like His, even that besides His sufferings in making the atonement. Psalm 69:26 shews how others are brought in. “They talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.” This is the same psalm in which He speaks of “reproach hath broken my heart”; and we all know the accomplishment of that in the Gospels. Yet in the other verse there were some who, however insignificant, had a part in it.

There is a character of suffering flowing from the activity of divine love. There is another kind—anxiety and distress for sin, both of which we may go through, not in atonement as Christ did, whose alone it was to be there. But Israel will feel the distress of their sin in the last day. What is the foundation on which He can sympathise with sinners now in any way? Atonement.

In Psalm 22 you get, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “I cry in the day time and thou hearest not,” etc. But in this Psalm 69, which approaches nearest to that, we get the suffering very different in principle. “Save me, O God, for the waters,” etc.; “but as for me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time,” though going up to death; whereas in Psalm 22 He is forsaken, bearing divine wrath for sin. There are dogs around and “my soul like wax,” He says, “but be not thou far from me.” He is far from Him, entirely alone. He could not then speak of “those whom thou hast wounded.” He does bring in the church at the end of Psalm 22: “in the midst of the church will I sing praise.”

The judgment being completely and fully borne, and atonement made, He sings praise to Him who heard Him, resurrection being the proof of it.

In Gethsemane, in prospect of the cup, He experienced man's weakness and the power of Satan. He sweat great drops of blood, and cries to His Father, "Father, if it be possible," etc. He had not got the cup then, though He was thinking of it. The moment He has got the cup He says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The remnant may dread the wrath of God for sin; but they never endure it: He has endured it for them.

We may go through and feel the reproach of Christ in our little measure, a privilege Paul had, in scourges, reproaches, etc. He was wonderfully like his Master; but would he have thought it a privilege to bear the wrath of God for sin? The power of Satan and the power of wicked men might be all let loose upon us; but that would not be like the suffering in atonement. The sorrow and suffering on account of sin He can feel with us, for He felt it in bearing it, and so could say, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee"; but in the activity of divine love He can feel with us, and we with Him. The other thing into which we can never enter is what He endured for us. The historical circumstances of Christ were just what Israel will have to go through in the latter day— circumstances in a smaller sphere, but in greater depth of feeling. He went through all in spirit and through some in fact. Psalm 109 is Judas' betrayal personally, but not confined to Judas— "them." "Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth," v. 15 — "them that speak evil," etc. (v. 20). What a wonderful provision God has made for the comfort of the remnant in that day!

Suppose them reading these words! Christ made the atonement and has put words into their mouths, expressing for them their cry, speaking of their sins, etc., and they will say, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,” and thus they will be encouraged to think He will hear them. These two things will give them encouragement when they find out their sin; otherwise they might say, What will become of us? and get into despair.

When all come up, as recorded in Matthew, asking what authority had Caesar, the Lord puts a question. There was a solemn process going on between them and God; they were with “the officer” in the way. Then He refers to this Psalm no speaking of His exaltation on high (Man. 22:44), “Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies,” etc. This is the time He is sitting there—doing nothing for Israel, though He is their great High Priest within, and “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”; but their whole condition, since the day of the cross till He comes again to earth, is that He is doing nothing for them. This is not the time that He is making His enemies His footstool, but He is gathering the joint-heirs, while He is sitting on the throne of God. How remarkably this comes in as connected with making our peace! “When he had by himself purged our sins”; that was part of His divine glory. He could not sit down without it, and the work is complete; “He for ever sat down,” referring to completeness in perpetuity. Every believer has immutable, unchangeable perfection before God in Christ. He sits on the right hand of God, and, consequent upon His sitting down there, He has received the Holy Ghost. There is now no true christian state, but that of unclouded assurance in the presence of

God—absolute brightness there. There is no continual cleansing with blood; the water is for practical purifying. Thus in 1 John 1, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” refers to our place or standing before God.

Remark, Jehovah says in verse 1, “Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool.” He is not treading them under His feet. When He comes forth, we come with Him, not to triumph upon them; that He does alone, and the time not come yet. Our actual condition will then be with Him. It is now by faith with Him. We have association with Him as a heavenly Christ. Now they are giving a place to this Jehovah on earth, who was the rejected man. “The Lord send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.” We are going back to the fulfilment of Psalm 2. He has set His King in Zion. “Thy people [Jehovah’s people] shall be willing,” etc. (v. 3), but not before the day of His power. They were not willing in His weakness; a little remnant were, and they became the nucleus of the church. But now “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” that is in contrast with “sit thou on my right hand until I make,” etc. In verse 3 “dew of thy youth,” means of these youths, the generation just come in, and “the womb of the morning “is the opening of the new day just coming in. The people that shall be born are the dew of the morning. The Jew elsewhere is compared to dew, and to a lion too—strength, and not tarrying for man. “The Sun shall arise with healing in his wings” for this earth; that is, in the “day of the Lord.” We shall be with Him in the heavenlies then. We watch for the Morning Star; it is those watching in the night who see this.

The Lord in verse 5 is not the same as Jehovah, it is Adonai. “The Lord shall strike through kings in the day of thy wrath.” It is not the day of His wrath now at all, but when that time comes He will strike through kings. The beast will be destroyed first—Gog and these kings; no human power will stand before Him. “He shall wound the heads” (it is rather the head) over a great country (v. 6).

“He shall drink of the brook by the way,” etc. (v. 7). This is according to the grand principle of God’s moral government. Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, while those who exalt themselves shall be abased. Christ was always the dependent One. He drank of the brook by the way. He took whatever refreshment God sent Him—took it as He could get it by the way. As Christ wept over Jerusalem, so He went out really in heart giving it up, finds a poor Samaritan, and He says, “The fields are white unto harvest.” He had meat to eat, He drank of the brook by the way, in perfect subjection He took it as He could “by the way.” He did not keep what He had to save Him from the sorrow of the way; but He emptied Himself, to be entirely dependent.

“The head over a great country “is a follower of Nebuchadnezzar. What will he have when the humbled One comes in? He will be smitten. He has exalted himself, and he will be abased; and that other Man, who humbled Himself—took only what God gave Him, He shall be exalted. It is a future scene.

How blessed that God should give us Christ’s history in this way! If I look at Him as in the bosom of the Father, as Jehovah come in moral glory, the One who was humbled, if I look at the springs that moved His heart,

His sufferings under the hand of God, His glory in the latter day, what food it gives me! “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me,” and “If ye abide in me, ye shall bring forth much fruit.” He brings us by faith into another world altogether, where striving together, and jostling one another up and down, are unknown.

The Lord’s walk on earth is good for us. If we believe on Him, we must then abide in Him. The first thing He will do for us, when He comes for us, will be what He speaks of in John 17, “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.” May we learn in dependence on the Lord what will never have an end, the depth and blessedness of what is in the Son; and so walk with Him as that the Holy Ghost need not occupy us with ourselves, which He must do if we walk badly!

Song Of Solomon

If we examine the Psalms, or even the prophets, with a view to ascertain the character or circumstances of the residue of Israel in the latter days, we shall find, after their undergoing some deceptions through professed friendship, a distressed and oppressed people. The fowls summer upon them, and the beasts of the earth winter upon them; Isa. 18:6. That is the state of the nation when the Assyrian shall be pressing them from without, and the beast oppressing them within. At the centre of their nationality, and where their hearts have sought rest, will be trouble such as never was since there was a nation, and never will be again: the time when God is making short work upon the earth.

Though this will be in the nation at large, the effect on the wicked and on the saints will be very different. The nation at large will have joined with the beast and acquiesced in idolatry. Another, come in his own name, they will have received. The unclean spirit of idolatry, with seven others worse, will have entered into them. They have given up their God, rejected their Messiah, received the Antichrist, and what have they when oppression comes? “They shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish, and they shall be driven to darkness.”

But we have to do more particularly with the remnant attached to Israel, to Israel’s hopes, and Israel’s relationship with Jehovah, but awakened to the sense of the evil that is going on, and suffering on all hands from

it where they have not fled. The Spirit and word of God are working in their hearts. They remember the promise to the people as God's people; they seek faithfulness to Jehovah, and are only for that reason oppressed and driven out, hated by unfaithful Israel and cruelly oppressed by her oppressors, but brought to the sense of the nation's and therein their own sins, grieved over its ruin, and seeing approaching judgments and God's hand already on them in sore chastisement. They would hope yet in Jehovah and expect Messiah, though smitten into the place of dragons and finding it hard to count on One against whom they have sinned, and whose hand is out against them and to reckon on promises when all seems dark. Still the promises are there, and God will certainly set His King on His holy hill of Zion. From Deuteronomy 32 onward, the prophets had predicted this state of things; so that, dark and terrible as it is, and humanly speaking, excluding hope, there was that, even in the very threats, which sustained hope.

This state of things the Psalms meet, and, as we have often seen in commenting on them, furnish a divine expression for the hopes and sorrows of these exercised hearts. It is only the great principles of these which I would now advert to, to bring out more distinctly the different character of the Song of Solomon, and what this will furnish to the hearts and faith of the remnant. There are two great principles characteristic of their state in the midst of all their sorrows: firstly, integrity; secondly, trust in Jehovah. In these the Spirit of Christ leads them, Himself perfect in both and by His grace enabling them, in the expressions furnished them in these Psalms, to express their confidence in spite of all their failure, which rendered it more difficult than even

the deep waters they were passing through. This very integrity, and the operation of the Spirit of Christ in them, leads them, however necessarily, to the confession of sin and long failure even to blood-guiltiness. It is remarkable to see in this way how declaration of integrity, and confession of sins, are found together; so with Job, so even with Peter. Hence also, in looking to God, mercy always comes before righteousness in their thoughts. He had shut them up in unbelief that they might be objects of mercy. No doubt God was righteous in fulfilling His promises; but they must get into the true and right place to have them accomplished, the place where the interpreter, one among a thousand, could put them. And this interpreter is just the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms. He shews them the place of uprightness in confessing their sin; then they can look for mercy, and so righteousness. All these are the moral dealings of Jehovah, most instructive, and most interesting. The Psalms, and the Prophets too, add, that it will be through the intervention of Messiah, and the Prophets at any rate tell us plainly it will be under the new covenant.

But the Song of Solomon seems to me to shew us something further—the drawing out, where the soul is taught of God (an effect realised in some hidden ones, while revealed and open for all), of the soul of the waiting few, into affections here figuratively presented, and the revelation of Messiah’s devoted love for the people; for Jerusalem, if you please, as the centre of it, over which He wept, when in its folly it rejected Him, so that the humble and instructed heart should have the consciousness of it, and confide in it, though not yet revealed.

It begins with a recognition of the blessedness of Messiah's love. His name, from the graces in Him, is as ointment poured forth, and He is loved by the uncorrupted ones—those, I suppose, who have guarded themselves from idolatry and corruption, the same class exactly as in Revelation 14, these evidently therefore also while waiting for Christ have suffered in a certain sense like Him. Next the bride (Jerusalem) looks to be drawn by Messiah, but says "we," because she really represents all the faithful. The King now appears, King Messiah. He loves Jerusalem intimately. This is valued. It is the upright ones who love Him. We have seen this character of the remnant. Verses 5,6, tell the tale of Jerusalem, of Jacob's long persecution and desolation. The sun has looked upon her, the heat of trial. Her place was to be a keeper of nations for fruit; she had not kept her own vineyard. Next, in verse 7, she would not be anywhere but with Messiah's flocks, not be like a dissolute wanderer with others than He. The paths marked out by those, whom God owned as guided and guides, the testimony among God's people, were to lead her. This brings her to Messiah's own testimony of His delight in her; and her consciousness that thus grace is drawn forth in her (v. 12). What an image of this, suited to the time, was Mary's act, which Judas blamed! This is a kind of introductory statement, which gives us the aspects in which they stand, and their position, so as to recognise the bride, her place, and the bridegroom.

Now the action and effect of it begins. Chapter 2. The bride takes her place, and the bridegroom owns only her. She is the lily, the rest thorns (v. 2). It is under Christ she finds herself, she owns Him as the true blessed fruit-bearer. And His shadow protects her, and

she delights in it, and His fruit is her joy. Jerusalem and Israel are restored under Messiah, delight in Him, are sheltered under Him.

Now we find how much more we have than in the Psalms, the heart's devoted confidence, that His love is the spring of delight, her joy, and overpowering her with blessing. He, too, rests in His love, and in her heart she weighs and estimates the value of His love; all her delight is in His resting in His love (see Zephaniah 3:17): 'he please' (v. 7) I doubt not is right, though I had elsewhere supposed it otherwise. The remnant are entering by faith into the joy Messiah will have in His bridegroom-love to them, and express their own rest of heart in this.

Remark here what follows, for it is a key to the bearing of this: "The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh." This connection is not accidental, we have the form of verse 7, also in chapters 3:5, and 8:4, and each time it is followed by His coming, but with progress. Here Messiah comes revealing Himself. After chapter 3:8, He comes crowned as King Messiah, the Son of David, Prince of peace, crowned in the day of His espousals, as His mother's (Israel's) heart crowns Him. After chapter 8:3, 4, the bride is coming, back out of the wilderness with Him, leaning on her beloved.

Here we return to the first principle of blessing stated in chapter 2:3: she was raised up under the apple-tree; there she was brought forth. It was not under Moses, not under the old covenant, that Israel or Jerusalem could truly find their blessing, but under Christ; still less was it under Egypt: Christ was the source, the tree of blessing and life to her. Hence—to complete this part of

the connection of thought— instead of vineyards trusted to her, and her not keeping her own, Christ, as royal Prince of peace, has a vineyard at Baal-hamon, a difficult word. At any rate, it is now Solomon, Messiah Himself, who has the vineyard. I am disposed to think it refers to Christ's universal dominion over the earth, the peoples, a vineyard which will now bear its fruit. But there was a special vineyard now, once not kept, which was now before the spouse—Israel, who through grace would now diligently keep her vineyard; her vineyard was before her. The song closes the remark with the desire that the Bridegroom would make haste. The companions hearkened to His voice for her. It was the desire of the upright ones, but in the character of spouse she prays to hear it.

All this points out, I think, two things. One is the way faith, in those whose hearts have been opened, enters into the perfect delight of Christ's love in the blessing of Israel, specially of Jerusalem. The anticipative sense of this is here furnished to draw out and encourage this faith. It is not the prophetic statement of moral principles, however deeply important in connection with Jehovah's dealings with Israel they may be, but the sense of bridegroom-love which Messiah has for His people, for the people and city He has chosen; not as stongs of course, but as the seat of election. (Compare Ps. 132:13, 14 —indeed the whole Psalm.)

Next, it is only the anticipation of faith: for every time that she realises it, and looks to the Bridegroom's resting undisturbed in His love, immediately follows the thought of His coming. She did not actually possess Him. This, as we have seen, is progressive. In the end of chapter 2 there is the consciousness that the time was

come; the Lord's grace was causing blessing to spring forth and bud. (Compare Psalm 102.)

The various exercises of heart connected with it I do not notice in detail—true affection, yet failure. I only remark that the Bridegroom speaks to her, the bride of Him: this is just. Christ can give His approval to those He loves. The saint, Jew or heavenly, enjoys His love, can describe His excellencies with delight, but does not take upon him to tell them to Him. There is progress also in the consciousness of the character of relationship. As has been noticed elsewhere, first "My beloved is mine, and I am his "(chap. 2:16); this is the first consciousness of relationship. "We have found him." He owns, indeed, His beloved (were it not so, there would be no comfort); and He enjoys with delight her beauty; but the first thought is, "He is mine." It is not till after many exercises, failure on her part, and assurance how precious she was to Him, that she says with calmer spirit, "I am my Beloved's," I belong to Him, though the other part remains true, with deeper feeling too, for His worth and title is more felt and better known, and in it all He is ours, whatever His title over us, and still His joy is in the beauty and graces of His people.

But, after this, we have not exercises, but the expression of the Bridegroom's thoughts; His dove, His undefiled, is but one: there may be nations, and many more or less connected with Him, but His Beloved is one; Israel only on earth has this place. But, when He so looks at it, soon He is carried on their hearts. He goes down to see the fruits of the valley, whether His vineyard bore its fruits, at least whether it flourished, and that which represented true faithfulness, as He delighted in it (as the pomegranates on Aaron's robe), was budding forth—

Israel shewing in its humiUation the breaking forth of the signs of living fruit. Or ever He was aware, His soul set Him on the chariots of His willing people; for such is the force of Aminadab, as in Psalm no:3, and Psalm 47:9, translated princes (the Nadibim) of the people. Hence Israel becomes immediately as two armies, or as Mahanaim the hosts of God of old.8 When all this has taken place, and the Bride-goom has told her how He estimates her beauty, she says again in the due sense how all ought to be His, and what a blessing it was to be so in one's own right place, "I am my Beloved's." He is that, her Beloved, but she is His, then all her heart could delight in "His desire is towards me."

Now this was the thought into which Israel had to grow up. Exercises of Israel, right ones, we have in the Psalms; but this thought of Messiah's delight in her is scarcely found there; but they ought to feel it. It opens out a new and most interesting element of their condition, of what grace furnishes them with, that all the feelings that grace can give may be then divinely given to them, and they drawn on into this blessed confidence, and knowledge of Messiah.

It seems to me that, not merely particular images or expressions, but that the whole structure of this, I admit, mysterious and remarkable poem points to Israel, to the remnant of Jerusalem, as the centre of all this in the latter day and (as I have said) gives a further apprehension of what is provided and in store, for the remnant, than any other portion of scripture does; though we have seen it connect itself with many expressions in the Psalms, which confirm this interpretation of it. It has seemed to me that the

passages I have referred to, with their combination, give a distinctive clue to the intention of the whole book.

8 See Genesis 32:2.

General Remarks On The Prophetic Word

1. Old Testament.

There is at the outset a great distinction to make between the prophets. Some wrote before the captivity and called the Jews to repentance, as hoping that they might still heed the warning, whatever the solemn light on the future judgment, but with blessing at last. The others wrote a little during or after the captivity on the basis of the judgment of God. Isaiah is in the first class, Jeremiah and Ezekiel being transitional; Daniel is in the second, as well as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Jonah stands alone as a sort of final testimony to the Gentiles while Israel was still owned as God's people.

Isaiah prophesies in general of all the hopes of the people of God and of the nations in their relations with Israel. The book is divided into two very distinct parts, the first ending with chapter 35, the second beginning with chapter 40, and an historical portion forming a parenthesis between those two parts. The former part contains the judgment of God on Israel and on the nations; the latter presents the consolation of Israel by sovereign grace and in view of their guilt, first by idolatry, next by the rejection of Messiah, who comes again for their deliverance to the glory of God.

Chapter 1 prophesies about Jerusalem; chapter 2 is the judging of the nations in relationship with the Jews; chapters 3 and 4 develop yet more the grounds of the judgment and its divine character and result; as chapter 5 sets forth Israel's sin and ruin, notwithstanding all the

goodness and painstaking of God from the first. In chapter 6 we see a kind of introduction which gives us the character of prophecy as to the Jews only.9 The prophecy of chapter 7 does not close till chapter 9:7. It divides into two sections: from chapter 7 we learn of Immanuel, from chapter 8 of Immanuel's land. Then commences a new subject at chapter 9:8, or rather a resumption of what began in chapter 5, which terminates with chapter 12.

Chapter 13 opens a series of judgments on the nations, beginning with Babylon, in chapter 24, involving all the earth, and concluding with chapter 27. It is to be remarked here as elsewhere that every judgment ends with blessing, the glory of Christ being the object of all these prophecies.

From chapter 28 to chapter 35 inclusively are found special judgments on Israel in the last times.

In chapters 35 to 39 we see foreshewn the overthrow of the Assyrian, the sickness unto death but raising up (in type) of the Son of David, and the power of Babylon as carrying away the Jews.

Chapters 40, etc., to the end predict the state of Israel, not externally like those before the history, but internally and Godward, as tested by their call to witness the one true God and to await the Messiah, with the grand results when mercy rejoices over judgment, in glory at the end and for ever.

As for Jeremiah, we see that, Manasseh having fully consummated the iniquity of Israel, judgment becomes necessary. (2 Kings 23:26; 24:3; Jer. 15:4.) This judgment is irrevocable: Jeremiah is the prophet of it in the midst of Jerusalem. Up to the end of chapter 24 he

does the pleading of Jehovah against His people to convince them of sin in every manner.

From chapter 25 Jerusalem (considered as quite pagan) is judged with all the nations. The new covenant is introduced in these chapters. The throne of Jehovah ceases to exist at Jerusalem; but Jerusalem shall surely be so called once more when all nations shall be gathered to it.

We have in Ezekiel the rejection of all that was Jewish or Gentile. He prophesied among the captives of Israel, not of Judah. He pronounced judgments upon the nations as a whole, on those who remained in the land after the captivity, on Pharaoh who wished to help them and hinder the establishment by Jehovah of the first of the four great empires, and he speaks of what will happen to the nation (ten tribes and all) when the last of the four monarchies shall have been judged. The restoration of Israel beings with chapter 34.

In Daniel we have the history of the four great monarchies which have replaced the throne of Jehovah for the earth. They subsist on His part who reigns by them. Thence it comes that Paul declares all the powers that be ordained of God. Kings reign by His sanction; as on the contrary the principle that it is by the will of the people is the presage of the anti-christian spirit. What restrains the manifestation of the lawless one is the presence of God’s Spirit on the earth in the church. This being the object of the grace and work of God, He will not let the bridle loose to the nations for them to spoil and destroy. The presence of the church on earth hinders then the manifestation of the lawless one. The Holy Spirit being in the church recognises the powers as

ordained of God, whilst the Antichrist will own no man, either God or any authority whatever. Men are advancing evidently toward this epoch; but there is something that hinders its manifestation and holds back the lawless one: it is the presence of the church, or of the Holy Spirit in the church.

In Hosea we have the judgment of Israel, though also that of Judah, and their restoration together in the latter day. Meanwhile, Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi tell the tale, Judah being specially in view up to the end of chapter 3, whilst in general the details that follow from chapter 4 look at Israel.

Joel gives the revelation of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. To announce it the Spirit of God takes the occasion of some particular judgments at that time.

Amos occupies himself particularly with Israel and the nations connected with Israel.

Obadiah predicts the judgment of Edom, which alone among the nations is to be destroyed without a remnant.

Jonah furnishes the last prophetic appeal to the nations before they have assumed the Babylonish character, to prove the interest God takes in all the creation, although in His mercy He has chosen a people for Himself to preserve the knowledge of His name on the earth. The power of Nineveh was anterior to that of Babylon as imperial.

Micah prophesied during the period of Isaiah. He treats of the invasion of the Assyrian and his threats, in order to present in a special manner the judgment of Judea, but at the same time Jehovah’s blessing in Christ.

Nahum is the judgment of the world in general, not of the corruption of Babylon but of man, of his power which is presented in the case of Nineveh.

Habakkuk complains of the iniquity of God's people and develops the chastening that will fall on them to be effected by those still more wicked than they—the Chaldeans, who, because they give loose rein to their violence, become in their turn objects of the judgment of Jehovah. But His glory and His righteousness shall be manifested in both one and the other, types of the Jewish people and of the world.

Zephaniah speaks of the awakening that God in His grace works in the midst of His people so that judgment should not fall on them. In that day shall be a time of repentance and salvation for many souls. He proves nevertheless that the divine counsels cannot be changed, that evil is always in man now, and that God will gather all the nations to punish them, but that then the remnant shall be blessed in every way.

Haggai, insisting on the re-building of the temple, takes occasion thereby to reveal the manifestation of Jesus in His glory coming to the house of God in the latter day.

Zechariah takes up all the relations of Israel with the nations after the captivity. He sets out the mutual rejection of Christ and the Jews at the time of His first coming, and the ways of God toward the Jews and the nations at the time of His second coming.

Malachi pronounces the judgment of Judea after the return to the holy land: and he makes known the message of Elijah to call the people to repentance before the day of Jehovah.

2. New Testament.

Matthew 24 up to verse 44 is the judgment of the Jews; from verse 45 of the same chapter to verse 30 of chapter 25 it is the judgment of those to whom the Lord Jesus has confided His service during His absence; and from verse 30 to the end of chapter 25 it is the judgment of the nations, not of the dead but of the quick.

2 Thessalonians 2 shews the mystery or secret of lawlessness, even in apostolic days already at work, ending, when the restraining power is gone, in the display of the lawless one in the power of Satan. It is the same personage called in the Epistles of John the Antichrist, who is predicted in Daniel 11:36 as the king who “shall do according to his will”; that is, his character not moral but political in his relations with the land and people of the Jews.

After that which concerns the seven churches, the Revelation presents the government that the Lord Jesus exercises in the midst of the throne on the earth before His manifestation here below. The general history of this government terminates at the end of chapter 11.

Chapter 12 shews the opposition of Satan to the glory of Christ; chapter 13 lets us see the instruments of that opposition, as chapter 14 the ways of God after He begins to act towards the remnant on the earth until He judges finally the body of the apostasy. These three chapter contribute to give us one vision.

Chapter 15, 16 are another vision shewing us the last judgment of God (not of the Lamb) on the earth. The saints were already before God.

Chapter 17, 18, describe the guilt and judgment of the great harlot, Babylon, the features of her character, and her relations with the beast or Roman empire.

Chapter 19 reveals the marriage of the Lamb, and the judgment of the beast, and the false prophet who is identical with the second beast of chapter 13. Chapter 20 gives us the binding of Satan in the opening verses; then from verse 4 the reign of the glorified saints over the earth for a thousand years; next the loosing of Satan for the last insurrection of the wicked then alive, and their destruction; and then the final eternal judgment of the dead, or all the wicked since the world began, followed by the new heavens and earth when God is all in all, the mediatorial office of Christ being closed, and all evil in the lake of fire. From chapter 21:9 to chapter 22:6 is a vision of the state of things in the millennium; from verse 7 final exhortations.

9 Chapter 6 presents the general character of the prophecy. Ahaz is about to accomplish the apostasy of the family of David by building an idolatrous altar. Before this happens, the glory of Christ is revealed; by the same the moral state of the people is entirely condemned and judgment pronounced. The fulfilment of the sentence is suspended until they have rejected Christ Himself, as we see in John 12. The promise of a remnant is revealed at the intercession of the prophet.

Thoughts On Isaiah The Prophet

The great subject of the introduction to this prophecy is the way in which Jehovah presents Himself after declaring their state of ruin. There is a day of Jehovah on all the earth; and if there were not a remnant, all the people would be as Sodom and like Gomorrah. The hand of Jehovah will be against all that the world exalts. Every thing or one that is lifted up shall be brought low: Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day (chap. 2:17). God will purify the earthly people by His judgments. The rest will be the object of a terrible judgment (chap. 2:18-21).

I desire to consider the character of the prophecy as given to the Jews. It takes in a circle much greater and concerns the nations as well as Israel.

There is an important principle to remark, namely, that every prophecy supposes ruin of the state of things in which the prophecy is presented. When all goes according to the mind of God, there is no need of warning. It is manifest here in a striking way. Prophecy reveals all the hopes that belong to the faithful when the dispensation breaks down. It announces the failures, and the judgments on what man essays to do because of the evil.

The mass of the Jews is not saved, but there is a remnant saved in the midst of them. The church is but a remnant. We begin as a remnant, and where the Jews end. This supposes that the state of the world is bad and that the world has not gone on well. God sends threatenings and warnings to the mass, when all goes ill; and He makes promises to the faithful remnant to

sustain and encourage it. When Israel failed, or the priesthood, in Eli, God raises up a prophet, Samuel. It was when all failed under the kings even of the house of David, that God raised up Isaiah. Ahaz had introduced idolatry into the house of God, and the testimony of Isaiah was sent to announce, not a remnant only, but the Messiah. The state of what God established in presence of the glory of God shews that the people cannot stand before this glory (chap. 6:5).

God sends prophet after prophet, and chastisement after chastisement, during seven centuries, and He only struck fully when the Son was cast out of the vineyard and slain. Meanwhile the promise of the Messiah sustained the hope of the faithful. They felt the state of things whilst waiting for redemption. Anna spoke of the infant Jesus to all those that looked for redemption. The principle of such immense importance in prophecy is, that because of the unfaithfulness of the mass God rejects that which He has Himself established; and He announces that He is going to replace what is ruined by something which is infinitely better. God in His goodness gives the light beforehand to brighten up the hearts of the faithful. The goodness of God treats them as friends and fills them with confidence. If one recognises the prophecy, one must recognise that God had judged and condemned that which exists. If God had not set aside man, thefre were no need of a new Adam. If the ark of the covenant had not been in the hands of the Philistines, there would have been no need of Samuel the prophet, any more than of Isaiah if the house of David were not fallen. Wherefore prophecy is called a charge or “burden.”

It will facilitate the understanding of the book if one point out the divisions of the book.

Chapters 1 to 4 are the introduction, and blessing at the end, chapter 1 speaking of the Jews, chapter 2 of the Gentiles.

Chapter 5 is a prophetic discourse which compares the state of the vineyard with that which God had done for Israel at the beginning; interrupted by Chapter 6, which compares it with the glory of Christ. It is thus God judges His people. The prophet is installed in his work.

Chapter 7 to 9:7 are a prophecy of Immanuel and of the remnant, of Immanuel's land and of the Assyrian when Immanuel is there.

Chapters 9:8 to 12 resume prophecy about Israel.

Chapters 13 to 27 look at the nations and the circumstances of Israel in the last days (chap. 18) among the nations.

Chapters 28 to 35 are details about Israel, each prophecy closing with a blessing.

Chapters 36 to 39 are a history of Hezekiah and the Assyrian as typical of the dead and risen Son of David, and the Assyrian of the last days, closing with a prediction of the Babylonish captivity.

Chapters 40 to 66 are the restoration of Israel, witness against the idolatry of the nations but idolatrous, and rejected because of rejecting the Messiah. Israel is found at last among the rebellious when Jesus shall come back, the remnant being kept on the earth for the glory of Jehovah.

Chapter 1.

We see the summary of the burden of the prophecy in verses 1-9.

There was much piety according to the world. They continued in a round of religious forms to render worship to God, without perceiving the lack of life, of faithfulness, and of purity by which they were characterised (v. 10-13). Having a show of godliness they had denied its power. They made long prayers at the corners of the streets; but their conscience was not right with God. There was a moral blindness before the judicial blindness. As we learn from the next chapter, the land was full of silver and gold, with horses and chariots, full of outward blessings but also of idols. The multitude of sacrifices did not make their ways true in relation to God. Hence (v. 14, 15) the very things God had instituted or enjoined became in their hands such as He hated, because the conscience in His people was not according to His mind.

The word therefore is (v. 16, 17), “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well.” There is the weighty matter. Have a good conscience before God: if not, you become blind of yourselves before you are blinded of God. God distinguishes between actions. One cannot learn to do good before ceasing from evil. One cannot have the light in the conscience, without leaving first that which wounds the conscience.

Jehovah imputes not iniquity (v. 18). Moral government follows (v. 19, 20).

The saddest thing for the heart of God is, not that the world is wicked, but that the city which bears His name,

on which His eyes rest continually, should be so evil. “How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them,” v. 21-23. His judgment begins with His house. We see in Ezekiel 9 that, when the remnant are marked, He causes all the city to be smitted, beginning at His sanctuary. He points out afterward the iniquities in detail. We have here a great present principle: if Christendom has deserved the judgment of God, His judgment begins with His house to purify it. In this sense we are with difficulty saved. It was over Jerusalem that Jesus wept.

“Therefore saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: and I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city,” v. 24-26. He will avenge Himself of His enemies who corrupted Zion; He will satisfy Himself in dealing with His adversaries. And when He shall have executed His judgment, He will restore Jerusalem as of old. But if judgment must fall on Israel, the consequence will be that out of Zion shall go forth the law. Jerusalem will be then more truly than ever the throne of Jehovah. “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and

they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them," v. 27-31.

Thus the first chapter of the prophecy applies to the state of the Jews announcing the judgment, and gives the hope across the judgment that God will purge His people therein. This will be the means of gathering the nations.

Chapter 2.

In the last days the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. Some might think the law's going out of Zion might be by the gospel. But the gospel is not by the execution of judgment on the nations as here. God will deal with the nations by public judgment and righteousness on earth (v. 1-4). It is not the church, but the Lord who is spoken of; and this has evidently never yet been. They have dreamt these things for Christianity; but it is 'he judgment of God that is to bring all this about. (Compare Matt. 24:6, 7.)

The intelligent spirit of prophecy always speaks as in verses 5, 6. "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers."

The rejection of the people had not yet happened. Judgment begins at the house of God, but does not stop there. God will judge His people; and will He not judge the idolatrous world?

The nations boasted of their power and of their riches. They will be the first to be judged; but above all, the so-called christian countries, where profession is found highest, must be found at last the objects of the indignant wrath of God. When He exercises judgment on man's idols and pride, He resumes the course of His earthly government on the earth.

Chapter 3.

Divine judgment notices every detail of iniquity, oppression, and even vanity. All must be brought low.

Chapter 4.

God pushes the judgment and the ruin to the uttermost; but Christ the Branch of beauty and glory shall appear at that time for the remnant. All the wicked shall, have been cut off (v. 2-4). The Branch of Jehovah shall be beauty and glory. The glory will be displayed over all the extent of the holy city (v. 5). Verse 6 describes an active protection on God's part. Those who remain after the purifying are saints, and the glory of God shall be manifested over the city that He has chosen to place His name there.

One can see in these four chapters the importance God attaches to the land. He takes cognisance of the iniquity of His earthly people, cleansing them by His judgment. He washes away the filth of the nations also.

This does not concern the church which will come again with Jesus in glory. Such is the position in which Christendom is found. Meanwhile, since the rejection of Jesus until He come again, God has visited the world by His Spirit to gather God's joint-heirs with Christ for heaven.

The nature of prophecy, which enters into the mind of God on the ruin and rejection of His people, is of all importance. It is what distinguishes the faithful who have the intelligence of Christ—faithful in the fallen state of things. Their conduct at the same time is directed and governed by the revelation they possess of another order of things to come.

Chapter 5.

There are two great principles presented in chapters 5 and 6: in the former the judgment God pronounces on the vineyard in reference to the fruits He must look for from it; in the latter is the introduction of the glory of the Messiah, and what this glory demands from the people. Prophecy supposes a fallen condition, and would be superfluous if the state God established had no need of a special testimony. God bears witness against the state of things and gives promise in Jesus.

God considers whether the vineyard bears the fruit that a vineyard so cared for ought to bear. It is a general principle that applies to the Jews, to the church, and to each individual. If the church has received more than the Jews, God is entitled to expect that it produce more. When one takes the glory of Christ, one sees what ought to correspond to that glory. The two principles constantly turn up. God has formed the state of things,

whether among the Jews or in the church, with reference to Christ.

Here is what God says of Israel: “Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they “rain no rain upon it.” For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression: for righteousness, but behold a cry,” (v. 1-7). The “well-beloved” is the Lord Jesus. God asks that people—even the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah—should judge between Him and His vineyard. He has done much for a nation that had a certain responsibility on the earth. He will accompUsh all His counsels, but first of all He proves Israel to see if they will make good themselves the design of God.

But man always fails for what God expects from him, and He would have it seen what man is. God does all

that man could ask, and this only manifests the ill-will of man. Sacrifices, temple, service—God had arranged all. The people fail in all; and God destroys what He had Himself made. He breaks the fence. All that the father had the elder brother possessed. But God destroys what He had made, and He will accomplish all His counsels (Lam. 2:1-9). The Lord has cast off His altar, He has abhorred His sanctuary. His people having been unfaithful to His blessings, the means He had placed for the blessing of His people He has taken all away. When the people are far from God, they attach themselves to ordinances; it is the mark that all is going to ruin. From the moment that God is of little importance to the conscience, ordinances become the objects of superstition and take the place of God. Here it is, "the temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord! "When God is just about to destroy them, it is then men attach the more importance to them. God confided to man true privileges; but man fails: God takes all away, and the result is a judgment.

From verse 8 God enumerates the various sins which were in the midst of Israel. "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put

bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (v. 8-11, 18-23).

The Israelites despise the warning of judgment; the wicked take advantage of the delay; just as the like was to happen in the last days of the christian testimony (2 Pet. 3). But God does not hurry His counsel. He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He knows well that He must judge at the end. Man attaches himself to his own wisdom, and as long as God does not chastise, man hardens his heart. God has done all for His vineyard, but this producing nothing but wild grapes; He judges His vineyard on the earth.

The church is also on the earth under responsibility here below. It has more light and more knowledge than Israel. This changes nothing as to the counsels of God, who commits His glory to the faithfulness of the church here below. If we do not represent aright this glory, judgment is impending on the church here below.

Instead of enfeebling the sense of our faults, the more that we feel the blessings, the dearer will be the glory of Christ to us; and the more also that we are alive to His glory, the more do we understand that the church here below must be judged as an economy here below. If any one can say that the church has duly guarded the glory of Christ in the world, he must have lost the idea of what the glory of Christ demands, just as an unconverted

person has no notion of what is due to the righteousness and holiness of God.

Chapter 6.

Here it is a question of the glory of Christ, as we see by comparing John 12:40 with verse 10 of our chapter. The prophet sees here Christ as Jehovah of hosts who is manifested in the temple; the Spirit of God, putting together His glory and the state of His people, judges this state in reference to that glory. This is the Spirit of prophecy and of faith.

The unity and the condition of the church, do they answer to the heart of the Bridegroom? Everything for us is to be in accordance with God. The state of His people, was it according to the glory of Christ which it is my privilege to share?

“Woe is me for I am undone.” He judges the state of the people, his own conscience being touched. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me,10 etc. God establishes the prophet. The witness of prophecy consists in the setting forth of the holiness of God in the midst of His people. The live coal from off the altar had touched his lips, and his iniquity was taken away and sin purged.

There is a moment when the people of God become, as happened to the land of Pharaoh, the occasion of the outward manifestation of God’s judgments: a serious and terrible thought, yet suitable. For where ought God to execute His righteous judgments if not where His light has been diffused and disobeyed? There must fall most stripes (Luke 12). It is Christendom which is now charged with this responsibility. It is for these times the vine of the earth, the grapes of which shall be trodden in

the winepress of His indignation (Rev. 14). God will send them strong delusion (2 Thess. 2:11). It is just so here for the Jews of that day. “Make fat the heart of this people,” not the Gentiles (v. 10). Christendom which received not the love of the truth that they might be saved shall be judged in the same way. God will send them the working of delusion that they may believe the lie.

The judgment must go on to an entire desolation (v. 11, 12). There is a manifestation of glory, the prophetic testimony of purged lips, judgment on the people and land; but there is also the spirit of intercession, along with and by the Spirit of prophecy. Only we must remember that the Jews are to be restored on earth, the church will be glorified in heaven.

The spirit of faith knows that it is impossible for God to abandon His people for ever. He subjects them to judgment up to desolation; but says the prophet, “Lord, how long?” He knows that there is a term and that finally grace abounds for the people. There will be a tenth (v. 13); then it is over again cropped down; but the holy seed, that is, the remnant, will be manifested. During winter the tree seems dead; but in spring, when the grace of God renews its shining on the people, the tree recovers.

This prophecy was given in the year that Uzziah died, and iniquity began to draw near under Jotham. The spirit of faith is pre-occupied with the glory of God, does not hide sin, but counts on grace in spite of sin. The principles which apply here are found again also for the church, though the details of application may not be the same. The church cannot say, Lord, how long? for the

earth; but the responsibility of the vineyard, cultivated yet bearing bad fruit, abides. We may desire for our souls intelligence in God's ways toward His people, and the application to ourselves and to the church of these great principles.

Nothing is more important for our souls than the church as an order of things here below for manifesting the glory of Christ during His absence. Our judgment on the state of the church should have as its rule the manifestation of Christ's glory as the Head in heaven. I cannot have a deep feeling of the benefits conferred by any one without having the sense of the responsibility that results from the relationship. If we have unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, we shall gain nothing by hiding from us the glory of Christ.

Chapter 7.

In general the prophets date their prophecies from the name of the kings during whose reign they prophesied. One always finds in their writings something which gave rise to their prophecy. Here it is the reign of Ahaz. The prophecy of Isaiah pertains to his last days.

Prophecy does not appear when the people walk according to God's mind. There might be a walk which appears good, but which goes little by little into evil. Before Israel made the fall of the golden calf, there was no need of a prophet, any more than during the leading of Joshua; for Israel enjoyed the goodness of God. When the state of the people is bad generally, God must encourage the remnant by prophecy, which is not only the revelation of things to come, but also a testimony given. Prophecy is also a means of deliverance; it always

condemns those in whose midst it takes place; it is the judgment of existing evil and the revelation of the method God is going to employ to deliver. Noah divinely warned condemned the world by building the ark; he prophesied the deluge for 120 years, because the wickedness of men was come to its height, and deliverance was in the ark. That judgment should be executed on the world, it was needful that it should be announced beforehand. Such is the principle. Prophecy is an appeal to repentance, for it is a manifestation which exists; it is not yet judgment, but still grace. There is always necessarily revelation for the faithful remnant from Him whose strength never fails. It is always Christ, in whom everything ends without exception: even all the course of this world concurs to the glory of Christ.

If we examine these two reigns, we see prosperity, and in part fidelity. It is said of Uzziah, “he did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah”; and the same of his son Jotham. God not having yet withdrawn His hand, there were blessings belonging to them; but look at what there was below. When the Spirit of God acts, He takes cognisance of evil and sees what sin is; He does not pass lightly over things and persons as the heart of man does, but wishes the good of the people and their conversion. Therefore does He take account of evil, and that before it is manifested; for He does not withdraw His hand till there is no remedy.

Such is the place prophecy holds in the ways of God, but at the same time it nourishes and strengthens faith by shewing in the glory of the Messiah the remedy for all evil. All the moral power of prophecy is taken away if we consider the things to come without considering the

action of God for the moment. Anna spoke of Christ to all those who, feeling the state of things, looked for redemption.

To understand prophecy one must understand what God says as He says it, just believing simply the things as they are said. It is because of not following this plain rule that people find so many difficulties.

There is one circumstance more, which shews God's attitude toward Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ahaz took away the altar which was before Jehovah and put in its place a pagan one. At that time the house of David being the last support, its fall dragged with it and displays the end of Israel; while Hezekiah who succeeded is like the resurrection for Israel, and displays the coming blessing for the remnant when Christ shall appear in His glory.

The Spirit of God thinks always of His people according to their privileges; when the heart is far from God, it judges otherwise than God does and according to its actual evil state. But God cannot do so. One must see the church as God formed it for Himself; and God cannot derogate from His holiness nor from the estimation He has made of it. Conscience cannot judge soundly if it judge according to its state and not its privileges; for it is according to our privileges that God always judges. When God judges, He compares the state of things present with what was when He set it up: and He sees only wounds and putrefying sores, and nothing whole. God judges and thinks according to our privileges; and we cannot judge soundly save when we judge as God judges, and this makes us humble.

"Make the heart of this people fat," etc. (Isa. 6:10): when was this an accomplished fact? Seven hundred

years later, after Christ and even the testimony of the Spirit had been rejected. Before the execution faith judges, and the judgment is in God's mind long before it happens. When the Christian is divinely warned by prophecy of the state of condemnation before the end, if he wait for it, all is lost. Prophecy supposes the knowledge of God, who was in relation with Israel till John the baptist.

Let us now look back and compare all we have had with chapters 6, 7, and all the rest of the book. When Jehovah says (Isa. 1:24), "I will ease me of mine adversaries and avenge me of mine enemies," He spoke of those in Israel. It is most terrible when the people of God take such a place as is not said of the poor sinner ignorant of God. There is a consuming fire for the adversaries (Heb, 10:27). God's people come under His judgments. There will be a remnant, but for the mass of the people judgment. Yet Zion shall be restored according to God's faithfulness. The separation of the remnant will take place at the end, judgment will fall on the people, not on the remnant. Those that return shall be redeemed by righteousness and Zion by judgment. It is a great mistake to think that chapter 2:2-4 is yet accomplished. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” There are two things: Jerusalem the centre, and Jerusalem compared with what it was. Judgment must be executed; and Zion, delivered by this judgment, becomes the centre of power, all nations flowing to it. In what follows one sees the moral judgment which was not executed till seven hundred years after it was pronounced. The day of Jehovah will be against all that is lifted up, for His Spirit judges all, and His hand will subject all to His power. It is only His people that are His enemy—none on earth like those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved; they will be faithful to Antichrist. There is nothing so opposed to God as what is near God, as we see in Judas. There must be judgment on all that is proud and lofty. The haughty looks of man shall be humbled. If there is in our hearts a single object that we desire to exalt us, it will be judged and broken. That day is against all the oaks of Bashan, etc.

Such is the sum given us in this book as to Jews and Gentiles, the first four chapters being introductory, with details in chapters 3, 4. Chapter 5 begins a pleading with God’s people3 chapter 6 interrupting the prophecy to give the prophet his mission, and chapters 7 to 9:7 the birth of Messiah in relation to Israel and the land, the Assyrian attacks, and the power of Messiah triumphant. Chapter 9:8 resumes the chastisements on Israel with deliverance in the end (chaps. 11, 12), for there is always deliverance after judgment.

From chapter 13 to 35 are the details of judgments on the nations, and of what will happen to Israel, that is,

Judah and Ephraim, followed by the typical history of Hezekiah in chapters 36-39.

Chapter 40 begins with comfort for the people from Jehovah, with their chastening from His hand for their wickedness, first, in idolatry, next in rejecting the Messiah, and ends with glory and blessing when they repent and He is received. The thought of God does not stop till He has shewn that grace over-abounds and till He sets His people in blessing. The way in which the Holy Spirit judges all is by referring all to His blessing if we have not full confidence in His goodness. One cannot have full confidence in His goodness without also having a full conviction of the sad state of God's people; if we avoid pronouncing this judgment on the actual state of things and on ourselves as sharing the same moral state we cannot know all the goodness of God. Israel is taken as His witness against idolatry and also of the rejection of Messiah; so that the end is to identify the nations with Israel, and all that which is identified with evil shall suffer the effects of evil. Two things shall happen together, terrible times and the return of Christ in power and glory.

We see in chapter 4:3 that all the escaped in Jerusalem shall be written to life. There will be a manifestation of glory in this world, as in a little measure there was in the wilderness. "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 daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." v. 5, 6. We have here the judgment of Israel and the glory manifested. The

first four chapters give us the end of all as to Israel, but glory at last. Prophecy always supposes a state of displeasure on God's part, but blessing and glory after judgment. It was given to be believed and understood before accomplishment. If God charges any one by a message, he must understand it before the judgment, else for him it is useless: to say the contrary is Satan's snare, for in understanding it only when accomplished, the moral effect is lost. To have God making known His mind in what does not touch ourselves directly, we have the great proof of His love and enjoy communion with Him, which always separates us more from a world about to be judged.

Jerusalem being the centre of the things which must come to pass, one must be at the centre to take in the circle. There was but one prophet sent to the heathen, Jonah to Nineveh. God ever sends warning before judgment, shewing also the interest He takes in the creature.

Hear what the Spirit says in chapter 5. It is important to remark that it is always the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. 1:10, 11). We shall ever find allusion to Christ; and if we read without understanding that it is Christ who speaks or is spoken of, they are lost for us.

In general, prophecy applies as here to a people with whom God is in relation. God calling His people to consider their state, He would reveal His judgments to them, but begins by making them pay attention. "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it," etc. (v. 1,2.) It is the plaint of God in recalling to His people what He has done for them. This applies to our consciences. God has a right to look for

fruit according to the pains He took, and if there were none, there must be necessarily judgment. God never stops at what is spoilt to repair the breaches; He looks at what He did at the beginning, and compares it with the actual state. Therefore does the Lord say to the angel of the church in Ephesus, “Thou hast left thy first love,” Rev. 2:4. What God demands of us is that we look at what He did at the beginning, and that we compare ourselves, not with the actual state that is spoilt, but with the fruits and testimonies given at the start; and if we do not bear these fruits, we are guilty, and here is the consequence: “Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.” The principle of verses 3, 4 applies also to the church.

The fact is that God’s people are reduced to silence. Israel was placed under responsibility, as is the church; and, if enjoying all the privileges, they failed, all fails on man’s part. God has chosen Israel for His glory on earth, and the church also for His glory in heaven; and we must not confound ourselves with them. We have failed, but God will accomplish all in Christ. There are always men failing under responsibility and Christ who does not fail; and God executes by Him judgment on the creature, whether Israel or the church. Judgment will come before God accomplishes His purposes of glory.

“And now go to: I will tell you what I will do,” etc. (v. 5-7). Judah was the plant of Jehovah’s pleasure, but it brought forth wild grapes. God judges the vineyard, as also Christendom. We have enjoyed superior advantages, and, our christian responsibility being greater, judgment will also be greater. God enters into details to shew the righteousness of His judgments. It is not only covetousness ending in desolation, and corrupt

luxury in death and hell, but excuses for iniquity growing up to contempt of divine judgment, as we see in the profane indifference of Christendom, when men have God's warnings and think they will never be executed. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet. 3:3, 4). It answers to the insult of God in verses 18, 19. "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it."

Another character still is lack of discernment in good and evil. Satan brings about transgression and hardening of the conscience; his desire is always to darken the intelligence, as the desire of the Christian should be always more and more to judge according to God. It was the prayer of the apostle that the Colossians (chap, i:9) should be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. So Ephesians 1:17. It is what distinguishes from those of whom it is here said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (v. 20, 21).

"Because they have cast away the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel, therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against his people, and he hath stretched his hand against them, and hath smitten them," v. 24, 25. God does not strike all at once. He sends partial judgments, and since they do not awaken, worse judgments; but there is always

before it forbearance and mercy on God's part. What God did at the beginning is the great principle that God recalls to His people. Therefore is He just in His judgments.

In chapter 6 is another principle. God speaks there, not of what He did at the beginning, but of glory. When I compare the state of the primitive church, I say, Where are we? I can also say, What glory! There is what God would give, and He shews the glory of God in His temple. Israel will be blessed by His manifestation and the enjoyment of this glory. But if the people are unclean, they must have only judgment, and not glory. Read verses 1-4 for the manifestation of the glory of Christ Himself. They could not comprehend, because the heart of the people was grown fat, as we see in verses 9, 10. But where the glory was presented to Isaiah, he says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts," v. 5. Such is the conviction of the prophet before God; he has the understanding of good and evil, instead of being overjoyed that he had seen Jehovah. This makes him say, Woe is me! The only thing that it becomes one to say is, Woe is me! "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged," v. 6, 7. Because he is thus purged, the prophet is rendered capable of being a messenger, and says to God, "Here am I; send me," v. 8. "And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not," v. 9. From the moment

it is a question of presenting the people, it is, “Make the heart of this people fat,” etc. It is no longer a question of repentance. The time of judgment is come: repentance is for the remnant. This will be infallibly. Pharaoh was blinded that God might deliver His people; and for those who refuse to receive His testimony, God shall send them strong delusion. For He has been patient to the last degree, but they refuse instruction from Him. He deals with Christendom as with Israel.

God is long-suffering; for seven hundred years elapsed since the threat till its execution. When He sent the Heir, every means had been exhausted: I do not speak of efficacious grace. His people said, We shall have the world without God if we get rid of the Heir. If the Christian understands the mind of God, this separates his heart from the actual state of things, because he sees the course of this world, which does not understand God. If the Spirit of God gives intelligence to the prophet and to us, one also understands that it is not for ever. “Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof,” v. 11-13. One must own that the judgment is just, but God is faithful. It is only for a time; though it will come, and though there be judgments, the church shall be in glory. So there will be a remnant of the Jews, but it will be anew consumed; they will come into the land, but the Gentiles will come also: as the oak

and the teil-tree, which being cut down have still the trunk; “so the holy seed shall be their stock.” God guards His remnants.

When the prophet’s mouth was purged, God tells him the judgment, and then he turns to intercession. We ought to understand these principles, and apply them, not to Israel only, but to the church, and to each individual. The beginning of conversion goes well, but afterwards—! One must judge oneself, or God judges us in His love, for He is always love. If God saves us perfectly in Christ, we are brought in to be the objects of His Father by government; and when a Christian walks for the glory of God, he is happy, and can say, Send me; for God never fails for those who trust in Him.

We find here not only the great principles of the government of God, but moreover the introduction of a personage (Immanuel, the Lord Jesus) on the scene of prophecy, and the consequences of this introduction. God had raised up to Israel a stay in David. It was the last support of God’s people on the earth. Before raising up the house of David, God had tried all means possible to maintain relations with His people. The priesthood had failed in Eli, the ark was taken, and God had pronounced Ichabod, The glory is departed. Samuel is brought in, and God abides by His channel in sovereign grace toward His people. Saul (“asked for”) is unfaithful. Under priesthood, under royalty, under prophecy, in a word under all forms and all means that God had prepared, Israel always failed. Yet God raised up the house of David. Solomon fails. Though more faithful than others, his family also fails. God had promised to chastise it, but that He would never entirely withdraw His favour. Christ Himself has been the accomplishment

of this promise, as of all others. Man always fails to keep his relationship with God, but all is accomplished in Jesus. The family of David failed, and it is in Christ alone that the Jews find the blessing that is attached to it.

In the person of Ahaz the family of David abandons completely its fidelity. Ahaz associates himself with the king of Assyria, imitates the altar seen at Damascus, and places it in the very temple of God. When the family of David itself thus fails, and every hope is ruined, prophecy introduces the promise of Christ to be the support of the faithful. This sign was to be in the family of David itself. It is a fact of all-importance. The Messiah, the Son of God, was to shew himself in Israel, and Israel to shew itself unfaithful spite of the presence of Messiah. What is before us here is the house of David, not Israel alone. By iniquity the conscience is bad and faith is feeble. Ahaz does not ask for a sign. He makes a show of not wishing it by reason of piety.

Though the house of David failed, God does not at all fail; and He says to Isaiah, “Go forth now to meet Ahaz.” He intervenes at the moment the thing is necessary. Shear-jashub signifies the remnant will return. The people, being unfaithful, have no force against their enemies. But there, in the circumstances where all hope is taken away, God presents the promise that the remnant should be sustained by the testimony of God Himself. He comes in between the sorrowful circumstances and the faithful, that their faith should not fail. At the extreme point of the misery God manifests Himself, and all is light. God would have it so: otherwise the heart rests on the flesh, and forgets God. If the heart loved God naturally, this would not be necessary; that is to say, it would not be necessary for

every outward prop to fail His children, if their heart were only occupied with counting on Him; but the bent of the heart estranges from God. He had not yet delivered His people from the Assyrian; but where there is a lack of faith, the heart is fearful before the enemy, even before a powerless enemy. God shews comfort to His people. He has a perfect knowledge of all that is done, and despises the strength of the enemy. He knows who Pekah and Rezin are, and that Damascus is head of Syria. When it is God who sends our enemies as a chastening against us, we have no strength against them. God knows all the difficulties. What is wanting is the faith which gives a perfect security against all the circumstances possible.

God points out the intentions of the two kings (v. 4-6), intentions which perhaps Ahaz did not know. But God besides has His king at Jerusalem, and they will not succeed in setting up another. “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established,” v. 7-9. God knew all the details, as He gives Ahaz to see. Whatever Syria, Damascus, or Rezin might plan, it was not what God willed. On this all turns. What the Christian wants is consciousness of his relationship with God: then there is nothing to fear, It is not the strength of the enemy which the people have to dread, but their own iniquity which enfeebles them. The danger presented ends in nothing; but if we seek any support whatever in something of this world, God

abandons us, leaving us to the consequences of our relation with the support we have chosen. Thus Pekah and Rezin had no strength against Judah, for God would not deliver Jerusalem to these confederate kings: but Ahaz, fearful and unbelieving, rests on Assyria, and it is from the Assyrian that Judah must be delivered. Meanwhile the true Deliverer, the real support, namely Immanuel, is revealed, when he failed who should have reigned according to God. Therein is a most important lesson.

God offers a sign to the feeble-hearted Ahaz and to the people seeking a prop apart from God. He would shew to the worldling all that is possible for Him to shew of grace and power; and He would make His children feel that their incredulity and unfaithfulness are without excuse. God bids the king to ask a sign below or above (v. 10, 11); but Ahaz (v. 12) shrinks from being too near God, and having a real proof that God was there, for fear of being obliged to follow Him, to abandon the outward supports of his infidelity, and to renounce everything but God. There is nothing that the outward people of God dread so much as nearness to God; though His nearness is a blessing without limit, the heart dreads it, because it will not quit what God condemns.

Nevertheless God will not abandon the house of David. He promises Immanuel (v. 13-15). The application of this promise concerns the house of David and the people of Israel, not here the salvation of the church. God gives the sign in spite of them. It is the birth of the Messiah. Ahaz did not wish God to be near him; but God would be with them, and Immanuel is the sign.

The two kings occasioned fear to Ahaz; but he on whom he sought to rest is sent as a chastening on him. (See 2 Kings 16.) There is what one should fear—that God should take the rod. He will hiss for the enemy, for the fly far off in Egypt, for the bee in Assyria; He will shave as with a hired razor, so as to sweep all clean (v. 17-20). God would be our strength: the heart of man never wishes it. The fear we have of evil befalling us makes us seek support in that which appears to us a way without danger; and these are the very things God employs to chastise us. The kings of Israel and of Syria came against Judah of their own will. God stops them. Ahaz and his people would lean on the king of Assyria; and God makes the Assyrian come against them in the end.

It is always what the will of man seeks that becomes the instrument of chastening. When the assaults against the people of God flow only from the will of man, there is nothing to fear. Beware of dreading the nearness of God: it is to be far from the source of all blessings.

Chapter 8.

Notwithstanding, the grace of God abides toward His people. The scourge of God comes; but if He brings the Assyrian, He promises at the same time Immanuel. If Maher-shalal-hash-baz testifies to the Assyrian in making speed to the spoil, and hastening the prey, God cannot abandon the house of David and Immanuel’s land (v. 1-10). The Assyrian shall go over, and reach even to the neck, but no farther. God thereon vindicates against him the rights of Messiah, even as it is ever our resource that we are Christ’s. This people had refused the softly flowing waters of Shiloah; they had despised the house of David, rejoicing in Rezin and Pekah, not in God’s

gentle way, which keeps the heart ever dependent. If the flesh can have a support, it is in man, in what looks strong; it has no confidence if there be only God for the morrow. From the moment we would for to-morrow rest on a good thought of to-day, it is our own righteousness. God would have us be in appearance the most feeble, that He should be our only strength.

As they despised the waters of Shiloah, the Lord brings on them the waters of the river strong and many; He sends against them as their master him on whom they leaned. Such is the end of man's wisdom. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. For Jehovah spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid," v. 9-12. How busy is human prudence, and how vain! We are taught of God not to imitate this. The nations shall do all this, but their counsels come to nought, "for God is with us." The one counsel for the faithful is Immanuel. "Neither fear ye their fear nor be afraid." Their word shall not stand. The thought of the Assyrian is to do his own will, not that of God. All depends on this only word, Immanuel. What avails confederacy against Him? The Lord spoke in strength of hand. Therefore His word is, "Sanctify Jehovah of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary;

but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken," v. 13-15. Give to God all the holy heed that is due to Him. Nothing then can shake us, because nothing can shake God. Yet is He in Jesus for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem—this because of their infidelity. They too did not like to have the Eternal near them. The introduction of the Messiah is in view of the power and the invasion of the Assyrian. (Compare Micah 5.) But the result for the mass of the people is that they reject Immanuel, and stumble on Him to their own utter ruin.

The remnant is separated, the testimony bound up and sealed (v. 16). The Eternal came Himself in the person of Jesus. He is the confidence, the sanctuary of those that believe; He is a rock of offence to the unbelieving. Hence results a relation more intimate: "Seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Jehovah of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion," v. 17, 18. The testimony is sealed there, while God turns away His face from the house of Jacob: nay more, "Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me." They are for signs and for wonders in Israel.

The people have lost God who disowns them meanwhile, and, seeking light but finding none, they turn to familiar spirits and wizards. But the true heart, having Christ before it, cleaves to God and His word— "To the law and

to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." v. 19, 20. And then we pass from the anguish and darkness of despair for the Jew when he refused the Messiah to the last days when light begins to dawn once more (v. 21, 22; chap. 9:1, 2).

Thus chapter 7 presents to us Immanuel, heir of David's house and hope of the remnant which shall return (Shear-jashub); chapter 8, the land of Canaan in relation to Him. It is Immanuel's land. There the remnant separated; and the nations in misery and darkness, till the despised light reappears in glory (chap. 9:1-7), overleaping the mystery of Christ and the church of the heavenly places, after which the general history of Israel is resumed in continuation of the judgments of chapter 5. Chapters 6-9:7 are a parenthesis to introduce Messiah.

We have seen in chapters 7, 8, Messiah born to reign. It is no longer only principles, or reasonings of God with His vineyard. There abides the absolute promise of God, though the son of the virgin, Immanuel, be rejected. Christ and His disciples, instead of being received, become a sign in Israel. Incredulity seeks a support, and this support becomes a difficulty and scourge, but there remains for faith the accomplishment of God's mind in Christ.

The waters of Shiloah being despised, the Assyrian comes into the country. The prophet with the two children is for a sign to the two houses of Israel. The Jews have in unbelief rejected Jesus, who is become a stumbling-stone to them, and their chastisement is in anguish and darkness. Two consequences result from

this. The remnant could not enjoy the earthly promises made to the Messiah, but they have the testimony sealed up. Those who have rejected the testimony wander without light from God in the land which is trodden under the feet of the Gentiles. The Jews abide in bondage. Syria attacks Zebulun and Naphtali; it is the first invasion. Tiglath Pileser comes into Galilee; it is the second. But what follows is worse. Nevertheless the light shines in this land of the shadow of death; but all becomes graver still by the rejection of this light.

There is then a new element on which depends the lot of Israel. Christ has been there (Matt. 4:15), and He has been rejected. The election from among the Jews is based on this foundation. All the Jewish election is added to the church (Acts 2:47), in place of being saved for another end as in Micah 5:3.

Christ having been manifested to but rejected by the nation, they are blinded. A judicial darkness is fallen on the Jews. His rejection by them opens the way for the election from among the Gentiles, whilst the elect from Israel are added to the church. Jehovah hides His face from the house of Jacob (chap. 8:17); but the prophetic Spirit waits for Him to act in favour of Israel. The church anticipates the faith of Israel when the Messiah is rejected, believing in Him; and this even becomes the occasion of provoking Israel to jealousy.

If Israel had received Jesus, Israel would have been blessed; the wickedness of man would not have been proved, and Israel would not have lost their right to the promises. The wisdom of God places Israel under mercy like the Gentiles (Rom. 11), and opens thus the door to the Gentiles in accomplishing the promises. Jesus is

minister of the truth of God for the Jews and of mercy for the Gentiles (Rom. 15). We have “pre-trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1:12): that is, those of the Jews whose hope was in Christ before the nation bows at the end when He is seen in glory. We have believed without seeing, in contrast with Thomas and Israel. Those who shall believe when they see Him are to be blessed, but are not to be in His glory. This changes nothing as to the promises on God’s part. Israel had lost all right to the promises; but these abide, because God had sworn to Abraham, and He is faithful. He judges Israel, hides His face from Jacob; nevertheless He keeps all His promises, and Israel waits till judgment falls on faithless Christendom, as it fell on the Jews. God will resume His ways with His people, and Israel shall be blessed.

From the first to the second verse of chapter 9 the present economy is quite passed over, and we light on the accomplishment of the promises for Israel. It is a question of Israel and the world, not of the church. The prophetic Spirit waits for what God will do, and beholds across the ages, the glory of Jehovah in the Messiah shedding His blessing on His people Israel. The first coming of Jesus has not accomplished verses 2-7. He has not delivered His people from the yoke of the Gentiles, the reign of the false king, or the efficacious lie of Satan. One often sees half a passage of the Old Testament cited in the New Testament, because the accomplishment of the other half is hot arrived. Thus Christ is gone on high and has received gifts for men, but not yet “for the rebellious,” that is, the Jews who will receive the rain of the latter season. All the present economy lies in the interval. It is no question at present either of Jews or

Greeks, but of man, a new creation in Christ and called out of the world for heaven.

The Child was already born, the Son given; but Israel have not owned Him. When they are renewed, Christ will be owned, as born “unto us” and given “unto us.” The church anticipates the people in all this; but for heaven.

There is here a principle of intelligence for prophecy, to see how we can employ the passages put in the mouth of the Jews. In chapter 53:1-4 it is the Jews who esteemed Christ “smitten of God and afflicted.” They said if He were the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross. Not so the believer, who enters into the enjoyment of the fruits of His suffering. “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.” “Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” It remains true that He died for the Jews as an elect nation, but also to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. These in the name of Jesus can say, that God caused the iniquities of us all to meet on Him. But Gentiles as such cannot say, “We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”; as grafted on the olive, they can now say what Israel will say by-and-by. The church can say more, for on our behalf Jesus sits on the throne, not of David, but of His Father. We shall sit on Christ’s throne, but not on the throne of David; to it we have no right whatever, not being of David’s lineage. But we shall be seated on the more elevated throne of our Lord as the glorified Son of man. We are one with Christ, the coming King, and shall reign with Him, kings and priests to God, even His Father. In this sense it is not for us to say, like Israel, “Unto us a child is born,” because we shall not be subjects of the kingdom, but co-

heirs with Christ the King, not the people reigned over, but kings reigning with Him.

Christ has not yet the government here spoken of upon His shoulders, nor is there the increase of government and peace without end, nor is His name yet called Prince of Peace as here in the exercise of His functions. He is prince or originator of life whom God raised up from among the dead. He has not come yet to give peace in the earth, but a sword and division. He would have us fight, clothed with all spiritual armour. When Christ shall reign, He will be Prince of Peace as Son of David, and peace shall be on the earth. Christ must have the pre-eminence in all things, and have every sort of glory, as Son of God, Son of man, Son of David, etc., all things put under Him, and not merely Israel or the Gentiles. We shall sit with Him on His throne, as now He sits on the Father's. Up to the present we are seated in heavenly places in Him, not with Him as yet, on high.

But He will also have the throne of David. God loves the people, and Jerusalem is the city of the great King: Jesus will have this glory, the church has it not. The Jews will enjoy it under His reign. It is an earthly state, and more limited. Jesus is also head of angels, and will have that glory too. He is personally the image of the invisible God, and Son of man, Head over all things, as all the ends of the earth shall call Him blessed (Psa. 72).

Jesus only took up the promises when risen, in a life to make all sure on the other side of the grave: a mere man could not do this (2 Sam. 23:5; Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34). Jesus must introduce the blessing of God among creation. It is not here the Father and the Son, but Jehovah and the Son of David; and there is a counsel of

peace between them both, to the end that creation should be blessed (Zech. 6:12, 13), Israel being restored to their own land.

We have been instruments of mischief to all creation, which now awaits for the manifestation of the children of God for its blessing and happiness too. We are gathered a kind of first-fruits of the new creation, while God hides His face from the house of Jacob. What gracious consideration in God towards us, for whom, having been in Adam the instruments of the ruin of creation, all creation waits, that we should be manifested with the second Man for the blessing! When Christ shall be Priest on His throne, the counsel of peace shall proceed for the blessing of the earth. As to us, identified now with His humiliation, we shall be identified with His glory; we alone shall see Him as He is in the intimacy of His love. The Jews will see Him as He shall be manifested in earthly glory. In the expression of faith, as in the Psalms, mercy is always before righteousness, because Israel had failed completely in righteousness, and there must be recourse to mercy and grace. We find in prophecy great principles of truth which can guide us, Christians, but also circumstances which do not concern us. Spiritual intelligence seizes the place of the church and the exaltation that God reserves for His Son Jesus, that all glory may centre in Him. The Christian’s heart is happy in seeing Jesus exalted everywhere and with all glory. The scriptures bear testimony to Him, and, in proportion as we apprehend better the glory of Jesus, the scriptures become more easy for us to understand.

Chapters 9, 10

The Spirit of God has given in the preceding chapters the Messiah (hope of the remnant and deliverer from the Assyrian), whose presentation to the Jews changes all the condition of the nation. He resumes now the prophetic history of the people of Israel. God has chastised His people, but this has not yet dealt with their pride: they confide yet in themselves (v. 8-12). The anger of Jehovah is not yet turned away, but His hand is stretched out still, for the people do not turn to Him that smites them, and have not discerned His hand. And till this is seen, there is resistance and a strengthening of self in one's own power.

There are three things in the chastenings of God's people: first, the instrument; second, the enemy's malice; third, the hidden intention of God. If one looks at the instrument, it is only to accuse, or to be discontented. But even behind the malice of Satan there is the goodness of God. Sometimes the heart avows that the chastening is come in consequence of known evil, and then would just reform itself a little. But the hand of God abides stretched out still because there is no return to Him that smites, but the effort by a certain quantity of hypocrisy to appease God. The conscience has not been put in direct relation with God.

The consequence is (v. 14) His cutting from Israel head and tail, branch and root, leaders and led. So God takes away even a Christian from this world as a chastisement (1 Cor. 11).

When the people of God go wrong, there is always the spirit of false prophecy which would make them believe that all goes well. Men in authority love that they should

not be discouraged: see the opposition to Jeremiah in Jerusalem. To this the false prophet lends help, to hinder the conscience from turning back to God, who would by chastening bring the conscience into direct contact with Him. The spirit of falsehood would persuade that they are very happy. They that call them blessed are the misleaders. Those that are so called and believe them are swallowed up (v. 16).

When the people of God are in a good state, they have at heart the glory of God without which they cannot be satisfied. It is not enough for them that there is no evil going on—this suffices man, but not the glory of God. There are still divisions and miseries because of their iniquities (v. 18-20). But the people is not yet turned to God, and His hand is stretched out still (v. 21). God does not crush His people even when He smites. He leaves some consolation. Nevertheless His people take up their pride again (chap. 10:1-4). At last God calls the great instrument of His anger, (chap. 10:5, etc.). The Assyrian is the rod of His wrath.

There are two phases in the history of the Jewish people. There is first the time when they are owned as the people of God, who chastens them by Egypt and Assyria, yet owns them. Later on He rejects them, and the people become Lo-ammi, Not-His-people. When Israel was carried away captive, it was Lo-ruhamah, but there was not yet an absolute cutting off as a people. When Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem, the people become Lo-ammi. Israel is rejected. God no more owns His people. He watches over them still for final restoration to their land, but “the times of the Gentiles” begin.

Messiah has been presented to the Jews, but not to the ten tribes which had been carried away by the Assyrian. All the history whilst Israel is not owned belongs to the times of the Gentiles. Now in this part of Isaiah we leave aside the times of the Gentiles to follow Israel. God owns His people even in chastising them. The Assyrian is the instrument of the chastisement even at the last.

We see in Micah 5:1-7 that, when the Assyrian shall come into the land, Christ the ruler in Israel will be found there, “the peace.” This is not yet arrived. He shall be the peace then when the Assyrian enters. There is a remarkable type of this final attack of the Assyrian in the history of Sennacherib against Hezekiah. Therefore it is that chapters 36-39 are given. The Holy Spirit takes the actual and real circumstances of the Jews to bind up with them the prophecy of the last days. When Sennacherib came, it was Hezekiah who was in Jerusalem. He is a type of the time when Christ is to be there.

God employs the pride and iniquity of the wicked for the chastisement of His people; and afterwards He destroys the instrument. The Assyrian, God’s rod to strike Israel, glorifies himself against God, who breaks the rod. So in the early part of the nineteenth century Napoleon Bonaparte smote all the people of the Roman empire, but, being wrong, was after that smitten himself.

When the Assyrian shall have done his work, it is the ceasing of the indignation against Israel: an important point in Israel’s history. The destruction of the Assyrian (not of Antichrist) is the end of Jehovah’s anger. The Antichrist will have appeared and been judged before. The remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob, unto the

mighty God, who will search out and punish the glory of man's high looks on all sides, and shall make a consumption even determined in all the land. Christ will maintain Israel.

Chapter 11.

It is no question here either of Christ as Head of the church or of the church's glory. He is presented as Messiah for the earth ruling, the judgment on the enemy being executed. He is not here called the Root of David, the source of blessing, but a Branch. In Revelation 5 He is the Root of David, in chapter 22 He is Offspring as well as Root. For the church He has a suited relation. He is not judging the earth yet. When He comes again, He will judge, and slay the wicked. (Compare v. 4 and 2 Thess. 2.) Consequently Christ must be looked for to reign over the earth, ruling in righteousness and deciding with equity for the meek of the earth. Actually it is the haughty and unjust who possess the earth. Christ and His own have not yet His rights here below.

In verses 5-9 we see the fruit of the curse gone from the earth, which, by the presence of Christ and the Spirit poured from on high, shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Christ here is not glorified above, nor is it the gospel here below.

Verse 10 is not at all realised yet. Christ is an object of reproach, not of glory. But "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." He will be the centre, and the Gentiles will seek Him then: now it is the hour when God the Father seeks true worshippers, a people from among the Gentiles for His name.

In that day not only will the curse of the earth be taken away, and the nations flock to Christ the exalted King; but “the Lord 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,” v. 11, 12. As He of old brought His people out of Egypt He will recover the remnant of them from the north and south, east and west. Ephraim and Judah will not only be re-united as a people, but in heart also (v. 13), as they never have been.

From verse 14 we learn that the neighbouring nations, which escape the last great Assyrian, or king of the north (Dan. 11:41), shall become objects of judgment to returned Israel, when they spoil their more distant enemies. The comparison of the two prophets shews exactness in detail, where unbelief sees only extinct races and thinks accomplishment impossible.

It is plain that verses 15, 16 can only apply to an earthly deliverance of Israel like that out of Egypt.

Chapter 12.

Here we have a song of praise and thanksgiving for their deliverance. “Thou shalt say,” etc. (v. 1) means unequivocally Israel. God’s anger has not only turned away and ceased, but He is their salvation (v. 2). For all Israel in that day shall be saved. Therefore with joy they draw water out of those exhaustless wells and say Hallelujah (v. 3, 4). But it is Jah Jehovah, not the Father

as we know Him now through the Lord Jesus. The effect of their deliverance is that His glory as the Eternal is known in all the earth (v. 5). The Father is known in His family, not in all the earth as such, though by His children everywhere. But here it is the kingdom, and He is known as the Holy One of Israel in Zion. Jehovah reigns, and by Israel He makes Himself known in all the earth.

If we have well seized these two chapters, we cannot confound what is said of Israel and of the church. Christ as the Judge of all must have slain the wicked with the breath of His lips (see chap. 30:33) in order that the blessing should come to pass. Otherwise we confound the kingdom of Christ's patience with the kingdom of righteous government. If one leads the church to believe that this happy time is come, and that she is to make good all these things, it is to mislead the faithful and to encourage unbelievers. For natural pride is increased by these misapplications of what can only be realised by Christ's coming to reign. Our place meanwhile is to suffer with Christ.

Here we can remark the force of 2 Peter 1:20: no prophecy of scripture is of its own [particular] interpretation. It is not a question of Nineveh, etc., nor of any other thing in or by itself, but finally of the glory of Jesus, where all meets and all ends. It speaks of a vast and connected system of glory which must be taken as a whole, even as the Spirit wrote it.

In the preceding chapters we have the relationship of God with His people closed by the manifestation of Christ in glory. Here begins a new prophecy, which presents to us the relationship of Israel with the nations.

This section of the prophecy goes from chapter 13 to the end of chapter 27, terminating with songs of joy and deliverance, as in the first section.

Chapter 13.

The first of these predictions begins with what is in contrast with Zion, that is to say, with Babylon, and the answer to the messengers of the nations, which is in chapter 14, that Jehovah hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall betake themselves to it, when Babylon is destroyed.

Babylon is not only the capital of Nebuchadnezzar and of the habitable world; it is Babel, signifying confusion. It is there men are united to exalt themselves and make themselves a name and a reputation in the world. At the end all the world sets itself to get exaltation for which commerce furnishes the means; and everything there, men’s bodies and souls, will be for sale, as we see in Revelation 18. The Spirit of God taking the city of the Chaldees as an occasion gives the mind of God on the city of idolatrous corruption and pride up to the end, and even brings in here future circumstances of which history presents no accomplishment, and whose order is in contrast with that which is already arrived. Thus the Assyrian, if we follow the history, was destroyed before the grandeur of Babylon; whilst the Spirit, speaking of what will happen in the last days, tells us that the Assyrian is to be destroyed after Babylon. In the time of the prophet Babylon had not yet any pretension to be the capital of an empire, but was a provincial city or at most a secondary power, seeking independence of Assyria, and at times gaining it, till it at last became not only aggressive but supreme.

In verse 6 the fall of Babylon is announced as the day of Jehovah. That which will happen in that day is indicated in verses 6-12. There is all that the world has to look for.

One sees in the world either the arrogance of him who has the upper hand, or the envy of him who is below. God will cause to cease the pride of man in both ways; He will punish (as here) not the dead only, but the living, the habitable earth, all that from which the world draws its glory. Its great chiefs, its victories, its wealth, ease, luxury, splendour, what is it but arrogance and self-exalution? That day will be blessed for those who are poor in spirit, because they will enjoy peace; but the destruction will be so great that a man will be more prized than the gold of Ophir.

“Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove,” etc. (v. 13-22). All this is “a promise” to the Christian. (See Heb. 12:25, 26.) If he is in his place, he is separate from all the interests of the world, he belongs to heaven, to Jesus, which cannot be shaken. The world passes away, and God will make it cease, and this will give rest. It is for us a “promise,” as we have seen. Jesus speaks to us from heaven and makes us this promise of shaking once more, not the earth only, but also heaven; because all that which surrounds us is an obstacle which hinders us from enjoying what Jesus has promised us. Christians hasten this time by their faith. God would have us wait for it because His patience is great, and the work of saving souls still goes on here below (2 Pet. 3). If the destruction of all the world-system is not a promise to us, it must be that we are attached to what is on the earth. There is a kingdom which cannot be moved and which will move all others; and it is for this that christian simplicity waits. Can we

truly desire, as the accomplishment of a promise, that God should shake the heavens and the earth? Are our hearts attached to not one thing which shall be the object of that destruction? May God make us see the end of it, that our hearts may be separated from all that is going to be destroyed!

Chapter 14.

When God acts in judgment, there is always care taken of His people. “For Jehovah will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were: and they shall rule over their oppressors,” v. 1, 2. When the devastation of the habitable world takes place, there will be the deliverance of the people of God, Israel, who will take possession of the earth.

From verses 3-23 there is a beautiful picture of the fall of Babylon’s king in its last representative—the beast of the close. The prophet takes occasion from events at hand in that day; but no prophecy of scripture is made to be of its own interpretation, none has been fully or entirely accomplished. And the reason is that the Holy Spirit has always Jesus and His kingdom in view. God has always the second Man in His mind. Even the first prophecy, that the woman’s Seed should crush the serpent’s head, is not yet fulfilled. All that there is in God’s word points onward to the glory of Christ.

There is a crowd of prophetic examples in the word of God, where but half is accomplished. Thus Psalm 8 is not yet accomplished in verses 6-9. We do not yet see all things put under His feet (Heb. 2). Again Psalm 68 is not yet accomplished fully. Hence the apostle omits “for the rebellious also” in Ephesians 4, because it will apply to the Jews in the latter day. It would be to lose the purpose of God to believe the prophecies accomplished on this side of Christ’s glory; for it would give to prophecy a particular interpretation.

In verses 12-15 we see that, as long as “the beast” is on the earth, he passes himself off for God. Nevertheless he is doomed to destruction (v. 19). God has but to give the signal, and he who broke kings like reeds is himself a broken reed.

To the Christian Christ is the true Morning Star; but “the beast “claims to be so. He attributes to himself all the glory of Christ. All these details here vaunted in verses 12-15 are true of the Lord Jesus; but the last holder of the power given first to Babylon’s head, would also ascend into heaven, and sit too on the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north, taking possession of Christ’s kingdom in Zion. Compare for part of the language Psalm 48:2: there was the city of the great king. The beast would also possess himself of Christ’s heavenly glory, and be like the Most High; but He who is Son of God and Son of man will overthrow the man of the earth, who shall cause no more fright after that (Ps. 10:18).

The beast and the false prophet being destroyed, Christ is King in Zion. In due time comes the destruction of the Assyrian, as we see here in verses 24-27. “Jehovah of

hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass: and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" The Assyrian is no less senseless in rising up against Christ associated with Israel, the Prince of princes. The indignation is accomplished then, and Israel long chastised is owned of God. When Christ reigns in Zion, Israel is owned, but all the enemies are not yet destroyed. That which follows the destruction of Babylon and the beast is the destruction of the Assyrian, or king of the north. It is a mistake to confound the little horn of Daniel 7 with the little horn of Daniel 8, which last elevates himself not against the God of gods, but against the Lord of lords. For the indignation to cease completely the Assyrian must be destroyed (Micah 5). He will trample down the Assyrian in His land, because He owns Israel for His people. God will assert in the person of Christ all His rights over the earth.

In verses 28-32 is the judgment of the Philistines, the remains of the Canaanites. Hezekiah laboured for their submission. The Lord Jesus will finish it by a destruction more terrible when He stablishes His throne in Zion. When Babylon, the Assyrian, and the Philistines are put down finally, the poor and needy remnant shall lie down in safety, and Zion shall be their bulwark. (See Ps. 132.)

Never in God's word does that mountain mean anything but itself, being wholly inapplicable to the church.

Chapters 15, 16.

From chapter 13 we have begun to see Israel the centre of all the providence of God in the world, in contrast to all the other nations. Deuteronomy 32 shews Israel as the centre of God's ways in the world. In antiquity there is no profane history of any importance which is not in connection with the Jewish people. God has a people in the midst of whom He governs and manifests His ways and the consequences of His character. This is true of Israel and the church. All that happens to them is the manifestation of the principles of God's government. God abode visibly in Israel, His throne was there. He abides by the Spirit in the church. He acts always in government in the midst of His people; it is there He would manifest Himself and not abide only in heaven.

From the moment God is in Israel He identifies Himself with His people. In consequence of this the nations are treated according as they treated Israel. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," says the King. The moment they touch Israel, they touch the apple of His eye. In all these chapters we see the relations of Israel with the nations, and the nations judged of God because they trod down His people, though He used them also to punish His people. But the world enters into God's mind and assails His people, because they are (not unfaithful to Him but) hateful to them, as they would swallow up all they have. When His people are unfaithful, God sends a testimony to them, as Jeremiah; but they accuse him of conspiring against them, of weakening them, etc., because he tells

them that in consequence of their departure from God He will give them over to the Chaldeans.

Here we have Moab wasted and cut off with bitter sorrow, the more humiliating after all their pride. And the very burden which proclaims Moab reduced hopelessly, declares that David's throne shall be prepared in mercy with One sitting on it in truth, judging and seeking judgment and hasting righteousness.

Chapter 17.

Next comes the burden of Damascus and its degradation from a city to a ruinous heap. In verses 4-6 we see the judgment of Israel, but gleaning grapes are left there. God chastises His people till they cease to rest on their own strength, instead of relying on God alone. Yet when dwindled down to a remnant of two or three here and four or five there, they shall look to Himself, the only source of strength, the Holy One of Israel. For their idolatry they had been desolated. But in the hour of their desperate grief, when nations seem once more ready to engulf and overwhelm them, rebuke comes, and the rushing multitudes are as chaff before the wind (v. 12-14).

When God's people are faithless, they are able to act even after the prudence and wisdom of the natural man. When they do not rest on God, they are feebler than the world; and when they are given over to a chastening, they are immediately broken to pieces.

The prophet Habakkuk demands the judgment of God, because He is broken-hearted at seeing iniquity in the dwelling of righteousness. When God says He will

punish and shews the prophet the desolation of His people, Holdest thou thy tongue, says the prophet, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? Jehovah then answers, “The just shall live by his faith.” Our relations with God, because He dwells in the midst of us, bring His judgment on men because of what they do to the people of God.

Chapter 18.

It is needful to remember the position of the land of Israel. The rivers of Ethiopia (Cush) are the Nile and the Euphrates, which represent the two nations on the frontiers of Israel that had oppressed them, Egypt and Babylon.

The country.here summoned, “shadowing with wings” (v. i), is beyond those rivers. It was a country unknown at the time when the prophet lived, and was consequently in no connection as yet with Israel; but it will be so in the last days. To shadow with wings is an expression often employed in the word of the Lord for marking protection. It will be a powerful nation, outside their ordinary limits, undertaking to protect Israel.

The great nations of those days occupy themselves with the Jews (v. 2). From the time the nations begin to be the object of God’s judgment, they will be crushed (Zech. 12:1-3).

“All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the mountains” (v. 3): God summons attention to that which He is going to do. “See ye when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.”

“For so Jehovah said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest,” v. 4. We see what God will do when the nations, following their own policy, will have restored the Jews to their land. He lets them act, and keeps quiet; but He keeps His eye on His dwelling-place.

“For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the springs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches,” v. 5. It is not yet judgment, so all comes to nothing, whatever the promise, as in all human things where God is concerned. Compare Isaiah 6:10.

“They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them,” v. 6. The people are brought back to their land to be given over as a prey to the nations, like wild beasts in winter or ravenous birds in summer. Such will be their fate when anew returned to Palestine, for God is not yet putting His hand to it. Jerusalem will again be the central object of political schemes for the world, though the world despises God’s people, and never occupies itself with them but to exalt itself. The Jew will be oppressed by the Gentiles once more in their land; but deliverance is at hand.

“In that time shall the present be brought unto Jehovah of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of Jehovah of hosts, the mount Zion,” v. 7. A present is to be brought

of Israel and from Israel to Jehovah. They will bring an offering, and themselves be as it were an offering, to Jehovah, who will manifest anew His abode in Zion (alter all the long sorrows and desolations), but also His hand in judgment of the nations. After this will begin His relationship with Israel for everlasting blessing under Messiah and the new covenant. The mount of Zion is the place God has chosen, in contrast with Sinai, the mountain of the nation's responsibility and ruin. (See Heb. 12.) At Sinai God gave, not His promises, but His law; and Israel stood afar off and fell under its curse. Zion is quite another thing. Israel failed under Moses and Aaron, the Judges, Eli, Samuel and Saul, under priest, prophet and king. But David is chosen in sovereignty and places the ark of God in Zion, which becomes the display of royal grace on earth, after man in every respect had failed in his relations with God.

The mountain of Zion is for the earth the same thing in principle as heaven is (save royalty) for God's relations with the church. The majesty of God no more requires righteousness in man. It establishes itself in grace on the earth when man broke down in everything. This will be true in all, though we shall not be there but above. Jehovah of hosts (that is, the God of government here below) will place Israel, not the church, in connection with the mount Zion. The Father will have us with the Son in His house on high as His children, instead of governing us as His subjects on the earth. It is always important to distinguish our part from that of the earthly people; if not, we necessarily lower our calling, our privileges, and our responsibility. God puts Himself in relation with the world as King by means of His people Israel.

Chapters 19, 20.

There is a change to be noticed, in that from this point the Spirit of God does not so much give us the deliverance of Israel as the desolation of the nations in question. Here in chapter 20 it is the burden of Egypt, its judgment and its blessing, when not Israel only but Assyria, their then conqueror, shall be blessed. If ruin befell that land meanwhile, if anarchy followed, if cruel lords after this oppressed, grace will succeed and bless in the end. But how complete the change when the land of Judah shall be a terror to Egypt, etc. (chap. 19:17), a thing never yet fulfilled! On the contrary Egypt dominated the Jews under the Ptolemies, as of old under the Pharaohs. When Israel becomes at length the inheritance of Jehovah, both Egypt and Assyria shall oppress no more, but come into special relationship and blessing from God. Chapter 20 is but the sequel, marking by a sign in the prophet's person the vanity of hoping in Egypt or Ethiopia against Assyria.

Chapters 21, 22.

These two chapters introduce us to God's mind by shewing the contrast between Babylon "the desert of the sea," and Jerusalem "the vision of peace." The idea of the Holy Spirit speaking of Babylon is that it becomes a "wilderness," the "sea" in prophetic language signifying the mass of peoples.

It is in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit sees the glory and the peace of Christ, Salem as is well known meaning "peace." The confusion is evident historically, if one essays to consider the prophecy as a whole already accomplished, however visibly Babylon's fall is given. It is plainly here a question of God's ways in times to

come. All the events are brought together here without any reference to the chronological order of the past, but in the relation that they will have among each other to the last days. For Jerusalem falls after Babylon, the inverse of history. We find here also instruction for ourselves now.

In chapter 21 we see God preparing a rod of vengeance for Babylon, as of chastening in the following chapter for Jerusalem, where the power of evil was displaying itself after another way.

How instructive for the soul which like a sentinel pays attention to that which God is going to do in His government of the earth! Men are of no value and know nothing at all: all their wisdom and their prudence only contribute to bring about the result that God has prepared for the manifestation of His glory in the person of Jesus, in the midst of the Jewish people. Prophecy makes us understand that all is judged in the world, and that all the world's course is but "the desert of the sea."

In Babylon had the Jews been captive; and there is found the pride and glory of the world. It has been thought that Babylon will be literally re-built by the unbelief which will vaunt itself against God to shew that what has been said of Babylon is not true. But if so, this will draw the final judgment on it.

Verses 11, 12. Dumah, or Edom, has a perpetual hatred against God's people. His people may be in an extremely poor state, and the world say with insolence against them, Where is your God? Here is the answer of the Spirit of God to this insolence (v. 12): "What of the night?" The Edomites spoke against Jerusalem, not

because it was corrupt, but just because it was the city of the great King.

For us the night will soon be past, the morning will come. It is still the night as to the world. For the people of God the morning comes; it is their hope and their consolation. But for the world it is a question of the night. So long as Jesus was in the world He was the light of the world, but the night is there since Jesus is there no longer.

The insolence of enemies serves to exercise and strengthen faith; it recalls to the child of God what his privileges are and his position. If the people of God are unfaithful, God chastises them, and may call them Lo-ammi (Not-my-people); but in the presence of the world one remembers that they are notwithstanding the people of God. Jacob had often been unfaithful and chastised in every way, saying to Pharaoh, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been “; yet he blessed the king. Jacob as God’s servant and chosen, though wretched and feeble, was in a position superior to that of the king of Egypt. The feeblest child of God is superior to the world in all its glory and strength. The church is unfaithful and has lost the manifestation of the favour of God. This should be a subject of humiliation. But if the world is insolent, we can answer to it, “The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.”

These are the counsels of God, and the character of God who acts in His government according to the conduct of His people. He has manifested His character in shewing an admirable patience till there was no remedy. As to this world, where God manifests His way, the church is

responsible and treated according to its responsibility. As to heavenly glory, the church cannot fail any more than the grace of God which calls to it.

The burden of Arabia follows in verses 13-17; all the glory of Kedar shall fail.

In chapter 22 comes the burden of the valley of vision. What is this that happened to Jerusalem? What is it that they expect? “What aileth thee now that thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops?” (v.i). To-day also is the world on the house-tops, looking out; and the church so called no less than the world, for each feels that all is crumbling.

Verse 4. The prophetic Spirit does not hide the evil, but, in place of rejoicing over it like Edom, it is afflicted, and weeps bitterly, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. This is ever the effect of intelligence in the ways of God. There is no need of prophecy but when things go to wreck. It awakens the affections of the heart. The spirit which is in us answers to the Spirit of prophecy, which is the expression of God’s affection for His people. One loves with God; and there is always a great sweetness in this fellowship of thoughts with God, where the subject of them is painful.

Verse 5. God demolishes the wall, He rejects His house, His altar. It is the judgment of God which leaves Jerusalem a prey to the Gentiles. If there is evil, God cannot manifest His favour. He can restore His people, but He cannot glorify them in the world if they are unfaithful.

Verses 8-11. All that the wisdom of man can suggest to him is to fortify the wall God broke down. They take wise measures, they make a ditch for the water of the

old pool. It is very prudent to hinder the water flowing outside the city to refresh their enemies. But with all this wisdom they forgot to look to the Maker and fashioner of it long ago. “And in that day did the Lord Jehovah of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by Jehovah of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord Jehovah of hosts,” v. 12-14. Such is the result. The prophetic Spirit seeing this cannot but weep for the ruin of the daughter of His people. It is a spirit of humiliation. The history of the same acts is presented to us in the Chronicles as a proof of blessing, and it was such on Hezekiah; but the worm was at the heart, and the people did not return to Him who struck them, but all went from bad to worse. In comparing this with the history, there is not a passage which bears more on the heart than the judgment God here pronounces on the efforts of man to re-establish what God would break down.

From verse 15 to the end I do not doubt that one should see in Shebna Antichrist set aside for the Messiah typified by Eliakim (that is, the God of resurrection). All the glory, great or small, attaches to Jesus on the throne of David; and all the power of Antichrist shall be cut off. Till Jehovah speaks, Antichrist looks strong and sure, and he counts on the future; but from the moment God speaks, he falls (v. 25).

We have also the judgment of the city. But we see the fall of Babylon necessary in order that Jerusalem should appear on the scene, though its state be one of

perplexity and distress, desiring and undertaking to restore things, but God blowing on all. And all falls with Antichrist, whereon God sets up the throne in Jesus and gives His blessing to all the earth.

We see in these chapters how God destroys the insolence of man and judges the unfaithfulness of His people. The world's insolence as to God's children ought not to shake their confidence, but on the contrary to strengthen it. For God takes knowledge of everything; and their cause is that of God, who will be glorified in them at the end.

Chapter 23.

In chapter 23 we see the burden of Tyre. The immediate aim was the capture of this great seat of ancient commerce by Nebuchadnezzar; but the Spirit of prophecy does not stop with Jehovah's purpose then against its merchant princes, when the honourable of the earth were brought into contempt, and the pride of all glory stained, and the ships of Tarshish smitten in their strength. Whatever the re-appearance of Tyre after the overthrow of the Chaldean, the prophecy looks onward to a brighter day when her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to Jehovah.

Chapter 24.

Since chanter 13 we have in general judgments on the nations, and have seen the Jews given up for the Gentiles, the beasts of the earth, to winter upon them. Here we see judgment on Israel, and from verse 13 extending to all the earth and the isles of the sea. At that time the resurrection will be, and after the judgment blessing. How many Christians walk as if the coming of

the Lord were a fable, without a thought that the present age is an evil one! It is sad that through lack of spirituality so it should be with saints. If their affections were only set on heavenly things, things here below would no longer act on them.

The counsels of God are manifested in the ways of God. One may begin to retire from the world by the precepts of the gospel; but prophecy confirms these precepts by the light it casts on the world, when these precepts yet more separate us, shewing their practical value.

It is a question at first of the men of Judea. But all nations of the earth will be occupied with Jerusalem and gathered there where the judgment of God is to fall. From the land the transition is to the prophetic earth, and then to all the world (v. 3, 4, etc.)

It is a frightful character in the joy of the world that it cannot subsist before God. His presence puts an end to all that the world loves and desires. How terrible the thought if realised by faith! Bring in the manifestation of God, and the world's joy, gaiety, pleasure is all destroyed (v. 7-12). The Christian ought to abide in complete separation from all that. It is important that the testimony borne against (not the world only, but) worldly Christians should be distinct and positive. With a worldly person, not bearing Christ's name, one thinks at least of speaking to him of grace. But to a Christian who, knowing his privileges, walks with the world, it is hard to speak of grace, because he abuses it. Love does not consist in walking with such, but in warning them. That which gives intelligence is the unction from the Holy One. It is not possible to walk in the light and in worldliness. One must shew oneself more decided with

the Christian who is worldly than with the worldly man: “If any man that is called a brother be … with such an one, no not to eat,” 1 Cor. 5:11. There is love. If we believe that God is going to judge Sodom, how could we be at ease in Sodom with Lot? This is of all importance to-day.

The latter portion shews the consequence of the vintage for a little remnant. If one passes across the world, one sees how God is forgotten. Before executing judgment, God separates from the perverse generation which is about to be judged, those who are going to be saved.

If a Christian passes through the world, there is nothing to find there which speaks of Christ; and he is called to confess Christ where no one thinks of Him. Do you believe that, when the judgment shall have fallen, what will remain will be only as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done? The Holy Spirit reveals to us beforehand what the reality will manifest, the glory of Christ, the ruin of the world, the blessing of the remnant. It is evident that the judgment of God will effect a total separation between the righteous and the wicked. If the Holy Spirit acts with power, that is realised beforehand in us. The effect of judgment is to give a glory and a joy without mixture.

From the moment that judgment is executed, God appears as the Jehovah-God of Israel (v. 15). Verses 16-18 shew the state of the Jewish people. Man may vaunt himself long against God, but he will not escape judgment when the Eternal is manifested. “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage;

and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again," v. 19, 20. Such is the end of all that surrounds us.

But there is more: "And it shall come to pass in that day that Jehovah shall punish the hosts of the high ones on high, and die kings of the earth upon the earth." The high ones are spiritual wickedness on high, or in the heavenlies, the source of the evil; the kings of the earth are the chief instruments here below. "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," v. 22, 23. The glory of Jehovah replaces all the false glitter of the world.

Chapter 25.

This is the song of Israel which corresponds with the subject. We have need of long patience. The counsels were of old, and they are faithfulness and truth; they are not yet accomplished, but they will be manifested in all their precision and solidity according to God. 2 Peter 3 shews us the world clinging to visible things: the sun rose to-day, as it did yesterday and will to-morrow, and with more prosperity still in hope. Let us eat and drink say they: the things that are have ever been, and nothing is so permanent; the earth, the world, goes on for ever. So men speak and act. The child of God, on the contrary, rests on the firmness of God's word. By His word the world was made; by His word it has been judged and will be destroyed. If we judge by the events before us, as incredulity does, we shall attach ourselves

till the last moment to the things about to pass away. If I conclude from experience, I try to make the best of things around me, instead of adhering to the word of God. It is a principle of all importance. Faith separates from evil, because it is evil; but it is quite a different thing to separate from a thing because God is going to judge it. One sees Christians who do not recognise evil until they are injured by it. But one ought to recognise evil beforehand by the word of God, in order not to be in the midst of evil when it shall be judged. It is not the man entangled by evil who can put his brethren on their guard.

In verses 2-8 we have the things that God does in that day. Not only will He put down wickedness and pride, but He will make unto all people a feast of fat things, that is, a full blessing; and He will destroy in the mountain of Israel the covering that covers over all people—an expression very applicable to the day when judicially God will send men strong delusion that they should believe a lie. Moreover He will swallow up death in victory, wiping away every tear and taking away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. This is applied in 1 Corinthians 15:54 to the first resurrection, of which the apostle treats throughout. All is presented together in a general way. We may so, for the Eternal has spoken, and it is our blessedness to believe God when there is only the word of God for our faith. The world will think only of what it likes; man believes Satan and despises God, who demands faith in His word; and we believe God in the midst of all the illusions, and the wiles of the devil by which we are surrounded in this world. We must believe God though encompassed with the effects of sin. Adam believed Satan though

encompassed with the effects of the goodness of God. Faith gains the victory over the world, and acts in fact of that which is not as if it already existed.

Comparing verse 8 of our chapter with 1 Corinthians 15:54 we see something different in tone from the resurrection of the wicked, who are to be by rising again plunged into the lake of fire, the second death. We clearly see here Israel restored at the time of the first resurrection. All the brightness of the sun will be as nothing in comparison with the glory of Jehovah, when the covering of darkness shall be removed from the nations. For God will have delivered the Gentiles to blindness (Rom. 1; 2 Thess. 2). In the two chapters that follow are given the blessing of Judah, and the destruction of Satan or leviathan.

“In that day” (v. 1) is an expression of frequent recurrence which marks the time of accomplishment. “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah.” Israel becomes again the centre of God’s government for the earth (Deut. 32:8). At present the nations have the upper hand; these are the “times of the Gentiles”; but at length Judah re-appears on the scene as the object of God’s counsels.

Though Israel has been for a time delivered to the nations as to fierce beasts of prey, nevertheless the nations are not the direct object of the government of God, whilst providence directs everything. From Psalm 67 and many other scriptures we learn that the face of God must shine on Israel in order that His way may be known in the earth. When God strikes the nations, they are set aside, and He resumes the course of His government toward Israel. God overthrows the power of

the Gentiles, and as to Israel shews Himself to be Jehovah, the Eternal.

“The way of the just is uprightness” (v. 7)—of him who walks faithfully. The immediate government of God takes place only in the midst of His people. Them God judges; and when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world. Every act in the life of the Christian has its consequence. God judges immediately, and the unfaithful Christian has not a path of uprightness. This is what Israel has already proved, as it will prove more. God smooths the way of him who is faithful.

The remnant of the Jewish people will have waited for Jehovah, spite of Antichrist and all the difficulties. Psalm 44 shews the anguish of the remnant at this time. God has to chasten them; nevertheless they are watched tenderly by God. Jesus perfectly realised this waiting of the faithful which counts on God, whatever the anguish to which obedience might bring Him. Never did He turn aside from the path of obedience, although it led Him on to drink “the cup.”

“The inhabitants of the world” will only learn righteousness (v. 9) by the divine judgment which strikes the earth. The Christian ought to take his part in suffering; if he walks with the world, he does not understand the interests of Christ and is weakened, he has not the desire for the glory of Christ and does not suffer for Christ. “The inhabitants of the world” are not of God; their portion is on the earth, they enjoy this world. We (Christians) are the dwellers in the heavens, or at least belong to heaven (1 Cor. 15:48; Phil. 3:20), though too often Christians learn the ways of the

dwellers on earth. God waits till iniquity reaches its height before striking; meanwhile the wicked will deal unjustly still.

“The land of uprightness” (v. 10) is what is promised to Israel, Canaan under the Messiah.

The wicked fail to see the uplifted hand of Jehovah (v. 11) until it falls upon them, when they shall see. As to the result here below, grace does not accomplish the conversion of the world. Every hope of the world’s conversion by the gospel is without ground in the word of God; and it is even worse with Christendom, hardened as it is against the truth, than with pagans. Christendom as it refuses the love of the truth will receive a spirit of error.

The Jewish remnant (v. 12, 13), have nothing but the name of Jehovah to boast. There are moments in life for the saint where nothing but that remains for the soul.

The nations which ill-treated Israel shall not live longer; their day is over. Not chosen of God for this world, they have failed in their responsibility; their day of visitation comes, and all their memory is made to perish.

Verses 15-19. Israel ends by renouncing all hope in itself; whilst now-a-days we see the Jews in their unbelief full of hope in their re-establishment. Yet they shall live. (Compare Ezek. 37.) They shall rise as a nation.

The remnant (v. 20, 21) are called to hide themselves during the time of indignation or the day of vengeance. It is the time when the lawlessness of Antichrist will draw down the consuming wrath of God. The sole testimony will then be His judgment.

Chapter 27.

We have here another fact of all importance. The power of Satan in the world is destroyed, a power which governs and deceives the nations. Israel becomes the vineyard of red wine that Jehovah keeps, waters, and guards: whoever would harm it must face His judgment; but He offers peace with Him, and His strength to make it good. Israel became the centre of earthly blessing. To this the church has not been destined; and the moment it is her pretension, it is nothing but pride. In fact the church has failed in the mission she received of announcing the gospel and of being the witness of Christ's heavenly glory; and if she would after that pretend to it and count on it as a right, is this any more than pride? Even things which at one time are of faith are in other circumstances only pride. For instance Isaiah tells the king in chapter 38 to count on the deliverance of Judah from the Assyrian; whereas Jeremiah tells the king at a later day to save himself by submission to the Chaldean. In Isaiah 51 God tells His people to look to Abraham, and as He called their father when he was alone and blessed and increased him; whereas when the Jew boasted of Abraham in pride, God confounded them, as in Ezekiel 33:24; Matthew 3:9; John 8:39.

In verses 7, 8 we see Israel chastened, not destroyed. It is a purifying dealing. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin" (v. 9) in the very day when judgment takes its course on the wicked who have no understanding (v. 10,11).

From verses 12, 13 we see that there will be among the nations a remnant of Israel to be recalled one by one (Matt. 24:31). Such is the unravelling of the history of this poor world. All should bid us now stand entirely aloof from its course. The pride of Israel transfers itself to Christendom which arrogates to itself what God never gave it. Worldly-mindedness and the hope of gaining over the world always go together now. When the church thinks of converting the world (instead of gathering out of it to Christ in heaven), it allies itself to the powers of the world. They begin, it is true, by sincerely desiring the conversion of souls; then to arrive at this they join the world and fall into spiritual feebleness. When we rest on the world, we own and affirm its power. Rightly viewed, the conversion of three thousand in one day in Jerusalem was the precursor, not even of the conversion of the city, but of the judgment which was about to fall on it. God abides sovereign, and the Christian admires His sovereignty, and rejoices in it.

Thus from chapter 13 to chapter 27 we have seen judgments falling on the Gentiles, the Jews being found there. From chapter 28 to chapter 35 we shall see the details of what is to happen to the Jews, etc., in the last days of this age. Each revelation closes with a testimony borne to God’s glory in Israel.

Chapter 28.

In this division chapters 28, 29 shew the judgments on Ephraim and Jerusalem (Ariel, that is, lion of God). We see there what God thinks of that which inspires most confidence in man, His judgment condemning it all, and the deliverance of the meek, the remnant of His people.

The first thing judged is the crown of pride, the carelessness of luxury, which leaves man intoxicated and blind. God raises up the Assyrian a mighty and strong one against those who had abandoned themselves to pride and excess. “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: and the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.” After this judgment there is a change, and Jehovah becomes a crown of glory, and a spirit of strength for the remnant (v. 5, 6). Pride, ease, luxury, and the world’s vain glory hinder the word from striking the conscience; but for the poor, despised, afflicted remnant, God is their resource and strength, and becomes a crown of glory. It is very possible that the people of God should be despised till then.

As to the church there is this difference, that from the beginning it is a remnant. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” The ways of God were not such in the Jewish economy. The nation was the people of God, and the remnant remained hidden. Elijah believed himself alone, the remnant was not manifested, though God knew seven thousand. When the church began, the Lord added together such as should be saved, the remnant from among the Jews. The

actual principle for the present time is the gathering together in one of the scattered children of God. Among the Jews God did not thus gather His children: they were the elect people that He owned.

It is a mistake that some Christians make of the church an invisible thing. Such was the case with God's children in Judaism, but it is not the principle in Christianity. For the Jews there was only individual faithfulness, besides their common national privileges. But to-day; that is, since Pentecost, the presence of the Holy Spirit is a power that gathers the children of God and produces a corporate testimony in the world. It is a city that cannot be hid. When Israel departs from God, God sends, as to children, precept upon precept, line upon line. "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of Jehovah was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line: here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken," v. 7-13. God

cannot cease to bear testimony till He has exhausted all the means to bring back to Himself.

The result of resistance is to bring upon those that resist a blindness so much the greater as it is proportionate to the light refused. If the first testimony is received, more is always added, for it is given to him that hath, and he shall have more abundance. Those who bowed to the witness of John the Baptist received also Jesus; those who rejected it rejected also the Messiah, and the testimony of John was withdrawn, and the people blinded. Jesus bears a greater testimony, the remnant attach to Him. The Holy Spirit bears afterwards testimony and gathers the church; but the Jews rejected Him, and were rejected. These testimonies bring on their judgment. The more God manifests Himself, the more does the heart's natural opposition shew itself. Those who receive the first grace receive the rest until glory, and go from strength to strength. God did not let judgment fall on Jerusalem till Jerusalem rejected the Holy Spirit. When grace is exhausted God sends judgment. The flesh seeks ever to keep the enjoyment of its lusts and would harden the conscience against the testimony that God sends.

The Jews would not have their kingdom and their holy place destroyed; but their unbelief led to a complete blinding, and Satan pushed them on to destruction, going so far as to make them say of Jesus, that He cast out demons by Beelzebub. There is no blindness like that which results from resisting the light, and in presence of the light not renouncing one's own will.

When Jerusalem sees the judgment on Ephraim, to escape it they unite more firmly with the power of evil.

“Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hid ourselves,” v. 14, 15. In the close it will be Antichrist in alliance with Satan and his instruments. But God gives the remnant a sure foundation-stone in Zion. “Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it,” v. 16-18.

In the judgments of God, the question one sees debated is between the rights of Satan because of sin, and those of God. It is necessary that the people of God should be judged on the one hand and on the other, that in the midst of the judgment salvation should be found, as Noah in the ark was carried over the waters of the deluge. It is in the cross of Christ that faith sees the judgment of God against our sins, and for ourselves; we are thus saved righteously. So here also judgment will Jehovah lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, when He lays in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone. The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, the waters overflowing the hiding place; but the Stone abides sure and stedfast.

The very same thing—God's judgment—which destroys the wicked guarantees the believer against all evil, for he is made God's righteousness in Christ.

The foundation Stone has long been laid at Jerusalem. The blood of the new covenant with His people is carried within the holiest of all. The church is already laid on this Stone meanwhile, because it has owned the Stone which later on is to become the confidence of the Jewish remnant. The church profits by it beforehand, as Israel will doubtless at a later day. The passages where it is a question of this Stone are cited in the New Testament, in the past generally applicable. One often sees passages thus half cited, because as a whole they do not apply to the present. Judgment is not yet laid to the hne and righteousness to the plummet. To-day is the time of grace, and not that of judgment.

But judgment will surely come for the earth. "From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For Jehovah shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord Jehovah of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth," v. 19-22. What is Jehovah's "strange work" and "act"? It is the judgment of His people towards whom His goodness has no bounds. This "act "strange to the heart of God, which made the Lord Jesus weep, is the execution of judgment

on His people, then apostate. It is a thing God does only when He is forced to it by their extreme iniquity. The Jews have rejected the Christ, and they will have the Antichrist. The consumption, even determined upon the whole earth, will be much more terrible on them. It is the same principle, but even worse, for Christendom which had the light but rejected it. The more truly one is in the light, the more is one necessarily allied to Satan if one rejects the light. Nothing more terrible than a conscience hardened by a perverse will, which commences by the most ordinary lusts. Judas is not the only man fond of money.

The end of the chapter (v. 23-29) shews the wisdom of God in the smallest things. He gives to man wisdom in cultivating the earth, in sowing, reaping, and dealing with the crops. And will He not know what to do best for His people?

Chapter 29.

As chapter 28 gave us Ephraim and Jerusalem, spite of its evil alliance, taken; chapter 29 shews that a second attack against Jerusalem, brought to the utmost distress, will fail through divine power which will destroy its adversaries (v. 1-8).

If Jerusalem is a lion of God, when God speaks of the judgments He says, “I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee,” v. 3. The Assyrians were but instruments in His hand. He would Himself strike, but not exterminate His guilty people. He docs not destroy, but chastens them. This humbles but it comforts; for love is there. See the case of Job: there are the instruments of judgment, and Satan behind them,

but God above who directs all for the good of Job, who at the end is more blessed of Jehovah than at the beginning, bright as it was. Psalm 118 shews us these three things clearly. (See v. 10, 13, 18.) The nations surround in enmity, Satan seeks to destroy, but above them all Jehovah chastises and sorely, but does not deliver to death. All the nations of the earth shall be round Jerusalem and opposed to her, but they shall pass as a dream before Jehovah. See also Zech. 12:2-4; 14:2,3; Ps. 108; Micah 4:11, 12.

But we see here that the most ancient relations with God serve no good purpose when man lays his trust in them. When he is far from God, he attaches himself to the old things that God instituted, to reject what God may be actually giving. But one cannot deceive God as to right and wrong. “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year: let them kill sacrifices. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel,” v. 1, 2. He says elsewhere, He would destroy His house, His altar; as He did to Shiloh, so to the temple, whatever the presumption of His people, because He will have righteousness and holiness, not the things He established. God had established the altar, temple, sacrifices, feasts, and priests; but when iniquity is there, judgment must begin with His house, and its judgment is only the more terrible if the effects of the Holy Spirit are not there; the sole consequence of being near to God outwardly is the more unsparing judgment. Again, the more Christendom departs from truth and righteousness, the more it rests on institutions as being of God. It is not those who are occupied with the Lord of the temple that say, “The temple of Jehovah, the temple

of Jehovah are these." The more evil the conscience is, the more it attaches itself to forms.

No doubt sovereign mercy and faithfulness will work in a remnant, and God will deliver for His own name at the end. But we see in verses 9-14 at the side of these forms, that God despises the incapacity of His people judicially blinded of God: learned or ignorant alike reject the word of God. To the one the book is as sealed, and the other pleads that he is not learned: the revelation of God by prophecy they cannot seize. Yet He reveals all for the blessing of His people, not that aught should be covered. He has not given the Bible that it should not be understood. If Christians say that they cannot take it in, they say just what the Jews do here, the proof of their state of ruin. They thus evade the testimony which would save them from the consequences of the judgment. But in vain. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from Jehovah, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay; for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?" v. 15-17.

But babes receive God's testimony. "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel," v. 18, 19.

The Lord does not present us here with the detailed history of His people in the last days. He takes cognisance of all that will happen to them; He has measured the force of the enemy; He has not only foreseen all, but makes us see that light behind all these means.

The state of the people in the time that precedes destruction is a voluntary ignorance, after which God closes intelligence and sheds profound slumber. This will happen to Christendom also. There will be “strong delusion” because they wished not the truth. It is the same here in verses 8-11. This iniquity will be like the bowing of a wall about to fall. They wish to hear no more vision threatening them with the terrible things that are to happen. It had been similar with the heathen who had not kept the knowledge of God, and were given over to a state of blindness (Rom. 1:22-24). God had already said of Israel, “Make the heart of this people fat,” a word applied for the last time in Acts 28. It is the case then for the heathen, the Jews, and Christendom, and it will be yet again true for the Jews. They have said to the seers, See not (chap. 30:10). It is frightful to know the people at such a pitch that they can no more be extricated. This obstinacy assumes an appearance of reason, because it is a strong delusion.

Verses 13, 14. This is not an avowed infidelity which brings on the judgment. The people draw near to God with a shew of piety: they have a fear taught by the precept of men. It will be the same with Christendom: there will be a form of godliness; yes, and men will be lovers of themselves rather than of God. Such is what characterises the perilous times, the show of piety, but no conscience before God (v. 15). Then God turns all

upside down. Lebanon is turned into Carmel. The fruitful field is esteemed a forest, and the forest a fruitful field. This is always what characterises such a state; but when God turns all upside down, verses 18-24 will be seen accomplished. All that is yet to come.

Chapter 30.

Woe is pronounced on the rebellious children who act according to their prudence, but not counselled of Jehovah (v. 1-7). This is found too often even with the Christian. It is folly, even with the best intentions, to take counsel of oneself. It characterises the evil in the last times. For the Christian, is it not to take counsel of God, if one forms a plan, and then pray for a blessing? Often it is necessary for us to run back the road so as to return to the place which one had quitted. All that is time lost.

Israel sought an ally in Egypt strong as the Assyrians (v. 2). It is to seek strength in the flesh. God would make this prudence vain; He would have His people confide in Himself. So Abram went down into Egypt without consulting God (Gen. 12), and found himself the worse for it. What things have we, dear friends, done to-day without consulting God? It has been all lost time thus to act without God. Man would always act; though on many occasions God would have one keep quietly waiting (1 Sam. 15). Whatever be the appearances of reason and prudence, it is always folly for man to wish to go before God’s time. God does not slumber, He tries our hearts and intervenes at last in a suitable time.

Nothing is more despicable than the people of God in alliance with the world. They can but add their misery to that of the world, and the world profits them in nothing

(chap. 31:3). Ruin will come on all that the deceivers do (v. 8-14). There is no people like God's when He abandons them: the evil reaches them, the good escapes them; there is neither force nor intelligence (v. 15-17).

Nevertheless Jehovah waits that He may be gracious unto them (v. 18). The Pharisees, who would have made a heap of the adulteress, disappear; whilst Jesus stays to shew grace, of which they felt no need. (See John 8:9-11.)

"For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee," v. 19. This is given also in Joel 2:12-14. From the moment the remnant take the place where God put them, He listens to their cry. Faith takes the place of the sinner and humbles itself, and then God answers. If the church is in a sad state, faith has the consciousness of the state the church is found in; owns it, humbles itself, and God can answer. It is what Christ has done for us; He has owned fully before God the state of sin in which He put Himself for us, and He has wrought redemption. The remnant will feel the ruin of Jerusalem, and will cry according to the misery and the ruin of Jerusalem. Faith gives the consciousness of the state of ruin in which sin has placed us.

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left," v. 20, 21. This is consoling. The remnant will be in the utmost

distress, but they shall see their teachers, and hear the word of guidance. Misery may be deep, but God will shew the way. Once they are brought down to the point where God sees things, He has always a way for His people, and as they depart from all iniquity, so He will bless with every blessing on the earth (v. 22-26). The nations are to assemble in the power of their will, but God will sift and scatter them in devouring judgment (v. 27-30), while the remnant rejoice in their place.

The Assyrian is always presented here as the one with whose destruction ends “the indignation.” (See chaps. 10:24; 14; Dan. 8.) When the Assyrian is destroyed the indignation will be closed. (Compare Micah 5:5, 6.) Jesus “shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land.” “For through the voice of Jehovah shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it,” v. 31-33. The staff of Jehovah shall fall on the Assyrian. One sees the aim of this judgment of God. He is full of patience and long-suffering. His people meanwhile are in alarm at the power of the enemy. When God strikes the enemies, it is always the deliverance of His people. Tophet, the place of the Assyrian’s judgment, is already prepared, not for him only, but also for “the king,” the Antichrist who shall do according to his will. (See Dan. 11:36-45.) Antichrist will be cast with the Assyrian into Tophet. “The breath of Jehovah like a stream of brimstone doth kindle

it." (Compare 2 Thess. 2:8.) He will destroy the wicked with the breath of His mouth.

If we listen to our own will, it would put us in movement according to the strength of man against the evil which surrounds us. But we have nothing else to do but wait on God, abiding faithful to Him who will not let us fall into ruin through the adversary. May God give us grace to receive His word that this rebellious people would not receive. For God waits to be gracious to those that receive His word. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the earth," Rev. 3:10.

Chapter 31.

The Lord warns His people against the tendency to seek aid in Egypt. It is not any longer only taking counsel without God, but leaning on the flesh. It is the tendency of us all not to have recourse to God unless forced to it. The prodigal son ate the husks of swine before he thought of his father's house. To lean on God one must be in the truth, having the consciousness of what we are; one cannot bring lies before God. What often hinders conversion, or at least retards it, is that one misunderstands what one is by nature, that is, without strength and ungodly. It is the same in all our ways, seeking to lean on any rather than on God. Israel had been taken out of Egypt and carried to Babylon. Called out of the world one falls into corruption. Egypt typifies the natural strength of the world, Babylon of the world's corruption. Israel seeks support in the natural strength of man. That does not irritate pride nor unveil what we are. One cannot lean on God without the beating down

of flesh's pride and the learning that we are nothing. The tendency of sin is to veil sin from our eyes. Far from God we cannot know what is the power of God, though we might have known it at other times. Far from God we forget what He is. It is not a question only for us of God in heaven, but of His manifestation in the midst of His people, mixing Himself with all their affairs, and accompanying them in all their journeyings (Ex. 29:45, 46).

What is true for the joy of God's people is also true for their strength; it comes from the presence of God. It is also the case with the church which is God's habitation through the Spirit. It is true of each Christian individually. God does not manifest His power in the activity of the flesh. If one acts in the flesh, one loses the consciousness of what God can do. When we see that God acts, one does not even think of seeking the resources of the flesh. In the activity of the flesh, one feels that one has no right to count on God.

The flesh seeks to hide the thing from itself, or to take its side of going with the world, or to find somewhere a resource to hinder chastening. The consequence of this is that one does not at all perceive when good comes (Jer. 17). Israel set themselves outside the way, and when the Lord acts, they do not at all see it; they will then be overthrown with those from whom they sought succour.

Often the Lord makes one wait long as if He did not trouble Himself with the lot of His people. But when they are in the greatest distress, God acts. The extremity of man is the opportunity of God, the moment favourable and suited for Him to manifest Himself. It is

difficult to convince man of this—that God loves him enough to think of him and deliver him. Faith has only God, and God alone is the resource of the people in the resurrection.

We have already seen that the Assyrian is the last enemy of the people (v. 8, 9).

Chapter 32.

The moment that God acts, Christ appears. This chapter is the one God used to open my understanding to the coming of Christ. We see, first, Christ coming to reign in righteousness on the earth; second, an entire change in the economy, a new Pentecost for the Jews and also for the Gentiles. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit cannot be repeated in the present economy. There are but two outpourings of the Spirit, the rain of the former season and that of the latter. The Jews must necessarily have returned to their own land in order to receive the rain of the latter season which has been promised them. Thus there must be the presence of Christ on earth, and a second effusion of the Holy Spirit. But this will be a testimony rendered to the glory of Christ, and no longer a manifestation of grace. We see in Zechariah 2:8 that it is “after the glory” the Jews become a blessing to the nations. The testimony to the glory of Christ thus manifested is not in this economy.

We see here then the return of Christ (v. 1), and the Spirit poured out from on high on the Jews (v. 15), entirely new events. All that has taken place before in Christendom will be counted only as a forest and not a fruitful field, or a Carmel; the hail shall fall on the forest (of the Gentiles), and “the city “Babylon shall be utterly abased.

Verses 1, 2. The first thing is a king who is to reign on earth in righteousness. The church on the contrary ought during the actual economy to follow Jesus, righteous indeed but suffering, put to death by a judge who owned His innocence. The righteous man suffers, and injustice the most flagrant is committed against such. Such is the position of the Christian and the church. It is not yet a king reigning in righteousness. In the age to come righteousness shall reign. Even then it will not be the eternal state where righteousness dwells in the new earth. During the millennium there will be the need of a reign to repress evil. The principle of the present economy is the suffering of the saints though walking righteously: in the future age “judgment will return to righteousness,” whilst at the present time it is opposed to righteousness.

Verses 9-14. Judgment must go on, Zion even be a wilderness, until (v. 15) the Spirit be poured upon us (the Jews) from on high: then all should be changed for good, the wilderness be a Carmel, and what was a Carmel be counted for a forest.

God, having put man near Himself, above by resurrection and ascension, pours out from on high the Holy Spirit upon those who believe, as a Spirit of power, which it is needful to distinguish from His work in conversion or the new birth. At the time of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down on the converted only. We see that not only does the Holy Spirit act on us to make us believe, but moreover when we believe He is therein given to us as a Spirit of power. All this got blotted out little by little in its effects by the unfaithfulness of the church, which grieved the Holy Spirit who dwells there. When the church is caught up to meet the Lord, the

Holy Spirit goes along with it; but after the Lord returns in power and glory, the Spirit is poured out afresh as the rain of the latter season, and the world recommences as a thing quite new. “Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,” etc. (v. 16-18). But it is the moment of the world’s judgment (v. 19), followed by the blessedness of peace on earth (v. 20).

The chapter thus presents us with the complete change of the economy. It is not here a question of the church. The relationships and the state of the faithful will be then quite opposite in character. To-day it is a question of conformity to the grace of Jesus in suffering, then to His glory and power on earth. The earth cursed because of sinful man will be blessed; flesh and unrighteousness will be uprooted. The vile person will no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. Peace and righteousness shall flourish; and the Holy Spirit will no more have to resist the power or wiles of Satan who will then be consigned to the abyss. We see the later history of the Jewish remnant in Psalms 42-49, especially in the three earliest of these psalms. Then Psalm 45 introduces the Messiah, and joy comes. We have here this instruction to sustain us on the Lord when He does not manifest Himself. Those who have believed without seeing are to be specially blessed. This is the church’s portion; and it applies also to all the circumstances of details. Moreover the presence of the Holy Spirit is all our strength. It is when put to the proof that we are

tempted to lean on the flesh, and then faith manifests itself in leaning only on God. But we must be in the truth before Him, and it will be manifest that the remnant seek not help in Egypt.

Chapter 33.

We have seen from chapter 28 the special circumstances of the Jews in the last days, terminating as always in the introduction of the Messiah. Here in chapter 33 we see judgment fall on the last enemy of Israel (it would seem the Gog of Ezekiel); then in chapter 34 on all nations of which Edom is the scene, followed by the unparalleled sketch of the earth's blessing, and joy, and prosperity under Messiah's reign in Zion, when "the last end of the indignation" is closed. Therefore in the midst of the prophecy is found introduced the history of Hezekiah menaced by the Assyrian and his deadly sickness turned, as a type of Messiah and the power of resurrection, and the destruction of the last mighty foe of Israel in the last days, but not without the captivity of Judah and its royal line to Babylon meanwhile.

Edom is another bitter enemy that ever put obstacles in the way of Israel, and yet to be judged in a particular way, when his destruction will be so complete as to leave no remnant. See Obadiah.

We have then in this chapter the judgment of the last great enemy of Israel, typified by the Assyrian, then of Edom and the nations gathered there, to introduce the blessing of Israel and the earth, the land especially when every curse shall be removed.

The invasion of the Assyrian into Judea was groundless; he dealt treacherously (v. 1), deceived Hezekiah and,

after receiving his treasure, broke the covenant and besieged Jerusalem; but the effect of the distress of Israel at the coming of the Assyrian was that Jehovah rose, was exalted, and lifted Himself up (v. 2-10). One may remark the spirit of intercession in Christ for His people, and how He identifies Himself with them: “Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.” We see it also very often in the Psalms when He speaks of “mine iniquities” in speaking of those of His people.

Verse 5. “Jehovah is exalted,” etc. The circumstances indicated in verses 7-9 shew the power of the enemy unlimited. It is thus faith regards all the power of the world. From the moment it sees neither fear of God in the world nor deliverance for itself, it gives itself up to wait on God. Faith judges justly of all. Unbelief judges the circumstances correctly, and the consequences of things visible; it forgets but one thing, God, who comes in and upsets all these combinations, be they ever so wise. Faith pierces even to God across all circumstances and all difficulties. It does not stop to consider, it does not reason on the possibility of things because it only stops at God, and when man despairs, faith is perfectly calm and happy. Faith has no need either of human reasoning or of human prudence. Hezekiah puts before Jehovah the letter of Sennacherib. The wisdom of faith is looking to God, doing His will, and troubling about nothing. When Christ comes, one then sees that the fear of God is wisdom and treasure (v. 6).

The circumstances which are too strong for us ought to have no other effect upon us than to make us realise the presence of God. We see in Psalm 18 how God answers to the distress of His people. He rises, and all crumbles

in His presence: the full accomplishment of this Psalm will manifest it.

Verse 14. It is a terrible thing to be found without faith between the power of the enemies of God and the manifestation of the power of God when He descends with devouring fire. The hypocrite cannot dwell there between the two, nor is any one so wretched as a merely professing Christian or a sinful Jew in those times. It is the position of the foolish virgins; the Bridegroom comes, and they have no oil. It is the position in which all Christendom will then be found, all that which has but the form of godliness; and therefore during the judgments in the last days they will be as men giving up the ghost through fear, and saying to the mountains, Cover us. Conscience foresees those everlasting burnings, and that the judgment of God will rise against every power of Satan.

Verses 15, 16. The remnant will be kept; the devouring fire does not touch them. But further (v. 17) their eye shall see the King in His beauty. The thunderbolt that falls on the wicked passes them harmlessly, for Messiah is there. Peace is established; and men look round freely even to the most distant quarters of the land, and reflect on the terror which no longer fills them: so overwhelming the danger! so sudden and complete the deliverance! (v. 18,19). All that was dreaded is vanished away.

From verse 20 we see what Zion will be for the faithful people. It is a peace God has made and given for ever, not an atom to be disturbed any more. Even in the last revolt when Satan masters the distant nations at the end of the thousand years' reign, the enemies may compass

the beloved city and the camp of the saints, but they touch nothing. It is a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down. “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,” v. 20.

Verses 21, 22. The confidence of Israel is in Jehovah, the source of all blessing, and withal their unfailing security. “For Jehovah our Judge, Jehovah our Lawgiver, Jehovah our King, He will save us.”

The strongest of their enemies was foiled and prostrate, and a prey to the feeblest in Israel (v. 23), who will then be enabled to enjoy the blessing, the curse being gone, all their iniquities forgiven, and all their diseases healed (v. 24).

Chapter 34.

All the earth is called to hear (v. 1); it is very far now from being willing to answer such an appeal.

The nations will be assembled in Idumea, and there will be judged. (Obad. 13-15; Ps. 137:7; Isa. 63:1-4.) The sword of Jehovah shall come down on Idumea, and on the people of His curse to judgment (v. 5). Edom is marked out as a centre of judgment for the quick. He has chastened His people to sanctify them; but He will judge the nations. His indignation against idolatrous and apostate Jerusalem closes with the judgment of the Assyrian, and the destruction of the nations in the land of Edom. In chapter 63 we see what will happen to them at this time; Jesus will judge and trample them down in

His fury: a scene which has no reference to the cross where Jesus was Himself trampled down.

“The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.” This terrible judgment of the living is lost for Christendom. The Jews had no adequate idea of a judgment of the dead; they were familiar with judgments on the living by the direct government of God which exercised visible judgment on the living, as we see in Korah, Achan, etc. All has been changed in relationship with God for the church by the resurrection; and Christians have in great measure lost sight of the judgment of the living, because they are used only to expect judgment after death. But there will be a judgment of the living as well as a judgment of the dead. They like to forget it because the judgment of the dead, being more distant, does not touch so directly the course in which one walks on the earth. It will fall on the neighbourhood of Jerusalem as well as on Bozrah.

The rest of the chapter is the detail of the judgment in Edom.

Chapter 35.

We see the full blessing of the land, of which Zion will be the centre. All will be blessed. God does not despise this earth, nor any creature, though the curse is fallen on all because of Adam’s sin.

The miracles of Jesus working every sort of cure were a sample of what His redemption will do for all creation, and hence called powers of the world to come (Rom. 8:19-22; Heb. 6). There will be deliverance when He appears; the evil will be taken away. Hence also when the disciples rejoiced over the demons cast out in His name, He predicts the fall of Satan from heaven. His death breaks Satan's power for the believer's conscience: but though thus emancipated, we groan and suffer in the body still. But the Son of man's victory goes much farther than to cast Satan from the conscience. By His word He takes away every evil, all suffering, for faith. But here it is no question of conscience; it is a marvellous manifestation of God's intervention into all the miseries of man. Jesus will exercise this power fully when He returns, but on quite a different plan from that which He exercised in Judea during His ministry. It will be no more by the Holy Spirit awakening souls for spiritual joys, but delivering creation from the slavery of corruption.

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you," v. 4. The faithful remnant is restored by this announcement. Is it also for us the greatest source of joy? or would His coming be a sort of tearing us away from the earth, instead of lifting us up to set us where our treasure is? The Spirit and the bride say, Come. Do we?

Chapters 36-39.

These chapters are the history of the Assyrian invading and overthrown, of the sickness of Hezekiah and of the

embassy from Babylon with the captivity foreshewn. There is the outward deliverance (chaps. 36, 37), and the inward (chap. 38), resurrection power being applied to the sickness of the son of David, type of a greater who actually died and rose to bring in the sure mercies of David.

Verse 16 above all explains why God wished Hezekiah to pass through this trial. It was needful that flesh should be judged as nought, and that the power which opposes the people of God should be destroyed solely by God's power. So will it yet be made good spiritually in the Jew, the principle of death for the destruction of the flesh, that the nation, deprived of all confidence in self, may be delivered by the power and grace of God. Yet was it but a type now: Hezekiah was a saint, but not the Messiah; nor had he learnt the lesson of death and resurrection adequately; but lifted up with pride after his recovery and the destruction of the Assyrian, he displayed the rich stores of his house and dominion to the ambassadors of Merodach-baladan, and hears from the prophet the solemn word of Jehovah that all should be swept away to Babylon, not only all that had been laid up for generations by the royal house, but of his issue to be eunuchs in the palace of the conqueror (chap. 39). The historical portion is of the utmost weight for the elucidation of this prophecy, which it divides into two very distinct sections, both of which it illustrates, the earlier being external, as the latter is more internal and consequently viewing Israel not merely as a people among hostile nations, but as witnesses to Jehovah as the one true God and awaiting the Messiah, the elect Servant, which they were not, while they failed in both respects, but finally, when bowing to the Messiah in

detestation of their idolatry, they become and are owned as His servants when His glory appears, and all ends in the blessing of the faithful and the judgment of the rebellious. Christ will defend Israel by His power when the Assyrian shall come into their land: “This man shall be the peace,” Micah 5. “And they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.” Till then it is vain to expect it.

Chapter 40.

After this historical parenthesis we have henceforth in one prophecy a more intimate and detailed revelation of the relationships of God as to His people and of His ways toward them.

It is a question of the counsels of God as to Israel in grace, but in this point of view, Israel is a witness of God, the only true God, and His servant Christ, comes, and Israel will not acknowledge Him. For this reason the remnant alone is recognised and the people condemned by the judgment which is coming, and the remnant glorified with Christ.

He speaks of comfort, notwithstanding the many iniquities of which Israel has been guilty, and He manifests His positive will to be glorified by His people upon the earth. The church glorifies God before principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3). The church is the means of making known the wisdom of God in heaven; Israel is the means of making it known in this world to powers upon the earth. Until the church, the ways of God had always been in connection with the earth; God’s king had been seen on the earth; His wisdom on the earth, with regard to His earthly people. But in looking at the church, the principalities and

powers see a wisdom which is entirely new, the glory of Christ in a people which God strengthens by His Spirit, to whom everything is promised for heaven at least, and which does not consider its own life, in order to be manifested in the glory of Christ. That is why we see in Ephesians that the wisdom of God is different in every way. When this purpose of God is accomplished in the church, He takes up again His ways with the Jews, and He says as a summary of all that is to follow, “Comfort ye my people.”

In the preceding chapters, He reasons with His people, in order to prove to them their sin.- Here it is the proclamation of a new way, and of His positive will to comfort His people. But in order to do this, He must enter with more detail into the miseries of His people. He makes an appeal to their conscience, then an explanation of the thoughts of His heart. He enters into these special purposes with His people and shews that He has not always been able to do so. He desires that the conscience of the people should acknowledge the justice of His ways, and enters into the delicacy of their new relations with God. God makes manifest His way of dealing, and all the manner of His people’s acting, in order that everything may be acknowledged, and that the people may understand that in God all is love. It is continually a question in this latter part of the book of Isaiah, not only of the ways of God with His people in regard to the nations, but chiefly of the coming and the rejection of Jesus—a sin which was the crowning point of all the sins of Israel.

God had an object, whether it was in calling Israel or in calling the church. If God wished to glorify Israel on the earth, He presents His people according to the intention

of God regarding them. He might have said, This is my will, and have left to man the task of doing it: that is law. He could produce and accomplish in man what He desired, and shew the resources there are in God for doing it; that is grace. God did this with Israel. Israel was a people in relation with the eternal God, in order that the eternal and only true God might be manifested to the world in all His ways. This will happen also at the close.

There are two things true, with regard to the power of Satan. He got possession of the. earth as being the theatre of the government of God, and he got possession of man and his affections. Therefore does the Holy Spirit say, that the friendship of the world is enmity against God. He therefore who would be a friend of the world is an enemy of God; as also the mind of the flesh is enmity against God.

The church has been formed and maintained here below to manifest to the world the victory of the second Man over Satan and the glory of the second Man seated on the throne of God the Father, infinitely greater than that of the first man Adam in Eden. Israel and the church should have been witnesses of God, one for the earth, the other for heaven, and this in putting aside the power of Satan.

Before the flood there was no government; since then a new principle of evil manifested itself, man entering into direct relation with Satan by idolatry. Man does not confine himself only to being wicked and rebellious against God; he replaces God by Satan. “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons.” Then it is that God calls Abram in order that His name

should be known on the earth, and His called be witness to His glory. It is grace that acted; for Abram had been an idolater, like others. He is chosen, called, and made heir of the promises: grace acted thus. Later on the Israelites, Abram's posterity, were placed as God's witnesses in Canaan under the law—law which could not annul the promise. God manifests in Israel the principle of His government. Israel having not only failed but apostatised, God had to chase them thence. How could He tolerate a people which compromised His glory, having ceased to be a witness against idolatry, Satan's direct power in the world? The greatest part of the world is still under this direct power of Satan besides his influence on the heart, for this moral influence of Satan is quite another thing. In idolatry the demon is adored to get his protection or escape his malice; they attribute to him all that God does. Israel having become idolatrous totally failed in its responsibility, the ten tribes first, afterwards Judah who has been yet worse. Then God carries them successively away from the land. With Nebuchadnezzar begin the times of the Gentiles (Dan. 2:31-34, 37-43).

There is a particular circumstance to remark. We see in Isaiah 41-48 Cyrus, conqueror of Babylon, marked out as about to close the captivity by executing judgment on idolatry. The temple is rebuilt, and Israel enters on a new trial. For Jehovah comes Himself in the person of Jesus to present Himself to His people as king; and thus there is a new responsibility for Israel, or at least the Jew. Cyrus was but a type of a greater; and the return from Babylon only a partial deliverance. Much more was coming. Hence with chapter 49 God enters into a new controversy with His people, on the ground not of

idolatry but of the rejected Messiah. It is not only that Israel announces to the nations that God had called the seed of Abraham to be His servant, witnesses of Jehovah against idols, and that then they utterly failed and came under judgment, but that after this they were actually to refuse their own Messiah, the divine king, the Lord Jesus Christ, who takes the place of His people Israel, and Himself becomes “Servant” of God, a title which serves to open the latter half of the prophecy. In chapter 42 at the beginning He is just characterised in humiliation till the end come; but the people are immediately turned to in their failure, though with wonderful expression of sovereign goodness to Israel spite of all. So it is in the second controversy, from chapter 49 to chapter 57, whereas before, God’s love to Israel is fully set out before the proof of their sin and ruin. Then when Messiah’s humiliation and atoning death but exaltation have been fully set out in chapter 53, the result is added for Jerusalem at the close in chapter 54, and suited exhortations follow in the three chapters which conclude the sections: free grace even to the nations (chap 55); the indispensable character formed and requisite even for Israel (chap. 56); and, whether Israel or not, no peace to the wicked (chap. 57).

Then, in view of divine intervention and glory with its consequences morally and in every other way, which forms the closing part (chaps. 58-66), the Holy Spirit opens with the most extreme denunciation of form and hypocrisy in Israel, obedience being due to Jehovah. Only He could meet all, and will by coming as Redeemer to Zion (chap. 59); for whatever the glory in judgment which will invest Jerusalem (chap. 60), He must first suit Himself to their need in grace (chap. 61) in order to

secure peace and blessing (chap. 62), though none the less in unsparing judgment (chap. 63). Lastly the Spirit in the prophet speaking for the remnant reasons on this, chapter 63:7 to the end of chapter 64, and Jehovah answers in chapters 65 and 66, which concludes the book.

In this chapter Jehovah intervenes and announces that He is come to comfort His people. Verse 2 is the expression of His heart which will have it that Jerusalem has received double for all her sins at His hand. Verse 3 opens the preparatory warning, but it is of Jehovah's manifestation. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it," v. 4, 5. The Eternal presents Himself to His people and the remnant is manifested by this means. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? 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," v. 6-8. The answer is a sentence on all Israel. The passage is cited by the apostle of the circumcision to prove that all is rejected save the remnant. It is also a sentence pronounced on all that which is "flesh." For all flesh is grass. The power of the Spirit discovers to our souls that in the flesh no good dwells, it will not submit to God's law, nor does it love Jesus, nor is it led by the Holy Spirit. And man who is not of Christ is "flesh."

There must be submission to the righteousness of God in order to walk in the Spirit. Otherwise it is just the flesh and worth nothing, whatever the appearance. But at that time Israel according to the flesh was but vanity. Also, because they were flesh, the resurrection was needful to secure the mercies of David, even to Israel here below, namely the godly remnant who will own the risen Christ. Man torments himself vainly by seeking in himself wisdom, strength, righteousness. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. God's word alone abides. The consequence is that the promises to Israel stand for ever, that He will comfort His people even according to His earthly promises.

The rest of the chapter points out God's glory in creation for His people, the sole and true God in contrast with an idol. If on the one side all flesh is withered, on the other after the ages of sorrow Israel must know that God is always the same and wearies not. The state of the people has in no way been unknown to Him during this long interval. Those who wait on Jehovah renew their strength, He faints not, but He gives power to the faint. This is a hard lesson to learn; but it is necessary to believe that the flesh is nothing, its wisdom, good plans, etc., nothing but vanity. What God does and says abides; man perishes. How important to let God act, knowing that we are nothing.

Thus the people of God are to be comforted. Prepare ye the way of Jehovah; all flesh is as grass, but the word of God endures for ever. He takes the people of God for a witness against idols; the people which He made for His glory. He takes Cyrus as a type of the deliverance of the people captive in Babylon, also being a witness to the

Gentiles, and Jehovah, who is to be glorified in Israel. What has just been said is from chapters 40-48.

Chapter 41 is full of the righteous man from the earth, not merely as the destined conqueror, but as the avenger, to call on Jehovah's name and execute judgment on idolatry. But a greater than Cyrus is beheld at the beginning of chapter 62, who, meek and lowly, shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles of the Gentiles shall wait for His law. At the end of the chapter Israel are the deaf and blind, perfect in privilege as Jehovah's earthly people, but alas! blind. Self-will and disobedience had darkened their eyes. But grace will intervene and save them from the ends of the earth (chap. 43) though they be the blind people that have eyes and the deaf that have ears. The dealings with Babylon, which prefigure the judgments at the end of the age, shew that Israel are His witnesses, and that He notwithstanding their iniquities, will blot out all for His own sake. In chapter 44 He promises the full positive blessings of grace, while exposing the folly of idols and pointing out the coming conqueror by name; and this is followed up in chapter 45 with plain predictions of Babylon's fall, and Israel's salvation. Chapter 46 declares how the idols of Babylon must come to nothing through the "ravenous bird from the east," the man to execute Jehovah's counsel from a far country, as we see from chapter 47 that the virgin daughter of Babylon must sit in the dust. Then chapter 48 closes the section by an appeal to Israel, though to those sprung of Judah, because these would alone represent the people in those days. We know from the Lord's word in Matthew 12 that the unclean spirit will return with worse for the closing scenes of "this wicked generation."

Chapter 49 begins the second charge, the rejection of Christ, not idolatry, and it goes on to the end of chapter 57. (Compare the end of chap. 48.) Israel, having rejected the Messiah, it is said that it is to be of little value. He is put as a light to the Gentiles, and Zion is to be re-established.

Chapter 50. Manifestation to all flesh: indication of the rejection of Jerusalem (the Jews) because they have despised the Lord in His humiliation. The remnant hearken to the voice of the servant and will be in darkness.

Chapter 51 till the end of verse 12 of chapter 52: three addresses on God's part to the people; verse 4, His people; verse 7, in whom is the law; verse 9, the people being awakened; verse 17, Jehovah.

Chapter 52:13, begins with the revelation of this servant.

Chapter 53. The Jews (the remnant) who recognise the rejection of Christ, and God who bears witness to Him.

Chapter 54. Jerusalem, barren, is acknowledged, and Jehovah becomes her husband.

Chapter 55. It is not only Jerusalem, it is such as are athirst—grace, the great principle.

Chapter 56 continues the same part; the end is in chapter 57.

In chapter 58 He begins, as the third part unto the end, to reason concerning righteousness, Israel, etc.; redemption comes in at the end of chapter 59, and the promise that the Spirit shall remain with Israel.

Chapter 60. The terrestrial glory of Jerusalem; the same thing is said of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Chapter 61. Christ come in blessing, and rejected.

Chapter 62. For the blessing of the earth by His people.

Chapter 63 is the day of vengeance.

Chapters 63 to 64. All this excites in the prophet the spirit of intercession.

Chapter 65 is the reply to the intercession of the prophet; God distinguishes between the nation and the remnant; He condemns the nation and saves the remnant, who own Christ the Servant, and become Jehovah's servants throughout.

Chapter 66. He condemns the outward form of religion, and comes to deliver the remnant and to bless Jerusalem.

In Isaiah the Holy Spirit does not speak of Antichrist but of the judgments of Christ against the Assyrian, etc. The Assyrian will come rather pushed forward by Gog; but he comes the first—Gog will come after (with the power of the Assyrian, it is true); Antichrist, in his character of beast, head of the Roman empire, will make war with the nations.

10 Seraphim in itself means burners that fly, and is found combined with serpents in Numbers 21:6, 8; Deuteronomy 8:15.

Remarks On The Prophetic Word (continued)

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is speaking continually in the name of the remnant. In chapter 15, for instance, he speaks for all Israel, and then he returns immediately to the remnant. It is the testimony which God gives to His people of its iniquity, when He is about to withdraw His throne from Jerusalem, and about to punish them. The covenant in some sort is terminated, because He has taken away His throne. Chapter 25 begins the judgment of the. nations, or rather the judgment which extends over all the earth. He gives the cup to drink to all nations (v. 15). From chapter 30 there are promises of restoration, and warning to set forth their iniquity. What follows for the most part is the controversy between Jeremiah and the prophets; a kind of history, especially of the fall of Jerusalem; of the flight into Egypt contrary to the will of God; of the false prophets; with judgments upon Egypt, the nations, and Babylon. The last chapter is a history.

Lamentations.

The wretchedness of Jerusalem; the Spirit of Christ, which identifies itself with the sufferings of Jerusalem, in Jeremiah appealing to the grace of God for restoration in intercession.

Ezekiel.

Ezekiel applies himself no more to Israel in its land; he prophesies in the captivity only to condemn it; he sees the throne of God leaving Jerusalem, and consequently

the beginning of the throne of the Gentiles. Chapter 11 shews the formation of the throne; he gives the history of the last king who wished to be the beast (Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt), but who could not; and it is Nebuchadnezzar who is the beast. Ezekiel passes over the four empires; different prophecies concerning the different classes of the Gentiles who are not included in the four monarchies, or prophecies concerning the nations who were not the beasts. From chapter 26-36 the re-establishment of Israel (chap. 28 being fall without temptation; it is possible that it is a revelation of the fall of Satan); the Jews from chapter 10-20. Ezekiel, when the Lord Jesus comes, speaks more of the ten tribes than of the Jews.

Daniel.

This prophecy fills up the gap which Ezekiel left, which stopped with the counsels of God relative to His people, whilst Daniel prophesies about the times of the Gentiles. Daniel gives the four monarchies. In the first six chapters he is only the interpreter of the general things which should be revealed to the Gentiles; whilst in the last six he himself is the vessel which God makes use of to give out his thoughts. This prophecy is much more taken up with what will happen to the Jewish people. In the first chapter we see the knowledge of God in contrast with the wisdom of man, the faithfulness of Daniel keeping himself separate from the spirit of Babylon, in order to exercise his office. The last three chapters relate to the Jews.

Hosea.

The rejection of Israel and of Judah, and their after-restoration; threatenings specially against Israel (the ten tribes); judgment upon Israel.

Joel.

Joel, taking occasion of a famine, announces the day of Jehovah upon Jerusalem; a call to repentance in order for blessing; announcement of the gift of the Spirit; the judgment of the nations, and the re-establishment of Zion. It is not specially Antichrist who makes havoc in Jerusalem, but rather the Assyrian.

Amos.

Amos speaks to Israel and equally addresses all the nations which lie around Israel: the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and the two families of Israel. It places the two families come out of Egypt, as the other nations. After certain intercessions, the Lord refuses to spare any longer, and He allows them to be led away captive; He takes away the tabernacle of David, and plants them in the land whence they shall no more be taken away.

Obadiah.

is the judgment of Edom (future). The judgment of Esau will be complete without leaving a grape (v. 5).

Jonah.

Jonah is important in certain respects, being the only prophet who was 6ent to the Gentiles. It was while the throne of God was remaining at Jerusalem and the Gentiles were not acknowledged. It is a proof that, notwithstanding principles the most severe, mercy

superabounds. Jonah called Him Jehovah, but he only says to the Ninevites God. The mercy of God towards the Gentiles, likewise towards the creation, is here shewn; deliverance in death through resurrection, and then the mortification of the flesh; the breaking of the will in the ways of God.

Micah.

Summary of the prophet Isaiah; the great principles at the beginning of Isaiah; the revelation of the judgment of Jehovah on account of the sin of Jacob, and the manifestation of the power of God according to election in grace towards Jerusalem; and then (which is very important) the judgment of the nations when Christ shall be manifested, according to His promises to Abraham.

Nahum.

The judgment of Nineveh and of the world in general as not being included in the four monarchies, as having been rebellious against God (opposed to the people of God). Nineveh was the enemy of the Jews during the time that the Jews were acknowledged by God, whilst Babylon was the enemy of the Jewish people whilst it was apocryphal. It is very important to distinguish the difference of the relations these two towns stand in, towards the people of God.

Habakkuk.

Habakkuk complains of the iniquity of the people of God, and asks for judgment; then God shews him the chastisement of His people through means of their enemies; why his love for the people of God returns; and then he cries against the oppressors. God shews that He

well knows the oppressor, and He shews that it is necessary to wait, and that the just shall live by faith, because deliverance will come later; then he reveals, on God's part, the judgment which falls at the last on the oppressor, and in a song, calling to mind the deliverance of the people of God at the beginning, he declares his confidence in God, even when the people of God are not in the enjoyment of outward blessings.

Zephaniah

is the day of the Lord on Jerusalem; the judgment of the nations who are in the territory (the Philistines, the Moabites, etc.), and judgment on the Assyrian, in behalf of the remnant of Jerusalem; promises and prophetic history of the remnant. The three prophets who follow prophesied after the captivity.

Haggai.

Haggai excites to build the temple by promising the presence of Messiah in the temple; he announces also the judgment of the nations when the heavens shall have been shaken; Zerubbabel was the seed of David.

Zechariah.

Jehovah takes notice of the four imperial nations, judges them and accepts and justifies Israel prophetically but places it actually upon its responsibility, shews the church order blessed under Messiah. Judgment against evil, and the manifestation of iniquity in its true character, and in sight of all nations, of all the empires of which the second only had accomplished the will of God. He takes occasion from this blessing to declare the re-establishment of the temple by Messiah Himself; this

terminates at the end of chapter 6. There are only two prophecies in this prophet; the first till the end of chapter 6, and the second until the end of the book. On the demand, if they ought to fast, he remarks to them how the words of the ancient prophets had been accomplished, but that they had returned to do good. He reassures them by saying that He had returned in grace, but for the present time placing them under responsibility, reveals to them the glory to come; judges the people who are in the territory of Israel; takes away strength in order that He may be their strength; He makes them conquerors over all the enemies of Jehovah, and blesses them in His presence as His flock; He blesses Judah and Ephraim, and gathers together all countries; He exposes then (at the end of chap. 10) the details of their history in that they have rejected Christ and have received Antichrist; they shall be subject to Him (chaps. 12, 13, 14); he speaks of the siege of Jerusalem in the last days, and of what shall happen to the remnant or to the people after the death of Jesus struck by Jehovah as their shepherd; Christ represented ecclesiastically, and Christ in these two characters (chap. 6:13); the two olive-trees; programme of the ceremony of this justification.

Chapter 11 of Zechariah has generally been thought one of considerable difficulty; but there are some points in our Lord’s character, and the unfolding of the purposes of God in His actual ministry, which I think make comparatively easy what seems most difficult, and may, perhaps, lead the way to what is yet unexplained. The strong expression of our Lord’s mind in Spirit—the full representation of the moral force in the sight of God of what took place upon His presence on earth—the

breaking up of all God's purposes in their present ministration—the immense importance which we find consequently to be attached to what in the eye of reason might seem small circumstances, because the principles of God's moral government are involved in them, and all brought out into relief in the person of the Lord Jesus; all contribute to attach the deepest interest to this morally comprehensive chapter, as God's version of all that then passed. The glory of the house of Israel is laid low—its external strength and glory. The glory of the shepherds is spoiled—its rulers and guides. The pride of the river of Israel is spoiled—the national fulness and power.

This is the general statement. The command follows, "Feed the flock of the slaughter." Their possessors (though I have doubted it), I apprehend, must be the Gentiles; their own people, those that sell them to the Gentiles; Herod for example, and the preceding chief priests and princes, or any such characters; some one who owned Jehovah, but sold His people. The Lord does not think it necessary to say who they are, as He owns them not at all; they are possessed by those who slay them, and sold by persons more or less owning the Lord openly, but loving covetousness, anjthing but the Lord's care as to their present estate. This flock of the slaughter —their own shepherds (who they are there can be no doubt), their own leaders and rulers pity them not. Verse 4 is the delivery of them, under these circumstances, into the Lord Christ's hands to feed, or take charge of them. The next verse shews however, that the body of the nation then, who inhabited the land indeed, but were not God's flock (compare 1 Peter 5 and the corresponding charge to Peter in John 21 all of

which is properly Jewish), would not be spared. “I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land—Israel’s land, saith Jehovah; but, lo, I will deliver,” etc. When the care was delivered to Him, He would not spare but deliver them to the fruit of their own ways. Such would be the general state of the inhabitants of the land, and then, “I will feed the flock of the slaughter,” the poor, despised people. “Blessed are the poor, and ye poor,” said the Lord, Himself the feeder of the flock of the slaughter: generally the nation was the flock of the slaughter; but in His hand a distinction was made, between those who were identified with the slayers, and the real flock of the slaughter, even the poor whom He saved. In judgment He had given up the inhabitants of the land, every man to his neighbour; He would not be a judge and a divider over them; and Herod and Caesar alike preyed upon the land, and they all preyed upon each other—now especially Caesar their king, “we have no king but Caesar.” But He took His two staves, of which words we shall see the force presently, and He fed them as a good Shepherd, even them, the poor of the flock: as for their shepherds they were cut off; between them and the good Shepherd there was nothing in common. His soul loathed them, and their soul abhorred Him. He had taken however two staves, one, Beauty; and the other, Bands; and fed the flock.

Then, viewed as in connection with their shepherds, as a nation which must abhor Him, He would not feed the flock: as such, they were delivered up to the fruit of their own will and depravity as it came upon them. And He took His staff, Beauty, and cut it asunder, that He might break the covenant He had made with all the people, that is, all the peoples (the Ammim). Now this

was formally done at the destruction of Jerusalem, and in fact at the rejection or death of our Lord, when He refused the nation, or when the nation refused Him; in principle, when they rejected His word and works. To Him was the gathering of the peoples (Ammim) to be. All nations were to be gathered to the throne of the Lord, to Jerusalem; this was the great, wide, circling covenant, that was made by Christ, made with Christ. This gathering of the peoples to Jerusalem, clothing herself with them all, was the great gathering foretold; it was to be to Jerusalem, but it was of the peoples; but when Jerusalem rejected Him, to whom was it to be? So upon the rejection of Him, He broke the covenant made with the peoples, and the destruction and rejection of Jerusalem made the poor of the flock that waited upon Him know that it was the word of the Lord: they knew in faith upon His rejection. It was then manifested in result, for His rejection had proved the rejection of all their hopes, and they lost the gathering of the nations. The whole plan was not abandoned but frustrated, that is, in present ministration (in the wisdom of God's counsels), in the rejection of the Lord, who had shewn and warned of all this, and Jesus was the Lord.

Nothing I think, can be more simple, if the gathering of the nations (Ammim) promised to Shiloh be seen, and that to Jerusalem, nor than the necessary results as testified by Him on His rejection, proving as to them who might be perplexed upon His rejection by the shepherds, who He was—that very Word of the Lord, and Himself the truth of all He said. His word in Zechariah was proved true, it was Himself in all that chapter. But there was another point incident to the acknowledgment of the Lord. Being thus refused, He

says, “Well, what do you think me worth?” This would have been most strange, even after His rejection. “You have rejected me, I came for no other purpose, what do you think me worth? what is your judgment of the Lord?” Oh! what condemnation, while they thought they condemned Him. “If you think good, give me my price; if not, forbear.” “I count myself nothing worth, I put no price upon myself, you can do what you please.” The fulfilment of this—our Lord indeed became as a servant—is too well, too little, known in its verity, to need or to be met by verbal explanation. The transition from all the expectations or titles of Shiloh in meek submission, when He would not have Israel, and He the Lord, is marvellous. It is here we learn what we can learn nowhere else—the strange meaning of that word, obedience—the marvellous mystery of the submission of the Lord. It is here, in the contrast from Shiloh to a rejected slave not opening his mouth even for the price (may we have grace to own Him in humiliation) discerned of us. But He was really the Lord in all this, which is the very revelation of this chapter, and it was the judicial process (yet saving to the remnant) of presenting the Lord to them.

There was another consequence connected with the acknowledgment of Shiloh, they were to be made one stick; the union of Israel and Judah was to be in His hand; the accompaniment of the same headship which involved the gathering of the Ammi, “then shall the children of Israel and the children of Judah be gathered together, and appoint unto themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel.” And though Jerusalem was to be the head—the Jehovah Shammai11; yet they were to be no

more two, but one in the land; and so the Lord always owned them. Zebulun and Napthali saw a great light, and the poor of the flock, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” indiscriminately met His care, scattered though they might be, but that unity depended upon David their king, their one head. His rejection broke all this; He cut asunder His other staff “Bands,” to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel; and this surely shall not be united again, till the King be owned again, and then indeed shall these things be according to the sure mercies of David; till then, even if in their land, they shall be a divided and a weakened people; and as I a believe, “Ephraim against Manasseh, and they together against Judah: for all which, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” Verse 15, and possibly also verse 17, but surely verses 15,16,1 believe to belong to the presumptuous shepherd, the fool that says in his heart, “there is no God”; one who shall come in his own name, whom they will receive. Lord, forgive them yet and deliver! The word is not merely “foolish,” though I have alluded to that, but the word (eveele) which includes in connection with the Lord, impiety, folly against God, in a word—Antichrist. They are given up after Christ is rejected, the Gentile history coming in meanwhile. The idol shepherd does not seem to me to go quite so far, perhaps it applies to the Jews in that day, who desert the flock when evil comes.12ik8 The shepherd who is nothing—emptiness. Yet Jerusalem shall be made a cup of trembling in that day to the nations round about her, but this is the Lord’s mercy. Having then given what the leading principles of the chapter appear to me to be, I will not pursue that which follows, though affording the leading principle of the whole of this prophecy would be of the deepest

interest, and, I believe, afford much instruction in the testimony of God.

The following chapters are the results in the latter day, with which the prophet then is wholly occupied—the rejection of Christ, and giving up to Antichrist and the idol shepherds, being the basis on which it rests.

We have then in the chapter the judgment in which the Lord found the Jews, Israel, and to which, in point of fact, they were given up; then the history of His assuming the pastorship, His rejecting, as He must, the exceeding evil state of them that dwelt in the land, His taking the poor of the flock, but the rejection by Him of the shepherds, and of Him by them. He had assumed necessarily in the pastorship, humble as He might seem, the double rod, not yet made one, of God's government; but upon His rejection by the shepherds, He broke that which involved the gathering of the nations; and, so to speak, neither He nor Jerusalem were of any more avail as the then fulfillers of this counsel. It was left to the shepherds to count His price, and they gave thirty pieces of silver; but Jerusalem and they were comparatively then given up; He alone could or would gather them. "How often would I have gathered thy children together! "(Matt. 23:37). Then what was the use of His other staff? He broke that also, even the bond of Israel itself, that also was gone in Him; they were then given up to the foolish shepherd, though this was left future, with a woe upon their own then faithless one. Subsequently comes the unfolding of God's unaltered purpose concerning Jerusalem, and the sure glory of Him whom they had rejected in His real and gracious character, in spite of their iniquity.

Brethren, beloved of the Lord, how should we dwell upon the extent of gracious and marvellous humiliation of that word, “If ye think well, give me my price; and if not, forbear”; even for Him whose all the glory was, “which things angels desire to look into,” “a goodly price” that He was prized at by them. Oh! what is man? and what is Jesus to us? the Lord our God.

Malachi.

The Lord had left them in Zechariah under their responsibility. Malachi feels the reproaches of the Lord Jehovah on account of their unbelief after their return, notwithstanding His goodness; he announces to them the day of the Lord; the distinction between the remnant (the faithful) and the mass (those who are not so), (chap. 3:17, 18); he announces the blessing of the remnant, and the coming of Elijah before the day of the Lord.

11 Ezekiel 48:35.

12 Compare John 10. Here the Jewish leaders, I conceive, in the latter day.

Notes On The Gospel Of Matthew

Editor's Note13

Chapter 16.

We arrive at that part of the Gospel where other ways of God, other manifestations of His character and of His glory, are substituted for Judaism. The kingdom and the form that it would take have been already revealed to us in chapter 13. However, though the form announced in the parables was to be new, the kingdom itself was in view since the time of John the Baptist, though it could not be established then, Jesus being rejected. Purposes of God, important in very different respects, were to be accomplished through the death of the Lord. And although the judgment of Israel had been plainly declared, and the new condition of the kingdom depicted in the parables of chapter 13, the power and the patient grace of the Lord were manifested in the midst of the people, up to the close of chapter 15. But now all is terminated: the church and the kingdom of glory take the place of an Emmanuel Messiah in the midst of the people. The unbelief of the heads of the nation is manifested in their request for a sign from heaven; signs enough had been given. It was not genuine faith, and the Lord reproves them and goes away. They knew well enough how to observe the signs of the weather that was coming; how was it then that they did not see the far clearer signs of Israel’s condition—signs which were precursors of the judgment of God? It was nothing but hypocrisy: they should only have the sign of Jonas; the death and the resurrection of Jesus bringing the judgment, the terrible punishment of the nation, as a

natural and necessary consequence of the scornful rejection of their Messiah come in grace.

The disciples themselves participate, not in the want of sincerity, but at least in the want or intelligence, of the Jews. Their faith understood no more than that of the Jews did the power that had manifested itself daily before their eyes. Jesus was to find nowhere a heart that understood Him. This isolation is one of the most striking features of the ordinary life of the Saviour, a Man of sorrows in this world. The Lord introduces what was going to be substituted for the kingdom in Israel by a question destined to bring out the doctrine of His person, the first foundation of everything recognised by faith. “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? “This is the character assumed by the One in whom God was proving men according to His own thoughts and according to His counsels. The heir of all the glory which belonged to man according to the determinate counsel of God taking His place among men here below, and before God the representation of the race, a race then accepted by Him, although heir He associated Himself with all their miseries, the true representative of the race alone perfect before God.

Psalms 8 and 80:17, and Daniel 7 represent Him thus to us in the Old Testament according to the thoughts of God. Men, struck by His miracles and His walk, had their opinions; faith, through the revelation of God, acknowledges His person. Peter answering the question addressed to all, proclaims this truth, the foundation of every hope, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It is worth while saying a word as to the character of the great apostle.

We know what was the burning ardour of this man, an ardour which placed him in difficulties from which his moral power could not succeed in extricating him and which even brought him, when God permitted it for his good, to deny his Saviour and his Master. So far as he was sustained by human strength, this ardour was a continual snare; but under God's hand, when grace took hold of the vessel, he became the instrument of the most blessed activity. I find this instructive difference: human energy cannot sustain the trials of faith. It may bring us into circumstances where these trials are found, but the strength of man's will cannot make us triumph. If the power of God is there, we triumph over temptation; the flesh which has brought us into it cannot do so. Nevertheless God can make use of the vessel which He has formed; then the power of God is there to hold us up, sheltered from evil by His arms. Now what I desire to remark here is that God makes use of the vessel for His glory; whilst, when the vessel alone and the energy which is in it are at work, it fails in time of trial, and the energy, which God makes use of as an instrument, brings us, when it acts alone, into temptation, in which it cannot cause us to triumph. Sincerity and zeal in that case only cause us to fall because there is too much confidence in ourselves. Here it is the ardent confession of what the Father Himself had revealed to Peter. There are two parts in this confession—Jesus is the Christ, that is what the Jews denied. This was the first thing to be acknowledged in Jesus. He was the One who had been promised to the fathers and to Israel; but further, He was of the fulness of that eternal Godhead, in which was the power of life; "the Son of the living God." Resurrection was the proof of it in the very place where death had entered. Thus, at the commencement of the

Epistle to the Romans, He is of the seed of David according to the flesh, and marked out Son of God in power by resurrection of the dead. The promises of God were thus not only accomplished in His person, but the person in whom they were accomplished was Son of God in a power of life which is in God only; not only Son of God born into this world according to Psalm 2—Nathaniel had acknowledged that—but Son of the living God as to His person. Up to that time this had not been acknowledged; the Father had revealed it to Peter, the Father in heaven had made known to him His Son upon earth.

At the same time the Lord also shews His authority by giving to Peter a name in accordance with the confession that he had just made, with the truth which (while establishing His divine person, His relationship with the Father, and that as a man) laid the firm foundation of what was above all promises, of what had never been promised of the new thing, the church of the living God. Against this power of life in the person of the Son, the might of Satan, who had the empire of death, could not prevail. It is not here the death and the resurrection of Jesus, or His work, and the proof by this power of life that He was the Son of God in power; it is the essential character of His person revealed by the Father to Simon Bar-jona. Christ also says something to Him. As the Father had revealed the true character of Jesus to Simon, Jesus also (it is thus that we must take the sentence) gave him a name and a position. His person as Son of the living God was the foundation of the church called to have its true place in heaven, for it is in this character that it is presented to us here. It is Christ who builds, and up to this day the building is not

yet completed. What we have here is not what Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 3. He, Paul, had laid the foundation of that house: others brought materials, each one on his own responsibility, so that wood, stubble, hay, were to be found in the building. That was what has been built under human responsibility upon the earth. What we have here is found again in i Peter 2:4, 5, where there is no human architect, but where living stones come and are builded together into a spiritual building. The same thing is found again in Ephesians 2:20, 21. It is Christ who builds a spiritual house, and the power of Satan could not touch it. It is the assembly which Christ'builds for heaven and for eternity. But there was yet another thing. The Lord, Master of all, gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter. He receives from Christ authority to administer the kingdom upon earth, and whatever he might decree here below would be sanctioned. It is no question, remark well, of keys of the church; one does not build with keys. Further, although Simon may receive the name of Peter, a testimony to his personal faith, which linked him with the Rock, and an acknowledgment of the fact that like a stone in its nature he belonged to the Rock; nevertheless here he does nothing at all, nor has he any authority, in the church. Christ Himself builds, "I will build my church." No one else has any part in this. Peter himself acknowledges it in his epistle (1 Pet. 2:4, 5), by an evident allusion to this passage; the living stones come to the "living Stone." The administration of the kingdom of heaven is confided to him. The keys of that kingdom are confided to him. For, I repeat, no such thing exists as keys of the church. Christ builds it, that is all. Now one can see well in the Acts that Simon Peter was the chief instrument of God in the work; and no true

Christian doubts that what he established by his apostolic authority, with the sanction of the Lord, is from heaven. We must further remark that the only succession in that authority is found in two or three gathered in the name of the Lord (Matt. 18:17-20). Christendom has accepted with strange facility the idea that there are keys for the church, an idea which is nowhere found in the word. Then, this error being once admitted, another was accepted, namely, that the church and the kingdom of heaven are the same thing, an idea also which has no foundation in the word. The passage that we are considering clearly shews that they are two distinct things. Christ does not build a kingdom, He is the King of it; whether as such He be either hidden or manifested. Further, a kingdom is neither a bride nor a body, as the church is, and the reader must remark, that since it is here Christ who builds, He certainly places none but true living stones in the house. At most there is a certain analogy in regard to historical limits and circumstances, with the house of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 3 in which were found hay and stubble, the building in that case being left to the responsibility of man. What is positive is that in no case are the church and the kingdom the same thing. Further, to have confounded the church, which Christ alone builds, and which is not yet completed, with the house which Paul founded upon earth, is one of the origins of the Romish system, and of the high church, wherever it may be.

The church then, so far as built by Christ, is14 the kingdom of the heavens replacing the Christ coming to the Jewish people according to promise, and the disciples receive the peremptory command not to announce henceforth Jesus as the Christ. On the other

side, the Lord from that time begins to make known to them that He was to be rejected, to suffer and rise. Peter cannot receive such a declaration. We see here how one may receive from God a revelation of the truth and be found in a practical state below the effect of this truth on the life. Peter had been taught by God Himself touching a truth which necessarily brought on the cross. For this his flesh was not at all prepared; further he who had just been called blessed by the Saviour is now denounced as doing the work and as having the thoughts of Satan. As a natural affection there was nothing to blame; but it was the mind of the flesh, not of God. It is a solemn thought for us that one may possess a truth as really taught of God and be opposed to the consequences which flow from it in the life. In this case the flesh is not judged according to the measure of the truth known, so that the divine effect of this truth should be produced in us. But the Lord, always perfect, puts Himself under the yoke of what was absolutely necessary to realise that which was worthy of God—redemption. The things which are in the world, its ease and its glory, are not of the Father. Man is carnal: Peter savoured what was of man. It is terrible to see that it suffices to say the things which are of man to shew what was evil and opposed to God. It is only the cross which is truly worthy of God. Christ always walked in obedience and in the love of the Father, which were fully manifested in Him. Also the earth was for Him a desert land, dry and without water. He savoured always and perfectly the things which were of God; but this brought on the cross in this world. Also each of us who would enjoy the blessing of God must take up his cross and follow Christ. If one spares himself, one spares flesh; one loses Christ so much and finds oneself in opposition

to God. He that loses his life for the love of Christ will have it with joy when all is according to God. The soul is not to satisfy vanity and carnal selfishness; it is gained for ever in tasting the things of God: such is what the cross means in a world opposed to God in all that He is.

There is besides more than this moral fact; there are positive ways of God. If the Son of man is actually rejected by the world, as presenting perfectly the ways and the character of God in its midst, the time comes when God will make valid the rights of Him who was faithful, and when He will manifest it in the glory which is due and belongs to Him. The Son of man will come in the glory of His Father; not in the humiliation of the obedience in which His moral perfection was manifested, and in which, at His own cost, He perfectly glorified God, but (for He is Son of the living God) in the glory of His Father, and with His angels, then He will render to each according to his conduct.

This gives room for the manifestation of the kingdom such as it will be manifested when the Son of man will come in His glory. It is what the transfiguration meant as shewn in chapter 18. Chapter 16 had replaced Israel and the Christ in Israel by the church and the kingdom of the heavens, by a Christ put to death and risen, basis of the establishment of God’s counsels in divine righteousness, man being thus placed in a position entirely new.

Chapter 17 replaces the transitory system of the law and of the prophets in Israel by the kingdom of glory and by the order of things flowing from it. The mountain of transfiguration is not Horeb. It is no longer the first Adam put to the proof by a law, perfect rule of what

ought to be in this fallen world. It is the last Adam seen in the result of the trial He had undergone; He, the victorious Redeemer who could bring other men to the same glory; He the Head of all, perfectly approved by the Father; a Man in whom He found all His good pleasure; His Son, His well-beloved seen in glory, and Moses and Elias with Him. And these two represent the law and prophecy in its highest order, for Elijah was not a prophet at a time when the law of God was recognised. He was in the midst of apostate Israel, as Moses in the midst of a captive people. Elijah returned to Horeb to denounce this apostasy and the refusal of the testimony of God, whatever had been His patience; for in fact nothing was then left but the election of grace, and Elijah went up to heaven after having displayed his grief on Horeb. Elisha was the prophet of resurrection, having returned across the Jordan which Elijah had crossed to go up to heaven. People have wished to see in this the living changed and the dead raised, and I have no objection. In fact, these two classes will be with the Lord in the glory of the kingdom. Still I do not see that this is the chief object of the Spirit, but rather the putting aside of the law and the prophets, of the law and the patience of God towards Israel. They now give place to the Son Himself, to God’s well-beloved, whilst they bear witness to Him.

Something is still left to be remarked. A bright cloud comes and envelopes them: it was the Shekinah of glory. The cloud had led Israel and filled the tabernacle with the glory of God, in such a way that the sacrificing priests could not stay there for their service: the word used here is the same as that used in the Septuagint when the cloud rilled the tabernacle. It was in the cloud

that Jehovah came to speak with Moses at the door of the tabernacle which he had set up outside the camp. Peter calls it “the excellent glory,” 2 Pet. 1:17, 18. What is presented to us here, however, is the glory of the kingdom in which Jesus is recognised as Son by the Father. The disciples do not enter into the cloud like Moses and Elias, as takes place, I suppose, in Luke 9:34. That is to say, the heavenly part, the Father’s house, is not found in Matthew; the glory indeed is, and the Son come in glory with His own, but not the dwelling near the Father on high: here we are in relation with heaven, but not in heaven.

These words, “hear him,” present to us the voice of the Son as the only one which ought to be heard henceforth. Not that Moses and Elias had not preached the word of God, but the order of things which they represent is past; and the words of the Son revealing the Father are those which we have to listen to. The law and the prophets have given testimony to the Saviour Himself, as it is said; but they addressed themselves to man in the flesh. Now it is the Son of man after death, raised and glorified: redemption being accomplished, the counsels of God in grace are revealed. The former witnesses disappear and Jesus remains alone: Son of God to whom the Father gives testimony, in whom the Father reveals Himself. Peter, like so many Christians, would have wished to mingle the three, but such is not the instruction of the Father. However, until Christ was raised, this new testimony had neither its place, nor its cause of existence (v. 9).

The difficulty, suggested by the opinion drawn from Malachi by the scribes, the last testimony given (namely, that Elias was to come before the glorious day of the

Lord), presents itself to the disciples. The Lord confirms this testimony and speaks of it as a thing which was to come to pass. Elias is to come first—the idea is true—and he will restore all things. The prophecy of Malachi shall be accomplished, but as Jesus came to suffer before His glory, so too there had come one to go before His face, and he must needs be rejected like Him whom he announced. Then the disciples understood that He spoke of John the Baptist, come before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elias. For what concerned the kingdom, all in fact, was only provisional. The king was there indeed, the Son of God Himself, but for a greater work even than establishing the kingdom: to save sinners and glorify God Himself by His death. To establish the kingdom He will return; but then all was prepared for faith to have its foundation, and for man to be without excuse. It was for that reason that the Lord could say, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come” (chap. 10:23), although He was there. However, His establishment as king has been deferred, the last half-week of Daniel still remains unaccomplished, and even the whole week for unbelief. Christ is seated at the right hand of God till His enemies be set as the footstool of His feet, having by Himself purified our sins, gathering, as we know, His co-heirs according to the counsels of God, co-heirs given to Him before the foundation of the world.

Afterwards we find here, on our way, that which, without arresting the accomplishment of the counsels of God, made impossible all idea of the establishment on earth of His power, such as it was then manifesting itself. The disciples themselves did not know how to profit by the faith of this power to make it effectual; the power of

Satan was in the world, whether directly or indirectly. The Lord was there to remove all the effect of this power and the consequences of sin. He had bound the strong man. A case of this power of evil presents itself to His disciples, and they cannot make use of the Lord's power to subdue it. It was then useless to continue to exercise this in the world if His disciples themselves did not know how to profit by it. And the Lord says, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" However, as long as the power is there, Jesus, unchangeable in His faithful goodness, exercises it in grace. "Bring thy son hither." Great consolation for us! If the faith of all fails, the Lord's goodness never is lacking. We can count on His power and on His grace, as always sure and indefeasible till all is finished. However the want of faith in His own is the sign that the patience of God is on the point of finding no more room for its exercise. The power of evil brought the Lord to this point: the practical unbelief of His own drives Him away; it puts an end to these ways, in regard to which unbelief manifests itself.

Two great principles are laid down by the Lord in reply to the question of His disciples. First, faith can do everything, according to the willed action of God at the moment of its exercise: but to overcome the enemy, where he shews his strength specially, a life of retirement is needed, which, in the consciousness of the strife in which we are engaged, refers to the presence of God, and places itself before Him in abasement of the flesh, and in entire confidence. This confidence displays itself in dependence on Him, owned in order to seek divine action. The Lord (v. 22) returns to His instructions with regard to His rejection and His crucifixion.

Delivered up to men, He must be put to death and He must rise again. The disciples entirely ignorant of salvation are deeply pained by it, but at the end of the chapter the Lord places His disciples, at least Peter, and according to His grace all of us, in the same relation with His Father as that in which He was Himself, whilst at the same time manifesting the divinity of His person. It is one of the most touching expositions of what was about to happen through the change that His work would produce— the revelation of a position always true as to His person, true as to His relationships, having become man before God, but which was about to be demonstrated in a glorious manner by His resurrection. At the same time He introduces His own beforehand into His own position, now that He was about to give up the kingdom in Israel as far as it belonged to Him there; now that He had just announced to His disciples His death and resurrection as necessary for introducing them into greater blessings than those which they enjoyed through His presence.

Peter wished that He should be considered a good Jew. When the tribute collectors asked Peter if his Master paid the didrachma (owing by the Jews for the service of the temple), the disciple answered, Yes. When Peter returns, the Lord anticipates him, knowing, without having been there, all that had passed. He asks him if it is from their children or from strangers that the kings of the earth take tribute or taxes. Peter answers, From strangers. “Then,” said the Lord, “the children are free.” He and Peter, sons of the great King of the temple, were not liable to pay; but, adds the Lord, “that we may not offend them, go thou to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast

opened his mouth, thou shalt find a stater [two didrachmas].” Then the One who not only knows everything, but who disposes of creation with equal power and knowledge, places Peter afresh in the same position as Himself: “That take and give unto them for me and thee.” Peter therefore is also a son of the great King of the temple. At the same moment in which the Lord shews that He knows everything divinely, and that He disposes of everything as Master of the creation, He places Peter in the same relationship as Himself with Jehovah. He submits to the prescription of Judaism in order not to stumble the Jews. But He and Peter are really exempt, as sons of the great King. What perfect grace! At the very moment in which He must give up His relationship with the unfaithful people, He introduces those who follow Him into a far more intimate relationship with the God of Israel, and at the same time with Himself. He is Son, being man, and His own are with Him in the same blessed relationship.

Chapter 18.

The three chapters, 18, 19, and 20, up to the end of verse 28, form a subdivision of our Gospel. They shew us from the Saviour Himself the principles that ought to characterise the disciples in the new order of things on which they were entering—principles of life and conduct, individual and collective. Nature, as far as established of God, is owned: but the state of the heart is sounded, grace and the cross characterising all the new system. The first principles enjoined by God in the christian order are humility and simplicity.

The disciples, as usual, wished to have a good position in the kingdom, each for himself, this time however more

in relation with moral character, with qualities. The Lord's answer is limited to calling a child, and placing him in the midst of His disciples, as an example of the spirit which ought to characterise them: he who resembled that little child should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The child pretended to nothing, and passed for nothing in the eyes of the world. He who was nothing in his own eyes should be great in God's eyes. Whoever should receive a little child in the name of Jesus had entered into His thought—into the estimate that He had of the world, and of the things that were in it. As to the principles of his conduct, he received Jesus Himself, acting upon the principles which governed Him. But, further, should there be in the child faith in Jesus, then, whoever should cause him to stumble in the way of the Lord, or should put an obstacle in the way, so that he should not follow Him, was fastening a millstone around his own neck to drown himself; and, worse still, there were stumbling-blocks in the world, but woe to him who should place them before the feet of others. The question between man and God was entirely laid down. They were either for or against Him. Neither was it any longer a question of a captivity in Babylon, of a governmental chastisement, however severe it might be, but of being finally cast into hell; it would be better to lose the best of one's members than to find oneself there.

But the special principle of the ways of God which were then being manifested was grace. The Son of man had come to save that which was lost—a testimony of immense range! It was no longer the accomplishment of the promises made to Israel, nor the Messiah, as Head of the kingdom, expected by that people, and reigning in

their midst, but a Saviour Son of man, but of man lost without Him. Man was lost. The difference between the Jew and the Gentile disappeared before the total ruin which was common to them, and before the salvation which was coming in His person. According to this spirit of grace, it was unsuitable to despise even the least important of human beings. Salvation was there, and the little child was of value in the eyes of God. God, who was giving His Son for the lost, took account of children. He took an interest in the happiness of men, and the child was not the least part of it. The work of Christ was available for them; He had come to save that which was lost. It is no question here of bearing the sins of the guilty, but of the general principle of the coming of the Saviour. “Lost” speaks of our condition; “guilty,” of what we have done: we are all lost together; every one will give account of what he has done in the body. Judgment relates to this latter point; bearing the sins of many does also; but “lost” is the condition common to all.15 Now children under the benefit of the work of Christ are accepted of God; “their angels continually behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,” said the Lord: a comforting passage, which gives us the happy assurance that children who die when quite young go to be with the Lord— the result of His work.

The Lord uses the image of the shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, as in the case of other sinners. It is a question here, not of bearing sins, but of saving the lost. As to the condition of man, all are together lost; children, as a condition before God, are the objects of His love; through the work of Christ they can see His face. The Lord does not go farther than the fact of their position, through the work that He has done according

to grace. Small, and despised by men (by the learned, great in their own eyes, but who are, after all, of this world), God set great value on them. They had not yet learnt the spirit of the age: evil itself, in them, had not developed itself before the eyes of God; there was simplicity and trust, so that, as a condition, they were a model. Nevertheless the work of Christ is laid down as the foundation of all. It is not man in his pretensions, it is God in His grace, that we have before us.

The same principle of grace (v. 15) applies to the christian walk in regard to wrongs which may have been done to some one. Only what we have just been looking at spoke of what concerned the individual and sin before God. In what we are about to examine, we find our relations one with another, and along with that the assembly and discipline.

In what precedes we have seen what must characterise the individual and the counsel of the Lord with regard to the evil which would exist in the individual himself. We have seen that man ought to be like a little child, and that, having to do with God Himself in the light, evil should be intolerable to him. He must put it away at all cost. With others evil is not allowed, but the Christian must act in grace. He warns his brother, if the latter has done him a wrong; then he takes two or three witnesses with him, in order that the facts may be confirmed, and that it may not be mere personal recrimination without proofs, if the brother does not yield to them. In this case, the complainant will tell all to the assembly, and the witnesses are there; and if the one who has done the wrong does not listen to the assembly, the one who has suffered is free to regard him as a stranger to all common privileges. It is no question here of the

discipline of the assembly. It may be that the one who has done the wrong deserves to be put out, but what the Lord regulates here is the conduct of the individual who has suffered the wrong. The first object is to gain the guilty brother. If one cannot do this, one must no longer act of one's own accord as judge of one's own cause. The facts must be confirmed, as well as the perverse will of the individual, by others who have no interest in carrying their own views; then the assembly intervenes with its authority. Here we are entirely upon new ground. It is not a question of Jehovah's patience in grace with His people on the earth, but of the conduct of those who have part in the new privileges which flow from the new position taken by the Son of man. Important principles are also brought out. Authority resides in the assembly, the authority to bind and to loose. The true apostolic succession is in the two or three met in the name of Jesus. It is not in individual successors, either of Peter or of the other apostles, but in the assembly, that is found the spiritual authority sanctioned by heaven. Let the wisdom of an apostle, if there is one, guide them: it is none the less the assembly which judges as a last resource. It is the assembly that must be listened to. In it is found judicial authority— the power of binding and of loosing; and the reason for this is given, namely, that, where two or three are gathered to the name of Christ, He Himself is there. The same principle applies to the requests one presents to God. Where two or three agree to ask a thing, it is granted. It is not individual will, nor a purely personal desire. The two or three being gathered to the name of Jesus, Jesus is there. The request is the fruit of a spiritual agreement, and God answers the request. The value of Christ and the mind of the Spirit are found there.

This position of the two or three, and the relationship in which grace has placed them in virtue of the name and presence of Jesus, is evidently of all importance. The privilege, which was given to Peter to establish the kingdom upon earth, falls as a heritage to the two or three truly gathered to the name of Jesus. There, and there only, is the divine sanction put upon what is done on earth. God can, no doubt, sanction and guide an individual; but an individual has not the authority which is conferred upon the two or three thus gathered. The promise made to the prayer of the two or three thus gathered to the name of Jesus, and agreed as to what they wish to ask, is also infinitely precious. Thus placed, Christians dispose of the power of God. It is a question of the things to which the Spirit of God leads their thoughts by common agreement. Now, for a soul which is sincere, and which seeks only the will of God, to be assured of God's power being employed with that object, is a great favour. In what a blessed manner this associates us with divine activity in love in the work that this love wishes to do on earth! The basis on which this favour is confirmed to us is equally precious. Jesus Himself is present where two or three are gathered to His name. What encouragement! Now that He is in heaven, absent bodily, He is Himself present spiritually with those who trust in Him here below. What an immense privilege it is to feel that, until the Lord Jesus come to take us to Himself, we may count on His presence in our midst when we gather to His name!

The remainder of the chapter (v. 21) presents to us the spirit in which a Christian must act with regard to the one who may have offended him. It is no longer a question here of the way traced higher up, if he refuse

to acknowledge his wrong, but of the disposition of the Christian to forgive it him, even if he should often repeat it. The Christian should always forgive—should never get weary of shewing grace towards the one that may have offended him; for a man might acknowledge his wrong, and yet repeat it. Ought this always to continue, and the Christian always to be ready to pardon? Yes, we must always act in grace. God has pardoned us much more. In Luke 17 the repentance of the one who has offended his brother is supposed. Here the principle is that forgiveness— such a case occurring—must always be granted. It is the christian spirit which is established. I do not doubt, although the principle may be universally established as a christian principle, that allusion is made here to what happened to the Jews. God in His ways with the nation having pardoned them the crucifixion of His Son, they would not have grace shewn towards the Gentiles, and were placed in consequence under discipline, under punishment, until they shall have paid the last farthing. It is not a question of expiation, nor of an individual, but of the nation and of the government of God.

Chapter 19.

Next the Pharisees raise the question of marriage, which gives the Lord occasion to lay down some principles as the basis of natural relationships, and of grace in the Christian; then, at the same time, to bring out man’s true moral state according to nature; and, finally, the consequences and the principle of devotedness according to grace.

That which God ordered in the beginning is strictly maintained. God created man, male and female; He

united the two to be but one flesh, and this union is indissoluble according to God. Sin may break the bond, but divorce is totally forbidden under any condition but that of the fact by which the bond is thus already broken. It is God who has formed this link; man has no right to break it. Since then a power was come to work in man outside and above nature, which can put him outside natural relationships, it can take and endow him with energy in order to keep him, apart from those relationships, for the service of the kingdom. The relationship of marriage is fully recognised, its holiness, its indissolubility; but God has taken possession of man, so that he might be for Him. In His creation, that is, God has made marriage; but the Holy Ghost, acting in power, appropriates to Himself a man, who, from that time, recognises marriage, and yet does not marry for love of the kingdom of God.

Next (v. 13) we have nature viewed on its beautiful side: little children, and a young man of charming character. In the Gospel of Mark we read, “Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him”; but his heart had to be put to the proof. Little children, with whom malice, falsehood, and the spirit of the world were not yet in action, furnished the model of what was suitable to the kingdom of heaven. The root of evil, no doubt, was there; but it was the creature in its simplicity and confidence, things which the world despised, and not will bearing fruits of wickedness and corruption. Thus their character, being such, served as a model. The difference between the amiability of nature and the state of the heart before God was to be shewn in the case of the young man. Irreproachable in his conduct, he sought the Teacher, who appeared to his conscience able to give the most

excellent directions for well doing. He comes with the thought that there is goodness in man, and in his eyes goodness was manifested more in Jesus than anywhere else. He seeks His counsel as to how to gain eternal life by his doings. He addresses the Lord as a man, a Rabbi, attracted nevertheless by what he had seen in Him. He calls Him good. The Lord stops him short, “One only is good.” Now the young man did not know Him as such. He had asked what must be done, not to be saved, but to have eternal life. The Lord reminds him of the commandments, the rule for the man who wishes to have life through the law: “This do, and thou shalt live.”

Now the young man did not know himself, nor what the law of God was in its holiness. He wanted to do in order to gain eternal life. The Lord does not speak of eternal life; He takes the young man on the ground of the law, which promised life to those who fulfilled it. The young man, irreproachable in his conduct, like Saul, and not knowing the spirituality of the law, replies that he has kept the law in everything the Saviour speaks of. What lacked he yet? If he would be perfect, he must sell that he had, and follow Jesus. The state of his soul is at once made manifest. The heart of the man, irreproachable in his morals, was under the yoke of attachment to what he possessed. He leaves the Lord sorrowful, his heart having been shewn out in the light which poor human nature can never endure. Nature, however amiable it may be in its character, is morally entirely at a distance from God. Here is an amiable young man, seeking to do well, shewing what is called the best dispositions, with the means to do a great deal of good, as soon as the light comes, convicted of being under the dominion of an idol—of preferring his ease and his riches to the One

whom he knew to be good, to whom he had come to seek direction as to the One who could best direct him. His heart was entirely possessed by evil, by an idol.

The Lord had already judged man, when declaring that none was good save God Himself; nevertheless He goes still farther. The disciples (astonished at such a result, and at that which the Lord had said about riches, which, in the eyes of a Jew, were the sign of the favour of God, and which, at all events, furnished the opportunity for doing good works) cry out, “Who, then, can be saved?” If none were good, and if good dispositions, with the means of doing good, were worth nothing, if these means were rather a hindrance, who could be saved? The Saviour’s answer is categorical. If it was a question of man, no one. As far as man is concerned, it is impossible; good is not in him. Man is the slave of evil by his will and his lusts. But God is above evil—He can save. It is evident that we are on an entirely new ground —on the ground, not of a law which puts to the proof, but of the truth itself which, while magnifying what is created by God, declares the entire moral ruin of man. God can save. This is the only resource. This is the fundamental truth as to the natural man. Now let us see what is the effect and the principle of grace, where it acted, and where men had left all to follow the Lord.

The apostles had done what the Lord had invited the young man to do; they had left all, and followed Jesus. What should they receive? The Lord answers by turning their eyes towards the kingdom established in glory. They would be on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The Son of David, the Son of man, seated on the throne of His glory, would have His princes over the twelve tribes, judging them, and themselves also seated

on thrones. But He will be Son of man, and will have taken out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; then princes shall rule in judgment. Isaiah 32.

And not only the apostles, but every one that had forsaken that which nature loves, which God Himself owns in its place; every one who should renounce himself for Christ, renouncing also everything that was dear to him, should have an hundredfold in reward, and inherit eternal life. It is not a question of the special position of Israel, as in the case of the twelve companions of Christ at the time of His humiliation in Israel; but at all times, in every place, he who should lose the present life for His name's sake should receive an hundredfold, and eternal life. This is the principle, for we have already an hundredfold down here, and afterwards everlasting life. The Lord says here, "eternal life"; to the young man He only said, "Thou shalt enter into life"; for the law had no formal promise of eternal life, it only said, "This do, and thou shalt live." Life and incorruptibility have been brought to light through the gospel; God had promised it before the world began, but in due times manifested His word through the preaching of the apostle (Tit. 1:2, 3). Eternal life is twice mentioned in the Old Testament (Ps. 133; Dan. 12), but the two passages refer to the millennium. No doubt there were facts, such as those of Enoch, of Elijah, and passages like Psalm 16, which gave ground for that belief which the Pharisees had rightly received. The Sadducees had known neither the scriptures nor the power of God. But the passage which the Saviour quotes shews how obscurely this doctrine was revealed, save for a spiritual eye. Christ was the eternal life come down

from heaven (1 John 1). With Him, and specially after His death, it was fully manifested. This already takes place here: one renounces the good things of life here below for oneself; one receives an hundredfold, and inherits eternal life." When He says, inherits, He turns our eye towards that which is properly eternal. I have already said one may have an hundredfold here below, even with persecutions, as Mark says; but then the inheritance surely is not limited to this world, and the eternal life, although we possess it already down here, belongs to another world, and never ends. The Lord here reveals it clearly, while carrying our thoughts to new things, and declaring that this denial of oneself should bring advantages a hundred times greater.

There was a danger, as did not fail to happen, that man might think of a kind of bargain with God: so much labour and sacrifice, and a proportionate recompense. Wretched principle! but which man is quite capable of inventing. The Lord therefore adds verse 30, that many first should be last, and last should be first.

Chapter 20.

Chapter 20:1-16 shews, to explain it, that, while recompensing each sacrifice faithfully according to His goodness, God is sovereign in what He gives; and that if He judges good, He can find the occasion of giving to those who, in man's estimate, might not have laboured so much, the same reward as to those who wished to gain according to their labour. The first workman has for principle so much labour for so much pay; the others betake themselves to the good will of the Lord of the vineyard. You shall receive what is just; and grace recompenses beyond all desert of labour. Such is the

great principle of all true service rendered to the Lord. There is the principle in question, and the final phrase (v. 16) refers to what was said at the beginning: “So the last shall be first, and the first last.” It is the inverse, however, of what is said (chap. 19:30) at the beginning of the parable, where this sentence refers to the thought of man, “What shall we have therefore?” whilst the final phrase refers to the thought of God who takes pleasure in blessing, according to the riches of His grace and power, according to His goodness. It is always thus in every case. The workman shall receive according to his labour, as that happened to the first that was called. God gives according to His goodness and His grace. There had not been a refusal to the invitations among the last (v. 6, 7): God called them when the moment that pleased Him arrived.

In the last words by which He closes the parable, the Saviour establishes in a formal manner this principle of grace. Many are called, but few chosen. This principle is laid down as the foundation of all for many. We find the same principle in chapter 22:14, where it is also laid down as the basis of all. A single man furnishes the example of it. A mass of people unite under the standard of Christianity, giving themselves up to the call of God; a small number only among them comes under the influence of the word of God, and is the fruit of it. It is this sovereign grace which is the true and only source of all blessing. Here the Lord, after having spoken of the operation of this grace in the parable, lays it down in an abstract way as the basis of all.

There are yet some other moral traits of deep interest which relate to this in connection with the Saviour’s humiliation (v. 17-28). The Lord warns His disciples on

the way to Jerusalem, that He must be condemned to death by the Jewish authorities, and delivered to the Gentiles, but that He will rise again the third day.

The sons of Zebedee (v. 20) raise the question, which is that of the whole Gospel we are studying, but in a thoroughly selfish spirit. They think, for they believe in Jesus as the Messiah, of the immediate establishment of the kingdom, since the King was there and they would wish to possess the most exalted places in it—to sit on the right hand and on the left of the King. But God was thinking of things of a very different character of excellence which also belonged to the moral state of man and his relations with God; now God was revealed in Jesus. There, moreover, is the key to the Lord's history—the Messiah in fact, was there—this King announced in the promises and prophecies. Now, after the flesh, the Jews were the children of the kingdom and the heirs of the promises. But the revelation of God, necessary to the accomplishment of these promises, revealed the hatred of the human heart against God, and this the more that the revelation was being accomplished in humiliation by the grace that saves. Had He come in judgment, all should have been taken away. He came then in grace. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Farther, there was need of expiation, without which no sin could have been forgiven. Always, whatever might be the grace in which God was there, it was always God, and man would have none of it; and Jesus, the true Messiah, in whom all the promises were Yea and Amen, found Himself rejected. But God in His divine wisdom made use of this hatred to accomplish expiation,

absolutely necessary to save any one whomsoever, or for Israel itself to be blessed; shewing thus the state of man's heart with respect to God, and opening at the same time the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

Thus the Son of man (a far wider title than that of Messiah, since it embraces all the rights of Christ in the counsels of God) was to suffer, to be rejected and put to death, then to arise from among the dead in order to lay the foundation of the eternal blessing of man and even the temporal blessing of Israel, on the assured basis of the atoning work which Christ was about to accomplish. These things could only be accomplished according to the power of an altogether new position— beyond death, the power of the enemy, and the wrath of God, according to the position of man risen, fruit of a work accomplished and approved by God, and a proof of divine power; a position consequently unchangeable, and not a blessing dependent on the responsibility of man, under which all was called in question, as in the case of Adam, who, in fact, failed in it. Here the blessing was to rest on a work in which God was about to be perfectly glorified. He has been, in fact, put to the proof —this gracious Saviour, but only to manifest His perfect faithfulness and obedience, whatever besides may have been the depth of His sufferings. But then He must drink the cup; the cross was His lot. Not only so, but His disciples must follow Him in that path. A victorious Messiah would place His own on thrones of judgment, but with a Saviour dying on the cross, all that must, for the moment, be laid aside. He must first accomplish a work of far different character of glory, and open to His disciples (with regard to what would result from it here below) a pathway like His own. They must follow it;

there was the path which He Himself trod, and which He was tracing for them to follow Him. The two disciples (their hearts filled with carnal desire of greatness, their spiritual sight wholly obscured by the thought of Messiah's earthly reign, and only looking at human glory) ask of Jesus the favour of sitting on His right and on His left in the kingdom of their desires. But, as in many other circumstances, the folly of the flesh is only an occasion for the Saviour to bring to light the thought of the Spirit.

In the world this kind of greatness was doubtless met with everywhere; but this was not Christianity. He who seeks to be great, and to take the lead among Christians, has entirely falsified the christian character. He will be the last of all; and the true way of having the highest place is to serve, considering oneself as the slave of the wants of other disciples. It was so that Jesus had done; He was not come to be ministered to in this world but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. A lesson simple and clear indeed, but of all importance! The seeking for personal exaltation is only the selfishness of the flesh, the spirit of the world which is enmity against God. Love delights to serve—this is what Christ did; pride and selfishness love to be served, and to take precedence of others.

In reading of such instructions, we are evidently beyond the idea of a Messiah come to reign, and we find ourselves in the thoughts of a God of love; in presence of the revelation of grace and the Word made flesh, of Him who emptied Himself, who humbled Himself, and who is now exalted. This passage is so much the more important because it terminates all the history of the Lord except His last days at Jerusalem. All His life of

service ends here, and these words impress an indelible character on this blessed life, shewing us solemnly, and in a manner as touching as it is powerful, what ought to be the character of our own—to serve in love, and, as far as this world is concerned, to be content to be nothing, while following in the footsteps of our precious Saviour. Oh that His own may learn this lesson in which the flesh could have no part whatever, but which gives us the joy of finding ourselves following Jesus, where purified from selfishness, our eyes may contemplate the beauty of that which is heavenly, and where we enjoy the brightness of God's face; where, in a word, the life of Jesus in us, enjoys that which belongs peculiarly to Himself.

In the first evangelists, those called Synoptic, the account of the last days of the Saviour commences here. Then in order to present Himself for the last time to the Jews, He resumes the character of Son of David. Would Jerusalem yet receive her king?

We may here indicate briefly the difference between those three evangelists and John. The three are historic: they relate to us the life and the ministry of Jesus from three different points of view: as Emmanuel the Messiah, as the Prophet-servant, and as Son of man in grace. Moreover, in these evangelists, His service is accomplished entirely in Galilee, in the midst of the poor of the flock. The result is that He is rejected; but He is presented to men in order that they may receive Him. They will have none of Him, but He is there for them. We have already seen that, while there as prophet and Son of David, He manifested God in this world. If man, or Israel, had received the Son of David, Son of man in grace, they could only receive Him with all the divine features which were peculiar to Him; consequently they

could not but bow before the manifestation of that which was divine. It could not be otherwise, for God was there. This is what man did not wish.

In the Gospel of John He is presented at the outset as God Himself, and consequently as already rejected, as He is seen in chapter i:10, n. The Jews from the beginning, and throughout the whole of this Gospel, are treated as reprobates. The necessity of the divine work in its two parts, the new birth and the cross, is asserted. Election and the sovereign action of grace, and its absolute necessity for salvation, are brought out everywhere. No one can come to Jesus, unless the Father, who hath sent Him, draw him. His sheep receive eternal life and shall never perish. In this Gospel nearly all takes place at Jerusalem except what is related in the last chapter.

Let us remember that Jesus presents to the heart of His own the spirit in which they must walk in this world as the spirit in which the Saviour Himself walked; He, the Lord of all, meek and lowly in heart, serving the others by love.

The Lord, going out of Jericho (v. 29), accepts from the blind men the title which He bears in relation to Israel, to whom also He is about to present Himself for the last time as having a right to this title. “Have mercy on us, O Son of David,” say the blind men. Not lending Himself to the impatience of the world which would not occupy itself with the misery of the blind men, the Lord stops to heal them; and they follow the Son of David, a clear testimony rendered to the reality of His title. But He presents Himself here too as the “Lord,” that is, as Jehovah Himself.

Chapter 21.

Arrived at Bethpage, near Bethany, He sends two of His disciples to the village, where they should find an ass and its foal, in order to His sitting thereon, and thus entering the city of Jerusalem, which was near. Prophecy had announced this fact: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation [or, saving himself]; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Remark, however, that these words, “just and saving himself,”16 are omitted here. He was first to come in humiliation; later He, the true King of Israel, should come with power, bringing with Him the deliverance of the people. Notwithstanding, though in humiliation, He acts already with royal and divine authority, and God disposes hearts to own Him. The owners of the ass let it go at the demand of the disciples. In the Gospel of Luke we find more details; here we have the fact that He acts as King. The crowd, under the divine influence, recognise Him also as such, and He enters, in the midst of this triumphal procession, into the holy city, accompanied by the cry, Hosanna to the Son of David. All the city was moved, and the multitude said, “This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth.”

Now that He is owned prophet and king (His priesthood was to be accomplished elsewhere), the hand of Jehovah displays itself clearly. It was not then the testimony which failed in the heart of the people. The Lord exercises His authority in purifying the temple, profaned by the trading which took place there, and which provided for the wants of those who had need of animals for their sacrifices. This traffic brought in with it another, that of money-changers. They had made the

house of God a den of thieves. Matthew only cites the passage. It was the house of His Father, but such is not the point of view presented here. He is the King, Emmanuel; also His power is manifested in grace; He heals the blind and the lame.

All this provokes the hatred of the chiefs of Israel, who express their sore displeasure. The Lord quotes to them Psalm 8, which reveals to us the Son of man, according to the counsels of Jehovah, when the Messiah is rejected of Israel. It is well to remark the two citations in verses 9 and 16. The first is taken from a psalm constantly cited by the Lord and His apostles, which reveals the restoration of Israel in the last days, when they shall own Him whom they pierced. (Ps. 118:25, 26). Hosanna means, Save now, or Save, I pray thee. Other verses of this psalm are frequently cited. Psalm 8 presents the position of the Son of man, all things being put under His feet, when (in Psalm 2, which shews Him King in Israel and Son of man) He has been rejected, but with the declaration on the part of Jehovah that He will be King in Zion, spite of Israel and the world, which is invited—at least its chiefs—to bow before Him. (Compare John 1:49, 50; Matt. 16:20, followed by chap. 17; Luke 9:20-22.) Now (v, 17) the Lord wishes no more of Jerusalem; He quits it, goes to Bethany, and there passes the night.

The fig-tree (v. 18-22) represents, I have no doubt at all, Israel, or man under the covenant of the law, who is judged definitively and for ever. There was nothing but a fine appearance, without fruit, and there never should be any more on that footing. But the Lord takes occasion of the fact, that at His word the fig-tree withered forthwith away, to shew His disciples the effect of faith

in them from the time it was found there. All difficulties should disappear. Not only would Israel under the law wither away, but all the worldly power which raised itself against them should disappear under the waters of the judgment of God.

In verse 23 the Jewish authorities raise the question of that of Jesus, the usual way with those who officially possess authority, when God is acting outside of them by His spiritual power. The Lord, in His divine wisdom, does not contest official authority in its sphere, but He presents a case which went to put its value fully to the proof. Divine power does not want authorisation, and it had fully manifested itself; but Jesus answers as in humiliation, and morally, as we can always do with His aid, if we cannot manifest this power outwardly. At any rate God does not work miracles to satisfy incredulity. The Lord proves, by their own confession, their incapacity to form a judgment on what was done on God's part. John wrought no miracles. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? If it was from heaven, John had borne witness to Jesus, and why did they not believe? But they were afraid, because of the people, to answer, "Of men." "We cannot tell," said they. How, then, pretend to judge of the mission of Jesus? But now they have to be judged in their turn, as well as all the sections of the Jewish people.

In all this part of the Gospel, Christ being rejected, the present time thenceforward is bound up, without interval, with His second coming in judgment, as we have seen it in the citations from Zechariah 9, Psalms 2, 8, 118. Only the Lord lays down, quite from the first, the character of this rejection.

In verses 28-32 He proposes to them the case of the two sons: the first saying, I will not go, but afterwards going; the second answering, I go, sir, but not going. Such was the pretended obedience of the Jews, whilst poor sinners repented of their sins and followed Christ. His interlocutors owned that it was the first of the two sons that did the will of his father. The Lord applies the case to them, and adds that, though they had seen the repentance of others, they did not repent one whit more.

Then, in verse 33, He sets out their history in the parable of the vineyard let to the husbandmen. The vineyard had been carefully put in order, and hedged round about. The owner sends his servants to receive his share of the fruits. Such were the prophets; but they were persecuted and killed, as Stephen too accused the Jews in Acts 7. Last of all he sent his son. But man [the Jew], with all the advantages he could enjoy on God's part, would have the world—the religious world, if you will—without the Son of God, without God and His authority, for he who has not the Son has not the Father. The husbandmen cast Him out of the vineyard, and kill Him. The Jews said that such miscreants ought to perish miserably. Then the Lord quotes the same Psalm (118), already mentioned in the earlier part: "Did ye never read in the scriptures The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" The kingdom was taken from them, and given to those who should bring forth the fruits thereof.

Then (v. 44) the Lord makes the difference between the effect of the judgment which should befall them, and that which should happen in the last days. They should fall on the stone of stumbling, and be broken; whereas

those on whom it should fall in judgment should be crushed, and ground to powder.

Having heard these words, the chief priests and Pharisees perceived that He spoke of them; but they were held back by the fear they already had of the mind of the multitude; for these regarded Him as a prophet.

What a solemn testimony the mouth of the Lord renders here of the crisis through which the human race was then passing, through which the soul passes still, when Jesus is announced! He who stumbles against the stone is ruined; but the Lord will come in judgment of His adversaries, who will be overwhelmed by the power of His advent in glory. The rebellious authority which rejects the truth is always feeble, and depends on the opinion of the world. A bad conscience is always feeble. He who has the truth and faith can say the truth; he is in the hands of God, and knows it. Let us remember that the world in which we live has rejected the Son of God. The gospel says to man on God's part, What have you done with My Son? What can he answer? God announces grace with long-suffering, until His long-suffering would be useless; but the world is judged, having not only sinned and violated the law when it had the law, but rejected God Himself come in grace.

Not only has man been driven out of the earthly paradise, a world (so to speak) which God had created around Him, but, as far as it depended on man, he has driven God from this world outside, which sin and lusts had formed around man. He drove out God, when His love brought Him here below, where He was delivering man every day from all the evils which sin had

introduced into the world. Man does not want God; he will not have Him at any price.

Chapter 22.

The parable of the husbandmen refers to the responsibility of man, even when it treated of Christ's coming. Now the Lord proceeds to speak of the ways of God in grace toward Israel and also toward the Gentiles. In the preceding parable it was a question of seeking fruit as God was doing in Israel. Here a king makes a marriage-feast for his son, and invites the guests to the feast. Remark also that it is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens (v. 2), whilst in the preceding parable they were seeking the fruits according to a fixed measure of obligation, that is, the law, though this were by the ministry of the prophets and the Son, without the kingdom being in question.

Those first invited were the Jews, and of course also during the lifetime of Christ (v. 3). Afterwards, when all things were ready He sent once more His servants—the apostles after His death—to invite them to the wedding-feast (v. 4); but they made light of it. We find here the two characters of men: the pre-occupied whose interest is in the world, and who do not trouble themselves about the Lord; and the violent who persecute His messengers (v. 5, 6). Luke, as is so often the case when moral things are treated of, enters more into detail, whilst for the other part he recounts in few words a crowd of incidents which do not make a moral picture. Luke, I say, enters more into details for the purpose of shewing what excuses men present for neglecting Christ; then he gives us to see the Lord seeking in grace the poor despised

ones of Israel when the chiefs would not have the Messiah.

Here we have the great historical fact that Jerusalem and the Jews as such would not have anything to do with Him and would persecute those that are His, bringing on themselves as they have done the judgment of God and ruin.

Afterwards He causes them to seek out the Gentiles, sinners where they are, and the guest-chamber of the wedding-feast is filled with people. But then comes a judgment which is exercised with regard to all these guests. We have only one example here, but this to lay down the principle. Christendom gathered by the message of the gospel is the object of God's judgment according to the nature of the invitation which has been made. For a wedding-feast there must be a wedding-garment. One must have put on Christ to have part in His joy.

We find here too another principle important and worthy of remark, a principle which flows from the form of the parable: the judgment is an individual judgment.

Here is that which I would say. The first part of this parable, of which the subject is grace, brings judgment on the Jews, who had despised the invitation of the King acting in grace and summoning them to the feast, who had evil-entreated the messengers, and who, following up their refusal to render Him the fruits of the vineyard, had outraged His servants the prophets, and finally laid their hands on His only Son and put to death His beloved. But at the end of the parable, when, the invitation having been sent on all sides, the house was filled with guests, though Christendom be cut off like

Judaism, another sort of judgment is revealed to us, an individual judgment, in which it is a question of knowing if the individual is in a state which suits the privileges he enjoys. It is not a question of the destruction of a city and of the nationality of God's earthly people, of an exterior judgment which closes the economy, the existence of the nation under the old covenant, all the Jewish system. It is a question of knowing whether the state of him who is present at the feast suits the marriage-supper of the Son, of the great King: if not, whilst the feast continues, the individual unfit for the marriage-supper is cast into outer darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The principle established, one sees that it applies alas! to many: many are called, but few chosen.

The parable of the husbandmen is the history of Judaism up to the rejection and the crucifixion of Christ; that of the marriage-feast is the history of the reception of the gospel, first by the Jews, then by the Gentiles, with that which results from the exterior participation in that grace, and the sorting which takes place in the very bosom of those privileges.

In resuming the order of the thoughts from chapter 20:29 we have seen thus far: the presentation of Jesus as Son of David at Jerusalem; the state of the Jews laid down as to the fact in the parable of the two sons; their judgment as a nation in the parable of the vineyard, a judgment which besides had been already described in the fig-tree become dried up.

Here it is useful to draw attention to the difference between these two cases. In the two it is Israel without fruit, judged and set aside; but in the case of the fig-tree

it is Israel in fact, such as the Saviour found them: plenty of leaves, a fair appearance, but no fruit answering to what the Saviour was seeking, to what His heart wanted; also the judgment has another and more profound character. The tree was bad; human nature under the culture of God Himself was worth nothing. On His entrance into this world there was on the Saviour's path but one people which had enjoyed this culture; it was Israel—man having all the advantages which man could have as placed on his responsibility here below. Now man according to the flesh is condemned; never will he bear fruit: it is all over with him.

The parable of the husbandmen attaches itself rather to the nation, as sphere of the ways of God, an economy on the earth; not human nature under the law, but the chiefs of the nation to whom the vineyard of God had been confided. God had had long patience; He was seeking fruits which were due to Him; and His messengers, His servants, had been dishonoured, ill-treated, and even killed. There was one thing more that God could do, and He did it; He sent His Son. The husbandmen cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him; they must undergo the judgment they had deserved. It is not the incurable evil, the flesh which cannot please God, which perishes before His eyes; it is an exterior and terrible judgment falling on the nation which, notwithstanding all the patience of God displayed toward it in its long career, has crowned its iniquity by rejecting and crucifying His Son. This people suffers the public judgment of God; it is a body ruined, broken in consequence of its sin; it will be ground to powder (save the small remnant God has reserved for Himself) when

in the last days it will be found an adversary and apostate.

After this parable we have the kingdom of the heavens, the grace which Israel equally rejects, but which, being spread far and wide, fills the house with guests, Gentiles as well as Jews. Here we find also judgment, but bearing on the question whether the individual is suitable for the position in which he is found.

Now after these great principles, after these features which give us the situation, all classes of the Jews, each in its turn come to be judged, just when they thought they were to cast divine wisdom into perplexity by questions it could not answer; for they believed themselves wise and thought they had to do with a poor unlettered Galilean. How blind this world, and religious men; and how wicked the heart of man! The Lord is in their midst in grace, and these men, the one as much as the other, would shew that He is in the wrong!

First (v. 15), the Pharisees gather together and take counsel together, seeking to entangle Him in His words. They hold strongly themselves to the Jewish self-government, as being the people of Jehovah who were not to be subject to the Gentiles. The Herodians, on the contrary, attached themselves to Herod’s dynasty, representing the imperial power of Rome which had placed him there as a subordinate king. They thought that, if Jesus acknowledged the Roman authority, He would lose in the eyes of the people His character of Messiah who was to deliver them from that yoke; if He rejected that authority, they might denounce Him to the civil power. It was of small moment to them that they should be inconsistent, if they could only get rid of God

and His truth. The bitterest foes become friends to rid themselves of Christ. As Herod and Pilate, Pharisees and Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees, all the world agree for that. The Pharisees and the Herodians came then together to question Him, and ask, while flattering Him for His integrity, if, yes or no, one ought to pay tribute to Caesar. The Lord, perceiving clearly their hypocrisy, points it out to them; then He asks them to shew Him the current money with which they paid the tribute in the country. Whose image and superscription did this piece bear? They say to Him, Caesar's. Render then, said He, to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's. God had subjected the Jews for their sins to the Gentiles; they should own His hand and submit to this yoke, until God according to His promise should free them from it.

Meanwhile they should render to God the things which are God's. They were doing neither the one nor the other. Rebels against God in all their ways, they were constantly rising against the Romans. Astonished at the Lord's answer, they leave Him to go their way.

The same day the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, came to submit to Him the case of a woman who, according to the law of Moses, had had seven husbands. Whose wife of the seven, demand they, should she be at the time of the resurrection? Here a fundamental truth was in question: also the Lord's answer is formal and precise. To put the resurrection in question was to be ignorant of the scriptures and of the power of God. Death did not terminate the existence of man. If God was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, He was not the God of those who did not exist. All live for Him, if they are dead for men; and, though life

and incorruption are only brought to light by the gospel, the Old Testament sufficed to shew that God had been, and was, and would be, the God of the faithful, in order that they should be with Him, not only as souls but as men, soul and body, even as He had made them; only risen, a thing necessary after death. When God said, I am the God of Abraham, Abraham was a man living for Him and was to be raised. But the Lord treats also the positive side of the question. In the resurrection all is changed: it is no question either of marrying or of giving in marriage; one is as the angels of God in heaven. It is not the question here of the position one may be found in, but of the character in which one subsists. The resurrection is a foundation of the gospel. Our faith is vain if Christ is not risen: a thing evidently true, for if man rises not, Christ Himself is not risen. He is then dead also without remedy or answer; He is vanquished, not victor. The Sadducees are put to silence, and the two great sects of the Jews have nothing more to say.

But the Lord having done what the Pharisees, adversaries of the Sadducees, could not do, the curiosity of the Pharisees is excited, and they were gathered together (v. 34). One among them questions the Lord; but his demand has for result that Jesus lays the true foundation of the law and the prophets, and then establishes clearly the situation of things, the question of the moment, as God regarded it. Which, asks the lawyer, is the great commandment in the law? A question much debated among the Jews, for whom each commandment had a special value, the observance of each of them gaining, as in an examination, so many good marks from God. The Lord seizes the occasion, offered in the ways of God, to establish the fundamental

principles of the divine law. To love God with all the heart, such is the first commandment. The second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. All in man hung on these two things. It is the summary of what man ought to be, the root and the measure of human righteousness. It is not in any way a revelation of divine love; it is not at all a question of grace, nor of an open way for the sinner to come to God; but it is the perfect rule of what a man should be, a divine compendium of the substance of the law, the law on which the prophets insisted in seeking to recall the people to its observance.

Now all changes. In His turn Christ questions them. He had been clear and positive as to the resurrection, clear and positive as to the essence and the foundation of the law that man should have kept (and in keeping it he would have enjoyed the life of God; but he is a sinner). Now He presents to them the question, grave and decisive for them, of the judgment they formed on Christ and thus on His own person. What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say to Him, David's. How then, says Jesus to them, does David in Spirit call Him Lord? saying, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? This is what was going to happen. He was about to quit the position of Son of David on earth, Heir of the promises made to the Jews, to take His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No one could answer Him a word, and from that day no one dared to ask Him any more questions. All was closed between the Jewish people and the Lord, save alas! to put in execution the thoughts of hatred which they had in their heart.

Chapter 23.

Without speaking of the instruction it contains, this chapter is important because it shews the manner in which this Gospel moves in the relations of God with Israel, whilst indicating the judgment which the people were drawing on themselves by the rejection of the Messiah.

We find here, first the position of the disciples in the midst of the Jews, as long as God would endure these last, and that which, in this respect, suited the servants of Jesus; then the iniquity and the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees; lastly the love and sovereign grace of Jesus, grace which overflows and displays what He is, even when He is announcing judgment. Hence all this part of the Gospel is bound up with the ways of God in relation with His earthly people, as the then moment when all that was passing is bound up with the last days. All connects itself with the Jews of that time and with the relation of the disciples with this people, and thence passes to the last times, leaving the church aside, save that the mention of the last times introduces necessarily the responsibility of those who replace the Jews as servants of the Lord during His absence, and finally the judgment of the Gentiles.

The disciples are left by the Lord in the relation with the Jewish chiefs in which they were then found and up to the judicial rejection of the people at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The Saviour places them in the same category as the multitude. All were subjected to the authority of the scribes and the Pharisees. These were seated in Moses' seat; and one ought to hear them as to injunctions which they drew from the law given by

his means. Nevertheless one must carefully guard against following their walk: they were hypocrites who spoke and did not act. They made the law very strict for others and very light for themselves; they loved to appear before men with the forms of piety to acquire a religious reputation; they sought the first places in the synagogues, salutations in the public places, and to be called Rabbi, making themselves esteemed in the eyes of the world by religion.

The spirit of the disciples was to be the opposite of all that. They were not to be called Rabbi, for Christ alone was their Master, and they were brethren; they were not any more to call others by the name of father, for one only was their Father, He who is in the heavens; finally they were not to be called teachers, for Christ alone was He who taught them. He who would be great in their midst was to be their servant, for whoever exalted himself on earth would be abased, and he who abased himself would be exalted. This is just what Christ has done, whilst man, having wished to exalt himself and be as God, has been abased and will be yet more in facing the judgment of God. (Compare Phil. 2.)

Afterwards (v. 13) the Lord denounces the scribes and the Pharisees, those religious doctors of the day, putting His finger on the different traits of iniquity which characterised them. They shut up the kingdom of heaven before men, and would neither enter nor let others enter; for religious doctors always oppose the entry of the truth into other hearts. Their life was a life of hypocrisy. They sought to profit through their religious character by the purse of those whose weakness exposed them to their artifices. They made long prayers. They would be proportionately severe. They shewed (v.

15) a prodigious zeal for their religion, but they made their proselytes morally worse than themselves. They proposed the subtleties of casuists and neglected the essential things of the law of God. Exact as to the minutiae of the tithes demanded by the law of Moses, they neglected justice, mercy, and faith, all that which was really important in the eyes of God. They washed the outside, and within they were full of rapine and unrighteousness. Hypocrites! they used to build the tombs of the prophets and were sure that, had they lived in the time of their fathers, they would not have imbrued their hands in the blood of those messengers of God. They testified thus to being sons of their fathers. Well! let them fill up the measure of their fathers.

Never did the Lord accuse any as those whom we may call the clergy of His time, those who, under religious forms, were the great obstacle to the success of His work here below. Serpents, offspring of vipers, said He, how should you escape the judgment of Gehenna? The meek and lowly Saviour, He who had begun His career by describing the character of those who should be blessed, closed it, rejected by the religion of the world and of forms, by describing the hypocrisy and unrighteousness of those who were opposed to the blessing of their neighbours; and He has done it with severity so much the more terrible as it was the mouth of love and peace which expressed itself thus.

Such is the starting-point of these burning words which put in light, as He could do it, the true character of the religion which will not have the truth. At least, said they, they would not have taken part in the persecution nor in the death of those who brought the message of God. But God had His eye on them; they would be put to the proof

in that respect. Christ, for it was the Lord Himself who judged them thus, would send prophets, wise men, and scribes (which He did after having ascended on high); whom they would persecute, kill, scourge in the synagogues, to maintain religion intact, but (it is God who pronounces the judgment) in order that the righteous blood shed on the earth since Abel up to Zechariah might come on the generation on which God had bestowed His last and greatest boon, and which had also shewn in the highest degree the perversity and the iniquity of man. We know, according to Revelation 18:24, that it will be just so with Christendom under its Babylonish form.

The very solemn point which is here put in evidence is that iniquity accumulates. The patience of God waits, and not only that, but it employs all means to recall to sincerity and to Himself those who possess the truth and who have at least its form. The most touching appeals, the most energetic warnings, the condescension which makes use of reasonings almost from equal to equal, all this is rendered useless by the obstinacy of men in despising grace and in practising iniquity. Finally, when God has exhausted all His means of calling to repentance, then comes the judgment that this divine patience had suspended. It is at last brought in by sin accumulated from age to age, and by the hardness of heart which has grown with the despite done to divine warnings and to grace.

Nevertheless grace overflows from the heart of the Saviour who speaks here in His divine character. Nothing more touching than the complaints of His grief in apostrophising Jerusalem, which would neither receive His appeals nor come to be guarded and

sheltered under the wings of divine love. The city is just characterised by the persecution of all the messengers of God; and how often He would have gathered her children together, as a hen her chickens under her wings! But now He Himself come in love is rejected, and "your house" (for He does not call it His) "is left unto you desolate" —not for ever, be it noted, for the gifts and calling of God are indefeasible, but desolate—till the repentance of the people manifested in the desire to see and to salute Him who had been promised according to Psalm 118, so often cited in connection with those days and the return of the Saviour. This was what the children had cried in chapter 21, a testimony willed of God and produced by His power, when the people would not have their Messiah, true Son of David. The iniquity of the people, set under their responsibility, was come to its height; but Jehovah, according to His sovereign grace and according to His faithfulness, will come again in power as Deliverer, at least for the repentant remnant, when the iniquity of years, in this case as in all others, will have wrought the blessing of Israel according to God's promises, an act of pure grace and mercy towards children of wrath (Rom. 11:29-32).

Chapter 24.

That which precedes shews how in all this we have the Jewish people under our eyes. What follows is the history of the Jews, or rather that of the testimony of the servants of Christ in the midst of the Jews, in the interval which separates the rejection of the Messiah, here in question, and His return in glory. They are still—or anew—in Palestine; not yet delivered nor publicly owned of Jehovah, but under His hand in chastening, if it

is a question of those who are under the influence of His grace and of His word, and finally in judgment against those who cast themselves into the arms of Antichrist. This statement comes very naturally following up the testimony of the last verses of chapter 23, and is connected, as to its contents, with that which is there said.

The Lord quits the temple, now forsaken in judgment up to His return, and sits on the mount of Olivet, separated by the valley of the brook of Cedron from the lofty plateau on which the temple was seen in all grandeur.

The disciples approach to draw His attention to the beauty of the majestic building. The Lord does not seek to turn away their eyes from the object which was pre-occupying them, but He foretells the complete destruction of what seemed to be the indestructible palace of their religion, necessary in fact for the accomplishment of the duties which it imposed, and the compulsory place for the offerings which were the only means of putting the people in relationship with God. All was about to be destroyed, from top to bottom; and their religion and all their relations with God, according to the ancient covenant which had to do with the temple, would be entirely abolished with it.

As far as it depended on the responsibility of man, the departure of the Saviour left the temple void of its God.

The disciples ask Him when these things should come to pass, and what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age. They mean the end of the age of the law by the arrival of the Messiah, that is to say, of Jesus in glory, for the Jews acknowledged “this age,” that is to

say, the age of the law, and “the age of the Messiah,” which should terminate it.

Let us examine the answer of the Lord. It is divided into two parts. The first (v. 4-14) gives a general sketch of their position, and of what would go on to the end. The second (v. 15-21) presents the picture, the application of which is the development of Daniel 12.

This chapter, indeed, of the prophet announces the great tribulation through which Jerusalem will pass in the last times, a tribulation that has no parallel in the history of the world; after which the Saviour will appear for the deliverance of His own, and to gather together from the four quarters of the earth the dispersed of Israel, that is to say, the elect of that people. The Lord occupies Himself more particularly with those who would be witnesses to His name, whilst describing the condition of things which so closely affected them. He leaves out of the question the church and all relating to it, and speaks of witnesses among the Jews, whom He warns against false Christs.

Now that the true Christ had been rejected, the people would fall a prey to these impostors, and many would be deceived. There would also be wars, and rumours of wars; the disciples were to be quiet; the end, that is, the end of the age, would not be yet. Nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there would be famines and earthquakes in divers places. It was the beginning of sorrows that would end in the accomplishment of the ways of God.

But in those days of trouble for the nation men would only become more wicked, and would break out in hatred against the witnesses for the truth. They would

be killed, given up to be tormented, and they would be hated of all nations for Christ's sake. When once the bridle is loosed, the Gentiles, like the Jews, will have neither Christ nor truth. False prophets would arise, who would deceive the mass, and the love of many would wax cold because iniquity should abound. In such cases moral courage fails, when faith is not in activity to sustain the heart by causing it to look to the Lord, who is above all difficulties, whatever they may be. The disciples were to persevere to the end, for deliverance would come in due time. Our business is to reap, applying ourselves, without discouragement, to the work of the Lord; for them it is a question of being delivered. It is true, in a general way, for us also, that we must persevere to the end. When the word of God speaks to us of the desert path that has to be trodden, it insists upon perseverance, and upon the maintenance of confidence unto the end, though there is no uncertainty about the issue for the true believer, because God will keep him to the end. He is faithful to do it, but He it is who must do it: there is the way, and we must walk in it. Danger is there, and we need to be preserved; but the sheep shall not perish, and none shall pluck them out of the hand of the Lord. We must, however, go on to the end: it is our duty to count upon God for that, but here in the last times there should be a deliverance. The word of God, notwithstanding the predominance of evil, should not be hindered; it would go beyond the limits of Palestine, and would carry to all nations tidings of the establishment of the coming kingdom. Then the end would come. It is not here the gospel of salvation, such as we have in Ephesians i, but the gospel of the kingdom, as John the Baptist and the Saviour Himself had proclaimed it. The kingdom of God is at hand.

All this is a general view of the state of things which would take place at the end, and which began to appear immediately after the departure of the Lord—a state of things of which there would be a foretaste in what was about to take place between His departure and the destruction of Jerusalem, of which verses 4-14 give us a general idea.

The church, as we have already said, is left entirely out of view, the testimony sent to the Gentiles being that of the last days when the church will be in heaven, and which will give occasion to the judgment described in chapter 25.

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is not found here at all: nevertheless this destruction was of great importance, because it put an end to all relation of God with the people, as such, until it should be resumed on their return to the land at the end of the days. Luke 21:24 speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, adding that it should be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles should be accomplished. Daniel 9:26 speaks of it thus: “The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary”; and the desolation will be there by the judgment of God. At the end the Messiah will take the kingdom, when Jerusalem and the Jews have suffered to the utmost the judgment decreed by God.

Verse 15. The Lord comes now, in the course of His prophecy, to the moment predicted by Daniel, when the abomination which makes desolate would be set up in the place that the throne of God ought to occupy. There would then be, as we have seen, a time of testimony in Israel, which would reach to the ends of the world to all

nations; the servants of the Lord were to possess their souls in patience, and, although hated of all, to persevere unto the end. But for those who should be in Judea, the moment would come when an idol (for this is the meaning of the word “abomination”) would be set up in the holy place. This idol is called the desolating idol; because the confidence placed in it, and the public affront given to God, would bring about the desolation of the people and of the holy place. When it should be placed there, the faithful ones in Judea were to flee unto the mountains. The Lord uses many figures to shew the urgency of the case. He who might be upon the housetop was not to come down to take anything out of his house; he who might be in the fields was not to return back to fetch his garments; the moment would be so terrible, that it would only be a question of flight. But God ever thinks of His own. They were to pray, the Lord said, that their flight might not take place in winter, nor on the sabbath-day. When their time of tribulation—unparalleled in the history of the world—has come, God will consider the temperature most suitable for the flight) and also the conscientious spirit that would stop the faithful soul on a sabbath-day.

This passage clearly shews us that in all this it is a question of the Jews, and of Jerusalem and the neighbourhood. It is the last half-week of Daniel, “a time of distress for Jacob,” but he would be delivered out of it. But woe to the women with child, and to those that give suck in those days, though in times of peace such things would be subjects for joy to Jewish women: there should be a tribulation such as never had been. But the heart of the Lord thinks of all the difficulties, of all the dangers of His own. For the sake of His elect He will

shorten those days, for otherwise no flesh should be saved; and in point of fact it will but be a misery prolonged according to man's will, for in three years and a half all will be ended.

The quotation from Daniel clearly shews us that it is not a question of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, for Daniel informs us that this time of tribulation is without a parallel, and consequently there cannot be two such. But further, the duration of the tribulation is twelve hundred and sixty days, or three and a half years: then followed seventy-five days for purifying everything, and then Daniel, having been raised, will have his part in these things at the end of the days. Now, whether you take the twelve hundred and sixty days as days— as I believe them to be—for a half-week of three and a half years, which corresponds to Daniel 9, or take them as twelve hundred and sixty years, the fact remains that nothing happened, either at one period or the other, corresponding to the Saviour's prophetic words, or to those of the Spirit by Daniel.

Luke neither speaks of Daniel, nor of the abomination of desolation, for he occupies himself more with the present period and with the principles that belong to it. Thus he tells us on this occasion that Jerusalem would be surrounded with armies, and trodden under foot of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiies be fulfilled.

After that (v. 23) come the great signs. There will also be in those last times false Christs and false prophets, promises of deliverance which hearts will so greatly need at that terrible moment when all the false hopes of an unbelieving nation will have passed away. "Behold," they will say, "he is in the desert; behold, he is in the

secret chambers." There will also be those who will work great signs and miracles, so as to deceive, if possible, the very elect. The wickedness of men and the deceits of Satan will again be employed to turn souls aside, and to hinder them from humbling themselves, and from seeking deliverance where alone it can be found.

It is the terrible time of the enemy's power, and of the judgment of God upon the people, by means of the instruments chosen by the people to aggrandise themselves, and establish themselves in their unbelief. It is no question here of Christians; they know that Christ is in heaven. To tell them that He is in the desert, or that He is in the inner chambers, would not meet any need of a Christian, and would produce no effect on those who might be Christians only in name. For the Jew, who will undergo the agony of an unparalleled persecution, and of the anger of Satan, who, cast down from heaven, will be filled with burning rage, knowing that he has but a short time; for the Jew, amidst all this suffering, the despair of a heart, bitterly deceived by the promise of a deliverer already come, will be an evident snare. It is purely and simply a question of the great tribulation of Jerusalem in the last days, the time predicted by Jeremiah (chap. 30:7), and by Daniel (chap. 12:1), the deliverance of the remnant which becomes the nation being foretold in these two passages. The power of Satan, which develops itself at this time, is shewn us in Revelation 12, the order of the time in Daniel 9.

The Lord warns His disciples, for in the whole of this chapter they are looked at as witnesses in the midst of the Jews. They were not to follow any of those will-of-the-wisps lighted by Satan to deceive souls; for the Lord,

the Son of man, would come as lightning, suddenly and with a brilliancy which would leave no uncertainty with regard to His person thus manifested; He would come in judgment there where the effect of the judgment was found before the penetrating eyes of God (v. 28).

The Lord makes some allusion to Job 39:30, though it is a proverbial expression, which one need not go far to find the meaning of. Where the carcase of Israel is, there will the judgment of God descend with the sight and rapidity of an eagle.

After this rapid and prophetic testimony of the Lord foreseeing the judgment of the latter days, He announces with greater calmness the wide results of the judgment of God, as well as the grace that will gather together the residue of the people (v. 29-31). It is not so much a prophetic transport, placing the mind in the circumstances which it announces, as the revelation of the ways of God, given with the calmness and dignity that are suitable to the One to whom all is certain. All the authority, all the power, which exists will be overthrown and will fall. I do not doubt that there will be in the last times extraordinary phenomena (Luke 21:25); but I think that the Lord is here speaking of the fall of everything which by exalting itself governs the world. God interferes, and all the powers then in rebellion against Him will be overthrown for ever.

This will happen immediately after the tribulation announced by the Lord and by the prophets. The disciples had asked what would be the sign of His coming. He had given them abundant warnings, and had declared to them the true character and dangers of those times; but the sign of His coming to the earth

would be the appearing of His glory in the sky. He had laid before them what was connected with the earth, according to the need of those times. But the coming of the Saviour was heavenly, and it was in heaven that the sign of His coming to the earth would be seen, the appearing, I do not doubt, of His glory in the heavens. They would see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory, and then all the tribes of the land (the land of Israel, I think) shall wail because of Him, those who had rejected Him, and who now see Him returning in glory. The faithful sharing in a general way the fate of the nation, but delivered from their unbelief, will mourn, we know, in another manner (Zech. 12:10-14), looking upon the One whom they had pierced. The rebellious Gentiles, who exalted themselves against Jehovah, and against His Christ, will be destroyed; but here, I think, the Spirit has more in view the children of Israel.

But there is more; not only in Palestine will those who are written in the book of God (Dan. 12:1) be delivered, but the Son of man will send His angels (for now the angels have become the servants of the One who inherits all the rights of man, according to the counsels of God) to gather together all the elect of Israel from the four corners of the earth, from one end of heaven to the other.

This terminates the history of the Jews and of the testimony of God in their midst, from the time when they rejected the Saviour up to His return. We have seen the relation of the testimony of the disciples with the Jewish people, and the circumstances in which they are to render this testimony until the Lord’s return. This ends at verse 31 of chapter 24. Verses 30, 31 of this chapter

are connected with verse 31 of chapter 25. The historical portion of the prophecy is taken up again in this last verse, the throne of the Lord being established, so that He judges the Gentiles. Between these two we have exhortations to the disciples, and the responsibility of Christians during the absence of the Lord. The general result for Christianity is developed at the end of chapter 24. All depended on the living expectation of the Lord. If those should fail, the servant would take the mastery over his companions in service, and would tyrannise over them; he would join himself to the world, in order to enjoy its fleshly delights: the consequence would be, that he would be cut off, counted among the hypocrites, and cast outside. This gives occasion to more precise details as to the condition and the responsibility in which Christians are placed during His absence, and this is what we are about to examine.

Chapter 25.

The coming of the Saviour gives occasion to look at Christians as ten virgins gone forth to meet the Bridegroom. The true force of the word is that the kingdom of the heavens will then have become like to ten virgins thus gone out. Nothing more solemn and more instructive than this parable as to the state of Christians. It is a question of the return of the Saviour and of that which will happen to Christians, to the members of the kingdom, at that epoch. If the servant said, “My Master delayeth his coming,” it would be his ruin, the demonstration of the state of his heart. But in fact the Bridegroom would delay; and this is what has happened.

It is of moment to remark the mutual relationships in which the personages of the parable are found. It is not a question here of the church as bride. If one would absolutely think of a bride, it is Jerusalem on earth. Christians are regarded as virgins gone out to meet Him who was the Bridegroom. The Jewish remnant does not go out. When Jesus shall come again, it will be found there on earth in the relationships in which it will have remained here below. The Bridegroom tarried, and the virgins, the wise like the foolish, went asleep, no longer expecting the Bridegroom. Further, they go in somewhere in order to sleep more conveniently. Nevertheless there are of them such as have oil in their vessels with their lamps: it is divine grace which sustains the lamp of the christian profession. They are not surprised. It is a question of those who make profession.

The moral state of the kingdom consists in this, that all are gone asleep: the coming of the Lord is forgotten by all. At an unforeseen moment the cry makes itself heard, Behold the Bridegroom! God re-awakens souls that they may think of it; but what a testimony rendered to the state of Christians! That which should have characterised them, the thing for which, as a living state of the soul of the Christian here below, one had been converted (according as it is written, “How ye turned to God … to wait for his Son from heaven”) had been entirely forgotten. They were no longer waiting for the Lord; and though there was oil in the vessels of some, the lamps were not trimmed. It is the soul that awaits the Lord which watches to be ready to receive Him. Their lamps shone no longer suitably. There might be smoke and ashes; the fire was perhaps not extinct; but

there was little light, enough however just to manifest negligence and slumbering. Where was then the love for the Saviour, when all forgot Him, no more occupied with His return? Fidelity and love to the Saviour were equally at fault.

One is asked sometimes how it has happened that those so excellent men of past times had no knowledge of this truth— were not animated by this hope. The answer is easy: the wise virgins slept like the foolish. Waiting for the Saviour was lost in the church. And, mark it well, it is the cry, Behold the Bridegroom! which awakens from their sleep slumbering Christians. One must not fall under illusions: the proper state of Christians depends on this expectation: “Ye yourselves [it is said], like unto men that wait for their lord.” Without doubt the new nature that the Christian receives produces essentially the same fruits, whatever be the circumstances in which it is found; but also the character is formed by the object that governs the heart; and there is nothing which detaches from the world like waiting for the Lord, nothing which searches the heart like this expectation, in order that there be nothing that suits not His presence. Nothing consequently introduces like it the feelings of Jesus in the judgment that it conveys on good and on evil; nothing like it for cherishing affection for Jesus in the motives which govern our conduct. Remark also that in reality it is the same waiting for the Saviour, the fact of watching in waiting for Him, which is in question here: not at all the service that we have to accomplish during His absence. Service and the responsibility that attaches to it are found in the following parable (chap. 25:14-30).

The same distinctions are found in Luke 12. In verse 27 it is said, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching”; then the recompense is that they will enjoy the blessings of heaven and that Jesus will gird Himself to make them happy. Afterwards (v. 43) it is a question of the service to render during His absence; and then the reward is the inheritance.

Returning to Matthew 25:1-13, I think the fact that the other virgins had to go away to buy oil means only that it was too late to have part with the Bridegroom, and that the faithful virgins could not then communicate grace. One must have it in time for the service itself. I will add that I do not think the foolish virgins were saved souls. The Bridegroom says to them, “I know you not”—what Jesus could hardly say to those who were His own.

In the parable of the talents (v. 14-30) it is a question of service. The Lord goes away and confides to His servants a part of His goods to trade with them. They are the spiritual gifts that the Lord Jesus has imparted to those that followed Him when He went away. It is no question of that which providence has given us, nor of all men, but of the servants of Jesus, and of that which He has given them at the moment of His going away. There is a certain difference between this parable and what is found in Luke 19. In this latter passage the same amount is given to each of the servants; human responsibility enters into it for more in the thoughts of the Spirit of God; also the reward is proportioned to what love gained. Here the amount is according to divine wisdom, in reference to the vessel to which it is confided; and each faithful workman is equally called to

enter into the joy of his Lord; he is set over many things, but he enters into the joy of his Lord. Faithful to Jesus according to what was confided to him, Jesus makes him enjoy His own joy. The principle of work is the confidence that the workman has in the master, and the spiritual intelligence which that confidence gives him.

The talents had not been entrusted to them for doing nothing with: in that case the Master might have kept them to Himself. They understood well that they had been put into their hands in order that they might traffic with them for the Master during His absence, and they employed those talents, those spiritual gifts, for the Master's service. Their heart knew that Master, desires His profit and His honour, sought no other authority or warrant for work than the fact that He had confided these gifts to them, and the zeal of a heart made confident through the knowledge that they had of Him. What the third servant servant lacked was exactly this true knowledge of the Master. In his eyes He was an austere man. And, mark well, when there is not the true knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ, one has always an entirely false idea of Him. The heart ever betrays itself by the idea that one forms of God, and unbelief always makes of the true God a picture from which the heart revolts. Knowledge of the rights of God as well as of His love is lacking. If God were such as unbelief imagines and His authority were recognised, one would act accordingly: but when His love is unknown, His authority is despised. God only reveals Himself in Christ, in Christ alone can He be really known.

This case of the unfaithful servant marks also distinctly the difference between gifts and grace, and the effect of

grace in the heart. We have no practical example as to this in the New Testament, yet the principle is clearly established in 1 Corinthians 13. In the Old Testament we have examples of the Spirit's power without conversion taking place—far from it indeed. This is what also explains Hebrews 6. Here sloth and unfaithfulness flow from the ignorance in which the servant is concerning his Master's character, as well as from the false and guilty idea that he had formed of Him.

Let us remark in our two parables an important fact which we shall find again elsewhere. The Lord, in the teachings which relate to His coming, says nothing which can give one occasion to think that it must necessarily be delayed beyond the life of those whom He addresses. Thus the virgins who slept are the same who awoke; the servants who received the talents are the same as those whose work is taken account of at the end. We know that many generations have appeared and disappeared since the departure of the Saviour, but He did not wish that they should be expecting beforehand any delay. In the same way when He wishes to give the history of the church to the close, the Spirit of God takes up seven churches which existed at that moment in order to describe in seven epochs the great features of that history; so that, although we may recognise now these features and these periods, there was nothing when the Apocalypse was written which announced in a formal manner any continuance of the church on earth.

There is another remark I have to make. What is said in verse 23 seems to me to state a general principle. Those who possess christian privileges without any living enjoyment of them, without truly knowing the Lord Jesus Himself, lose all that they have (this answers to Hebrews

6); whilst those who are faithful to the light they possess acquire more. This, too, is the explanation given in verse 29. The judgment upon the wicked servant is executed in verse 30.

We have gone through in these three parables the judgment of Christendom, of the church viewed as a divine system established on the earth, but exposed to the consequences of being established on the foundation of human responsibility; then of individuals who profess to be Christians considered with regard to their duty of waiting for the coming of the Lord, and in relation to their service during His absence. In verse 31 the Lord again takes up the thread of what He had already said with regard to the history of the earth and the things which will happen at His coming. This verse is linked, as I have said before, with chapter 24:31, before which all the relationships of the remnant with the unfaithful people and with the Gentiles, first in testimony, then in unparalleled sufferings, had been set out as preceding the personal coming of the Saviour, who will put an end to these sufferings. Now when the Lord shall appear in these circumstances, it will not be only to shine and then to disappear, as a flash of lightning; He will sit on the throne of His glory. Then when His warrior judgment, namely what is executed on His adversaries shall be accomplished (see Rev. 19:11), the Lord seated on His throne will judge the nations of the whole world to whom the gospel of the kingdom shall have been sent. This mission is found announced in verse 14 of chapter 24, which closes the first part of the prophecy of that chapter. It is a question there of the gospel that Jesus preached during His lifetime, as well as John the Baptist; it is not the gospel of the death and resurrection

of Jesus (that is to say, a work of eternal redemption fully accomplished), but the solemn fact that the kingdom was going to be established; it is the "everlasting gospel." The Lord was about to begin to break the serpent's head by the establishment of this kingdom, to take in hand His great power and act as King. This testimony is to be rendered after the catching up of the church and before the manifestation of the Lord. The testimony rendered to the Jews is found in Revelation 11; but here we learn that it will be heard also in the entire world before the end comes.

At the time then when the Lord shall be seated on the throne of His glory, He will begin to pronounce His judgment on the nations and to execute it. The word mentions two kinds of judgment, the warrior judgment, and that wherein the Judge is in session as supreme and recognised authority. Thus Revelation 19 is the warrior judgment. In chapter 20 begins the judicial session which is held when the power of the King has established His throne, and He sits there to judge (Rev. 19:11; 20:4).

As to the destruction of the beast and his armies, it takes place by the coming of the Lord, who destroys his armies and casts the beast and the false prophet at the same time into hell. Then He establishes His throne in Jerusalem. After this Gog comes, thinking to have all his own way; he finds the Lord Himself, and perishes on the mountains of Israel. Then, the throne being established in peace, the Lord sits there to judge the nations to which previously the gospel of the kingdom had been sent. The terms of the judgment shew us that it is no question whatever of a general judgment, as people commonly think of it. They are there judged according

to the manner that they treated the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom. It is of this only that they here give an account to the Judge; it is on this only that He questions them. Now, as the greatest number of pagans have never heard of such messengers, this judgment cannot be theirs, being wholly inapplicable to them. Besides at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans the judgment of the nations is pronounced, their guilt established on entirely different principles, namely, that they gave up the knowledge of God when they possessed it; that they disregarded the testimony of creation, then that of conscience; finally, that they plunged, consequent on this voluntary alienation from God, into idolatry and corruption, who should do worst.

Next we find here three classes, the goats, the sheep, and the brethren of the Judge; that is to say, those who had not received the messengers, those who had received them, and the messengers themselves. It is the judgment of the quick, of the nations; a final judgment. They go thence to Gehenna, to everlasting torment, whilst the righteous possess everlasting life here on earth, but enjoy it with God. It is the judgment of the valley of Jehoshaphat when Jehovah shall have gathered the nations, and there shall be multitudes in this valley of decision. The judgment of the quick is a scriptural truth as certainly as the judgment of the dead. Not only so, but the Jews were much more familiar, and this according to their own scriptures of the Old Testament, with the judgment of the quick than with the judgment of the dead. Doubtless there were in the Old Testament words which had given the Pharisees to understand the latter, as also the Lord justifies them on this point whilst He condemns the Sadducees. Yet these were held as

good Jews, and the high priest and his family were of this sect. Nobody put their orthodoxy in question. They were wrong, we know; but when we see the passage by which the Lord convicts them, we understand how some who had not the Spirit of God might remain in ignorance of the truth in this respect. If one did not seize the fact that God looks at man as having a body as well as a soul, so that the life beyond death demonstrates also the resurrection, one has still trouble to seize the force of the proof alleged by the Lord. For him who knows that the Lord is risen and that we are to be conformed to Him, the thing is simple. Death touches only the body; if one subsists afterwards, it is to be a complete man. One thing proves the other. The soul is happy with Christ meanwhile, but the man is not complete. He lives, the man who died; after death, all live for God, they are only dead for man; this last state of death must cease, but will only cease at the resurrection. Meanwhile the soul is with the Lord, the witness, since life is not terminated, that death is not to retain him who is subjected to it.

Now Christians have trouble in believing a judgment on the earth, though they profess it in the Creed. But the word of God is clear thereon. Prophecy speaks of it largely. There is a judgment of the quick, as there is a judgment of the dead; and this judgment we have here, at least the most formal part, that where the Lord sits on His throne and personally judges the nations. Elsewhere they are suddenly destroyed by His glorious appearing, being found, either gathered to make war on Him as in Revelation 17:14, and Revelation 19, or surrounding the camp of the saints and the beloved city (and here they are suddenly destroyed by fire come down from heaven) as in Revelation 20:7-9. But here the Lord, seated on His

throne, after having already come as lightning on those who were warring against Him, judges as King all the nations of the earth, according to the reception that each shall have given to His brethren the messengers of the kingdom, counting all that was done to them as done to Himself personally.

Such is the grand principle of this judgment. “The sheep” disavow all pretension to have had regard to the King personally; but He takes as done to Himself all that they had done to His messengers whom He owned as His brethren. “The goats,” on the contrary, pretend never to have failed toward the great King; but on the same principle the indifference they had shewn toward His messengers counts in the heart of the King for indifference toward Him. Thus it is just His judgment of the nations, but it is also a great encouragement for His servants whom He will send to the nations; it is also, in principle, an encouragement for all times. He thinks always of His own as if they were Himself. “Why,” says He to Saul, “persecutest thou Me?” This goes farther, it is true; for those that Saul persecuted were members of His body whilst He was in heaven; the others were His brethren on the earth. I speak of this as testimony to the great and precious truth that He ever bears the profoundest interest in His own—interest which never fails nor slumbers; which can doubtless allow the trial of persecution if needful, but an interest which, across all, holds the reins in His hand and owns the sufferings of His own for His name as a title of worth for the happiness of the kingdom which will be surely awarded them in its time.

I have still some remarks in detail to make. The Lord takes account of all the circumstances of the life of His

own. The great aim of the parable is to shew that what is done to His servants is done to Himself; but He knows who is hungry, who is in prison, etc. Nothing escapes Him. Further, it is well understood that His own suffer, not only now, but at every time during His absence. Afterwards it is before the Son of man that the nations are summoned to render account of their ways. Besides the Father judges nobody, but has committed all judgment to the Son. Here it is the Son of man come and seated on the throne of His glory.

Remark that when He sits on the great white throne to judge the dead (not the living, as here), He does not come at all. Heaven and earth flee away from before His face. This is not to come there. Here, it is, when He comes in His glory (compare Joel 3: ii, et seq.) that He sits on the throne of His glory and that He gathers the nations. The blessed put on His right hand are blessed of His Father, but they are children, not companions of the Judge, like the risen and the changed; they do not come with Him; they were mixed up with the goats until the King separated them. Now this is not true of Christians, for the dead in Christ rise apart, then go to meet Him with those changed. They are risen in glory. Jesus, who was their first-fruits in His own resurrection, comes and transforms the body of their humiliation according to the likeness of His glorious body. Their resurrection is as a thing wholly apart, and alone the faithful go to meet the Lord. Here He comes to the earth, separates the faithful and condemns the wicked who had despised their brethren, at the same time that He gives to those who had received them (His brethren) the kingdom prepared for them by His Father. This is not however the kingdom of the Father as in Matthew 13:43. Nevertheless all

flows from the Father and from His counsels as the source and cause of the blessing. It is an earthly kingdom, the blessing of which flows from the counsels and the goodness of the Father of Him who was there as Son of man— a kingdom prepared for them not before, but from the foundation of the world; the result of the government of God here below, but according to the counsels of God. The fire into which the wicked are to be cast was prepared for the devil and his angels.

Chapter 26.

Now, having finished that which He had to say when He had quitted or rather abandoned Jerusalem, the Lord recalls the attention and the thoughts of His disciples to His sufferings and His cross. Two days later came the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man was to be betrayed in order to be crucified. This was not the mind of the sages of the world, of the great men and the authorities, who found that the moment was hardly opportune at the time when there would be such a gathering together of people. For these, having enjoyed in vast numbers the effects of His power and His goodness, might stir up a tumult if the authorities attempted to get rid of Him in a violent and unjust manner. But in the counsels of God that was to be accomplished at this time.

True Lamb of God, He was to suffer for us in realising the type of the deliverance out of Egypt by means of a redemption excellent in a very different way. Also the Lord, in the value of His perfection, announces to His disciples that which was going to happen, making use of the very plots of the guides of the nation to accomplish the counsels of God, whilst all their precautions were

reduced to nothing. Now man was sufficiently wicked, and the enemy sufficiently powerful, when God permitted it, that there should be no tumult. The world shews itself completely under the power of its prince, and the enemy of God. As far as tumult was concerned, there were only those cries, Crucify Him, crucify Him.

All that which follows is the solemn testimony that, at this supreme moment, the Saviour, the Victim of atonement, the Lamb destined for the slaughter, the Sheep dumb in the hands of him that shears it, was to find no succour, no refuge, no support for His heart, not one to have compassion on Him though He sought for it. At the same time His perfection, His grace, are displayed so much the more that He is put to the proof.

We are going a little in detail to run over the account of this grace and of this patience. One learns in it the perfection of the Saviour, where it is presented in the most touching and at the same time the most admirable manner. The close of the life of the Lord is distinguished in this respect that it is regarded at a different point of view in each Gospel, as also all the rest of His history, whilst Mark and Matthew present the same portrait with but little differences. But the Gospel of John shews us the person of the Lord God, the Word made flesh, eternal life in the world. Also in Gethsemane and on the cross, we find there neither suffering nor humiliation, but a divine Person who passes through them in His power. In Luke, it is the Man who in Gethsemane feels more the trial as man, but who is victorious in it, so that on the cross the expression of suffering is not found. In Matthew, as the victim of propitiation, He answers nothing if it is not to make a good confession and render testimony to the truth, the sole motive of His

condemnation. The Spirit of God shews here in a positive manner the forsaking of men and even of His disciples, in which the Lord found Himself without any consolation for His heart; then finally the forsaking of God on the cross when He cries to Him, praying that God should not be far from Him, when bulls and dogs compassed Him. In a word we have, in John, the Son of God always man; in Luke, the man; in Matthew, the victim of atonement; but the circumstances are of profound interest, and we wish to touch on them.

Chapter 27.

The death of Jesus being already determined in the unpremeditated council held at the beginning of the night, when He had been brought before Caiaphas, the scribes and the Pharisees held a formal council very early in the morning to pronounce His definite sentence; then they lead Him away to Pilate. Here we find the iniquity and blindness of all in presence of Him who was about to die. Judas, who evidently as it seems to me, thought that Jesus would escape them as He had so many times escaped, as long as His hour was not yet come, struck in any case in his conscience at seeing Jesus condemned, comes to the chief priests with the thirty pieces of silver. Seized with remorse, he declares that he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood. Little sympathy awaits him there. They had attained their end; their business had succeeded; as to the sin of Judas, it was his affair. Such is all the compassion that remorse finds with those who make use of the iniquity that produces it. The end is attained; and if their instrument is lost for ever, so much the worse for him; it is his business. They have gained their end. Judas casts

into the temple the silver, poor price of his soul; then goes away to hang himself, sad end of a life passed without conscience near the Lord. Nothing hardens like this. The cruel and insolent indifference of the chiefs of Israel, which does not relieve a bad conscience, pushes to suicide this man, who loses his life, his soul, and the money for which he had sold it.

But what a picture of the heart of man we find in what follows! Men who had no scruple in buying the blood of Jesus could not put in the treasury the money they had thus employed, because it was the price of blood. What a testimony to the blindness of conscience! How much scruples differ from conscience! Good and evil affect the conscience, which in itself is the noblest of the faculties. The scrupulous man is servile, dreads for himself, is occupied with ordinances, and fears to violate them. The god that the scrupulous serves is a god who watches over what affects him; and he abandons his miserable servant who does not take account of that which concerns the honour and the will of the master that he fears. It is a false rancorous god, the god of a heart that knows not the true God, even when the heart names him the Eternal. If the heart is but externally in relation with the true God, it will neglect that which bears upon His true character (righteousness, true holiness, love), to be occupied with His ordinances, which man without faith and without knowledge of God can accomplish, and which he fears to neglect because he is afraid of God. Now the chief priests could attach importance to Israel which was being ruined and which had been rejected before because of its iniquity: Israel ought not to be defiled; but for miserable Gentiles, to whom the door (closed on Israel) was going to open, a field defiled by

the money which had bought it was good enough. It is thus that a place of burial is bought for strangers. All is blindness, pride, and darkness. Light they would not have. But the counsel of God, declared long before by the prophet, was to be accomplished. When their counsel was opposed to that, it came to nothing; but their own acts of folly were accomplishing the prophecies that they heeded not, though they were constantly read in their synagogues.

Now Jesus was standing there before their governor. He bears a good confession before Pontius Pilate. He is the King of the Jews. When the Jews accuse Him, He is mute. He is there to be victim. God gives testimony to Him by the dream of Pilate's wife; then the governor makes efforts to deliver Him from the bloodthirsty malice of the Jews, profiting by a habit they had of releasing a prisoner at Passover. But the unhappy Jews must consummate their iniquity; for the moment arrives when God permits iniquity to have its course even unto the end, in order that it should be manifested such as it is. Thus was propitiation accomplished by the suffering and death of Jesus. Pilate shews only the feebleness of a man who despised all that which surrounded him; of a man who would keep his conscience, but had very little of it and still less of the fear of God; of a man who, when it becomes too inconvenient to him to maintain righteousness, yields to the violence and perseverance in evil of a will which fights utterly against God and good. In the eyes of Pilate it was not worth while, for a poor just man who had no human importance, to compromise both his person and the public peace. He washes his hands of it, and leaves the responsibility of this death on those who desired it.

Poor Jews! This responsibility they take on them; they do also bear its penalty up to this day. “His blood,” say they, “be on us and on our children.” Terrible curse that this poor people calls on itself; curse which weighs on it until sovereign grace, in bringing a little remnant to repentance in which it will feel the sin which has been committed, changes the blood of a curse into the blood of expiation; and this on God’s part who will cleanse them from the sin which they committed in shedding it. The sovereign grace of God is that alone which can find in the very iniquity of man the means of accomplishing the salvation of him who has been guilty of it. It is thus that we, who have been saved of this same grace, can render testimony to it everlastingly. In the work which saves us we have no part but our sins and the hatred which accomplished it on man’s side. This poor people was on this occasion to shew to what point it had fallen, abandoned of God. They chose a robber in place of the Son of God, a murderer, but a man who flattered their own passions in exciting them against the Romans, their masters, to whom they were subjected because of their sins. Now Pilate releases to them Barabbas, and delivers to them Jesus after having scourged Him already owned to be innocent; for that which characterises Pilate here is want of heart and a proud indifference wholly stamped with cruelty.

Now the beloved Saviour endures all the indignities which can rise in the heart of man, brutal and free to exercise a power which finds its pleasure in making those suffer over whom it rules for a moment. For man is a tyrant by nature, and when several are united, there is no moral force found where the most amiable dispositions exist, and thus one falls to the bottom of the

ladder; one is ashamed of amiability, and all is on the level of what is the lowest. Poor fallen creatures! Besides, Pilate, their chief, had given them the example of it.

Nevertheless, that which especially concerns us here, that which ought to interest us, is the Lamb destined to the slaughter, the Sheep dumb before its shearers. The precious Saviour bears the insults and injuries of those who were only capable of taking joint pleasure in evil and of acting in consequence. He was not the One who would resist or do anything whatever to withdraw from it. He was come to suffer and give His life as a ransom for many. Only we can remark that Jews and Gentiles unite to reject and trample under foot Him who does not resist them. The chosen nation and the last beast, the Roman beast to which God had given the reins of power on the earth, put themselves in agreement, quite hostile though they were among themselves, to persecute and insult the Son of God. If the Jews go on before to demand His blood, the Gentiles lend themselves to the Jews to shed it. Now all is accomplished. The Saviour is led away to be crucified, the victim of propitiation for our sins.

It would appear that Jesus was physically feeble, for they compelled a man of Cyrene, named Simon, to bear His cross. They at least would not do so; alone, Jesus could not. Insolence and tyranny are here in play; in men there was joy in oppressing and putting to death the Son of God. Man was getting rid of Him to his ruin. But though these bulls of Bashan were there, though these dogs surrounded the Saviour, the great and for us the precious figure of the outline is the Victim silent and mute, the Lamb which goes to the slaughter. The

account has a perfect simplicity; but the fulfilment of the prophecies unrolls before our eyes in an admirable manner; the spiritual view pierces across circumstances, contemplating the patient and divinely calm figure of the Son of God, perfect in His submission. They offer Him vinegar mixed with gall, the effect of which was to stupefy in the midst of the sufferings; but the Lord did not seek such relief. He was there to suffer and to accomplish the will of His Father, not to escape the consciousness of that which this obedience cost Him. They share His garments and cast lots on His vesture, which, without that, they must have torn. So it was written. Now the Saviour, exposed naked to the derision of the soldier, was not insensible to the ignominy which He suffered, although He did not turn away His face from it. There was no one to have compassion for Him; no one to confess His name, had not God the Father forced man to render testimony to Him, for Pilate had inscribed His title on the cross: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” The Jews had wished to avoid this affront; but this must turn to their confusion without remedy and veil, and He whom they had rejected must receive His true title in spite of them. Their King was crucified; but God had taken care that He should be owned and proclaimed such.

Nevertheless personally He was to be outraged to the last point. The lowest state in which man could find himself left him always man; and at this supreme moment it was no question of making the difference between us, more openly wicked, and another who should have escaped the degradation that sin produces. It was a question of placing man, such as he is, in face of the Son of God. Also a robber it is here on the side of

men, associated with them against a God of love. In that they are together and equal. This robber could, in concert with the others, insult the Son of God. All is levelled; Christ alone is abased beneath man; a worm, as He said, and no man; yet was He God revealed in man. The Man who revealed God was there; and the reproaches that reproached God fell on Him. The Lord suffered and accomplished His work, more sensitive than any man to all that, for in Him was no trace of the hardness which renders insensible to circumstances, nor of the pride which conceals them or which at least seeks to conceal them: He felt all with a sensibility which all the malice of men could not change; and perfect in patience appealed to His God from them. “But thou, O Jehovah, be not far from me.”

The Jews boasted of having attained their aim. Man deceived by Satan thought to have rid himself of God whose presence troubled him. They wagged the head, saying, “He saved others: himself he cannot save.” What words! To own His power fully manifested, to reject what was divine, to avow that they actually banished God from their midst! In fact, He could not save Himself, not being able to think of Himself: the love which had saved others went farther and gave Himself for us. Perfect love for His Father, obedience to His commandments, His perfect love to us, hindered His saving Himself. He might have had His twelve legions of angels, but He was come for others, not for Himself; finally, loving His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. If He was to save others, He could not save Himself. His love and His obedience were complete. That which marks the frightful blindness of these poor priests is, that they cite the words which, in

the Psalm where His death is described so as it is here described, come out of the mouth of the godless and the wicked (Ps. 22:7, 8). In all this it is a question of men and of Christ; but as I have said, He appeals from them God. Such is what we find in Psalm 22: “Be not far from me.”

Now comes the moment when His position, His relation with God, must pass before our eyes. “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.” Thus, even by outward circumstances, God separated His Son from outrages and insults purely human in order that He should be alone with Him and entirely for His solemn work. He was alone with God, made sin; nothing to turn aside the cup of justice; nothing to deaden it. The power which was in Him did not shelter Him; it rendered Him capable of bearing that which weighed on His soul, the feeling of horror of the curse in the measure in which the love of the Father was familiar to Him, the feeling of that which it was to be made sin in the measure of the divine holiness which was in Him; and neither the one nor the other could be measured. He drank the cup of the judgment of God against sin. All forces Him to utter the cry—a cry which we are allowed to hear that we might know what passed there, the reality of atonement: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—a forsaking which none can fathom, save He who felt it, but which, in the little measure where its shadow only touches us and passes over us, is more terrible than all which the heart or body of man can undergo. In the mouth of Jesus it expressed all that which His heart, and that heart alone, could feel.

Moreover, Psalm 22, from which it is taken, is the voice of Jesus Himself. Psalms 20, 21 speak of the sufferings of

Christ, such only as man can understand when he sees them. They are, as it were, inflicted by men, and bring about the consequences which result from them for their victim and for those who inflict them—the exaltation to the right hand of God of the One who suffered; destructive wrath upon His enemies. But who was the enemy of Christ, in His character of expiatory Lamb? No one. He suffered, in giving Himself, on the part of God in righteousness; the stroke itself—the sufferings— was the stroke of justice. Moreover, as to its consequences, in Psalm 22, all is grace and blessing for all those who are the objects of it, from the little remnant which thus acknowledged Jesus, and which became the church, to the millennium and "the people that shall be born." AH declare that He has done this.

It is interesting to see all the testimonies of God in these Psalms (19-22). The creation above (for down here it is too much ruined to serve as such), and the law (Ps. 19); next (Ps. 20) the testimony of Jesus, looked at prophetically, such as He presents Himself to the heart of His disciples; the answer (Ps. 21); next finally, what Jesus alone can manifest, that which passed between His soul and God, that which His soul only was capable of expressing. Now this was not either weakness or exhaustion, as some men of petty thoughts have taken into their heads to say; a materialism to which not only is the christian doctrine unknown, but which betrays a total want of feeling and of sound judgment.

Now, not only the work has been accomplished, but all the circumstances which prophecy had announced as about to happen, have received their accomplishment. Moreover He Himself was to give up His life into the hands of His Father. It was not to be taken from Him. He

gave it up Himself. He entrusts His mother to John; He then fulfils the last prophetic circumstance. A true Man, absolutely calm, and, as we men say, with perfect self-possession, He declares that He thirsts as the result of His sufferings, and tastes the vinegar which is conveyed to His mouth by means of a sponge attached to a reed. All was finished: atonement, perfect according to God; the work of redemption; all the prophetic circumstances, absolutely everything, had received its accomplishment, whether as to man or as to God. Then, with a cry which indicated at the same time a strength in its fulness and an entire confidence in His Father,17 He commits His soul to Him in that critical moment in which death had part, but in which it lost from that time forward all its power—at least for the believer. With this cry, which announces the end of all human relationship with God, save in judgment, and the end of all the means which God could employ to re-establish such a relationship with the children of Adam, Jesus expired.

At this very moment, that which expressed the impossibility of man's approaching to God, the veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom, and the sanctuary, the holiest of all, where the throne of God is found, is opened. We can enter with boldness (Heb. 10:19, 20) by this new and living way, because of the precious blood which has been shed. The ancient state of things was ended, whether as the relations of man with God, or in that which concerns the very creation. Not however that the new order of things is yet established, because grace still seeks the co-heirs of Christ; but, in the rejection of the Son of God, all relationship of the first man and of the first creation with God has been ended for ever. A new basis has been laid down in righteousness and by

the full revelation of God in sovereign love, for the eternal joy of man, in the last Adam, and in the new creation. The veil, which characterised the state of man as to his relations with God, of man who was not only a sinner in Adam, but who had always failed, spite of God's employing all possible means in order to form fresh links of relationship with him—the veil which said, "Man cannot come to God," is rent; the earth quakes, and the rocks are rent. The power of death is also destroyed, as well as that of the devil who possessed it.

Historically it was only after the resurrection of Jesus that the dead rose and appeared to many in Jerusalem, as a witness of that which had been wrought. Nevertheless the fact is here connected with the death of Jesus, because it is by this death that the work of deliverance has been thus accomplished which made resurrection possible; a work to which testimony has been thus rendered in an extraordinary manner. It is a question of the bodies of saints—a precious anticipation of the first resurrection, when death will be swallowed up in victory. It will perhaps be asked, "What became of them?" None knows, because God has not said. The fact itself is a testimony rendered to the efficacy of the death of Jesus. The question only proceeds from the vain curiosity of man, and God does not make revelations to satisfy that curiosity.

The Roman officer who was on guard, consequently on the sentence pronounced on the prisoners, as well as the soldiers who were then with him, seeing the earthquake and all that had happened, are seized with fear, and acknowledge that Jesus is indeed "the Son of God." This was the cause of His condemnation by the priests and scribes. They had involuntarily borne testimony to Pilate

that He called Himself so, which had alarmed the latter, whom a bad conscience was already making afraid—so that, with all that had been noised abroad in Palestine through the deeds of power He had wrought there, this thought ran throughout the world; it was known of all. These extraordinary facts which accompanied His death, the cry full of strength with which without apparent motive He drew His last breath, all the circumstances which surrounded His departure from this world, bore witness that His death was more than a human death. The hearts of those who were taking part, overpowered by such events, might (even in their natural state) declare that this was the Son of God. As to the result in themselves, no one can know anything of it. Here it is the testimony which these poor pagan hearts, under the influence of the events which were passing under their eyes, could not refuse, while the hardened hearts of the Jews— “his own” —of those to whom He had come, were rejoicing in His death. Nothing hardens like religion when the heart is not changed. The natural heart is evil, not hardened, and facts in which God manifests Himself can act upon such a heart.

From this time forth it is a question of the resurrection, testimony which God renders to the perfection of the Victim and the perfection of His work; to the divine perfection of the One who went down to death, into the lower parts of the earth, so that, having ascended on high, He fills all things, not only as God, but according to the efficacy of the redemption He had now accomplished (Eph. 4). For the moment, what occupies us is the part which men took in these events, but, above all, the part which women took in them. It is here that the good handmaids of the Lord have their good portion.

The disciples count for nothing in it; they had fled; and in all this scene of grief, with the exception of John, they are not seen. Moreover it is Mary Magdalene who becomes the messenger of the risen Lord, to communicate to the disciples the privileges He had just acquired for them. The women had already followed Him from Galilee, had furnished Him with what was needed for His wants while He walked as man on the earth; now they were going to care for His burial, if God Himself had not anticipated them. Already they had accompanied Jesus to the place where He was to be crucified, looking from a distance on the solemn scene which was displayed before their eyes.

Now Jesus was to be “with the rich in his death.” Joseph of Arimathea goes in therefore to Pilate, who delivers to him the body of the Saviour. God wished to honour Christ, spite of the dishonour which was inflicted on Him on man’s part, and even on account of that dishonour. Joseph puts Him in his own tomb, wherein man never before was laid, wrapping Him in a winding-sheet; next he waits, as the law required, till the sabbath should be past, in order to carry out the honourable sepulture which he was preparing for Him; meanwhile he rolls a great stone before the mouth of the sepulchre. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (wife of Cleopas) are found there, watching and contemplating, with the profound interest produced by an ardent affection and by a bond of attachment which divine grace had created in their hearts, specially in that of Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

Nevertheless it was not only three blessed women and Joseph, the disciple up to that time timorous, but whom the extreme iniquity of the Jews, as often happens,

forced to shew himself, who were occupied with the remains of Jesus: the chief priests, goaded by a bad conscience, which always inspires fear, think of what Jesus had said—for they knew it very well—namely, that He would rise again. With them it was a fixed determination, and enmity against good and against all testimony borne to its power,18 an enmity which left them neither rest nor respite. They go in to Pilate, asserting that His disciples might come by night, take away His body by stealth, then say that He was risen. They wanted Pilate himself to secure the body of Jesus. But they themselves were to serve as involuntary witnesses to the resurrection of the Saviour. Pilate, full of contempt and not caring to serve their malice, leaves them the task of guarding against the removal of the Lord's body by His disciples. They place seals on the tomb, besides a guard to watch against every attempt of the kind. This was only to make the fact of the resurrection more patent, and to secure its proof in such a manner as to leave room, where there should be good faith in man, for no controversy.

Chapter 28.

Here the recital becomes rapid and abrupt. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrive at the end of the sabbath—that is, the evening of Saturday—to see the sepulchre. Then, in the morning of the Sunday, the sepulchre opens, an angel having rolled away the stone from the entrance. The glory of this angel terrifies the soldiers who are guarding it, so that they become as dead. The same angel comforts and encourages the women; he shews them where the body of the Lord had lain, saying, "Fear not; for I know that ye seek Jesus

which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said."

That which follows has altogether the character of this Gospel: it is important to remark this. We find neither the profoundly interesting and instructive conversations which are recounted in the Gospel of John, nor the ascension which took place at Bethany and is related by Luke. The angel bids the women to go quickly and tell His disciples that He was risen, that He was going before them into Galilee, and that there they should see Him. This makes conspicuous an entirely new character of His relations with them since His resurrection. He is still with the remnant, with the poor of the flock, in the place where the Messiah was to appear to Israel according to the prophecy of Isaiah. These relations are renewed on the footing of resurrection. No doubt He possessed all power in heaven and earth; but He was reestablishing His relations with the remnant of Israel, not yet as King manifested in glory to subdue the nations, but as associated with His disciples, viewed in the character of messengers of the kingdom, then when Christ, rejected from Jerusalem, had gathered the residue of Israel, and had recognised them in grace. Such is the character which the disciples wear here. The women go to announce these things to the disciples; they enjoy, by virtue of their faithfulness and their attachment to Jesus, this special privilege. They are the first witnesses (and that even to the apostles) of the victory which the grace and power of God gained over the efforts of the enemy, now conquered for evermore.

Nevertheless it is not only the angel who sends them. As they are going to carry the message to the disciples, Jesus Himself, full of love, comes to meet them, so that

they may be eye-witnesses of His presence on earth: a touching response of the Saviour to their fidelity, a blessed testimony which proves that the heart of Jesus is as full of love and of human condescension now that He is risen, as when He was walking in lowliness down here the most accessible of men. He also encourages them. But this fact is related to other truths which are connected with the position which the Lord takes in this Gospel, and specially on this occasion. In John, where the heavenly side and the actual position of the Saviour axe in question, He forbids Mary Magdalene to touch Him. She thought she had again found Him whom she loved, as come back on the earth to remain there in His character of risen Messiah. Such was not the case; He was ascending to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. His bodily presence on earth was no longer to be the object of affection to His own. He had placed them in His own position before His Father, in the same relationship as His own—ever a man with God, the well-beloved Son of the Father. This is why Thomas will only believe on condition of touching Him. The Lord grants him this favour, but makes him feel nevertheless, that those who believe now without having seen are more blessed than those who will only believe when they see. Christians, though now they see Him not, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; while the remnant, typified by Thomas, will only believe when they look upon Him whom they have pierced.

The unhappy Jews seek to hide their confusion, without humbling themselves, without repenting. By bribes they induce the soldiers to spread the report, even at the risk of falling under the severity of the Roman discipline,

that the disciples had taken away His body while they slept.

Finally, the eleven go into Galilee to a mountain which the Lord had appointed them. Doubt still remained in the heart of some, but they worship Him as soon as they saw Him. Their doubt is changed for us into certainty, based not only on the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul—the true foundation of faith—but on the clear evidence that it was neither a fable of their invention, nor a history arranged beforehand, nor the fruit of an ardent imagination which only saw what it wished. Some of the disciples themselves doubt, as we have seen in the case of Thomas; they believe only on irresistible evidence, sealed by the gift and the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven on the day of Pentecost. I think that there were present on that occasion other disciples besides the eleven; perhaps the five hundred of whom Paul speaks.

Here the mission of the apostles has its point of departure at the interview in Galilee with their risen Master; it is a remnant already associated with Jesus; it is not, as in Luke, a Saviour, who ascended to heaven, and who from heaven begins with Jerusalem, just as took place. Here Jerusalem is forsaken, and delivered into the hands of the wicked and of the Gentiles, while the remnant of Israel is associated with the Messiah rejected, but now risen; then those who are thus associated with the disowned Lord are sent to make disciples of all nations, baptising them to the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This mission, up to the present time, has never been accomplished. The mission to the Gentiles was formally transferred to Paul by those who were pillars among the

apostles (Gal. 2), with divine authority from Jesus glorified, and by the direct mission of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:4; 26:16-18).

It is possible the other apostles may have gone later; but the history which is given us in the word does not speak of it, unless it be in a very general and even vague verse at the end of Mark. The apostles remained at Jerusalem at the time of the persecution which took place after the death of Stephen; then the gospel was carried to the nations by those scattered abroad, and later on committed to Paul. John is found in Patmos, left last of all to watch over the church in its decline. The last verses of Mark say that they went everywhere, and that the Lord wrought with them to confirm the preached word by the signs which it was granted them to perform. However it may be here in Matthew, the commission is given them. They were also to teach the baptised nations to observe all that Jesus had commanded the disciples, and He Himself would be with them to the end of the age. It is not the christian mission properly so called; this is found rather in John 20, Luke 24, and Mark 16.19 13 See Expository, Volume 3, for Notes on chapters 1-15, of which this is the sequel written since.

14 Query if this should read “is not the kingdom of the heavens” [Ed.]

15 It is the difference, developed elsewhere, between Romans 1:17 j to 5:11 on one side, and chapter 5:12, to end of chapter 8 on the other side.

16 The Hebrew phrase is a little hard to render grammatically, but the sense is, bringing with Him salvation by the power of God.

17 It is this aspect of His death which Luke more especially puts in the foreground.

18 They had wished to put to death Lazarus who was raised, a hardness of conscience and perversity almost inconceivable.

19 Down to verse 6 of Mark 16 the same history as that of Matthew is found; in the last verses, that which we read at the end of Luke, and that which is found in John 20. The discourses of chapters 13 and 26 of Acts are connected, as those of Peter, with the mission mentioned in Luke. In the Gospel of Matthew it is not said they were to go and make disciples of the Jews, because the remnant is looked at as already separated from the nation, and associated with Christ. It is a kind of extension of chapter 10 of the same Gospel, where they are forbidden— at least as to their mission at the moment then present—to go to the Gentiles, indeed even to the Samaritans, but are told to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Here a wider mission is given them: they are to go and make disciples of the nations. This supposes that the work in the midst of the Jews is other than that of chapter 10, and, in some respects, chapter 24 only explains why the mission which is in question here applies exclusively to the Gentiles. The mission from heaven for the salvation of souls is naturally addressed to the Jews as to the Gentiles. This last is what we find accomplished in Acts: only the part which includes the Gentiles was transferred to Paul, as we have seen.

Thoughts On The Revelation

In pursuing the present explanation of the Apocalypse, I shall endeavour to give all the light which I may have acquired; but with the fullest acknowledgment, that many parts remain obscure; and explaining, what I judge to be clear, without in all things teaching it as ascertained truth, as in many parts of scripture the Christian ought to do. Further, I shall here consider the whole defined period to be one half-week, not two. The facts and personages, in this point of view, remain unaltered; it is merely the relationships of detail as to time, and the particular force of certain passages which are affected by it. Many treatises have been published viewing the Apocalypse as revealing the distinct events of two half-weeks. The comparison the reader will be enabled to make of the explanation of the book after the two methods will lead to a fuller judgment of the connection of the various parts of it.

Besides the direct blessed witness of God’s love and of personal salvation, there are two subjects which scripture presents to us as a whole; the government of this world, and the church. The latter is now, through the Holy Ghost, the recipient and depository of divine knowledge.20 The church’s portion is heavenly: to be in heaven in spirit now, and when the fulness of times has brought in the accomplishment of God’s purposes; to be there, in fact, associated with Christ in the government of the earth. Her own proper place is the bride and body of Christ. But the church has also an outward and responsible existence on the earth. She ought to be the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men; and to

present thus the character of God before the world. In this respect, she is looked at as a responsible dispensation in the world, God's husbandry, God's building, where men may build badly, though the foundation may have been well laid. Christ will build His own work, through all phases of the church's existence; and have the church, as His house, of which He will be the light and glory, perfect in glory. Against this work on earth, or its result in heaven, no power of him who has the empire of death can prevail; but, as intrusted to man's responsible service on earth, the church stands in the position of a dispensation: to be rejected and cast off, if it does not maintain its faithfulness and manifest the glory intrusted to it. It is like all the various ways and dealings of God with men: sinless man at first, the promises, the law, the priesthood, the Jewish royalty in obedience with the law, Gentile supremacy without any, have respectively been trusted to men; man has failed in them all. All will be set up in grace, in or under Christ. The last Adam will be there (of which the first was but an image), the promises fulfilled, the law written in the heart, priesthood in its excellency made good, Jewish royalty in the Son of David, supremacy over the Gentiles, in Him who shall rise to reign over them. The church—though forming no part of this series of dealings, yet, as the sphere of the manifestation of Christ's heavenly glory, by man's faithfulness on the earth, as the house of God, through the Spirit—is subject to the same divine law, first of responsibility in man, failure, and divine accomplishment in grace and power. Local assemblies—candlesticks— come under the same rule. In their normal state, they locally represent the normal state of the church, that which is manifested of Christ's body on earth; but, as is the case with the

general assembly, they may be so corrupt as to require that the candlestick should be removed. There is this difference, that the removal of the candlestick leaves the assembly in general subsisting on the earth; whereas, of course, the closing of the responsibility of the whole assembly removes it as the scene of God's dealings on earth. Hence, we are sure, that the latter never can take place, till the time for the bride and body of Christ to have a better place in heaven be come also.

The Apocalypse reveals to us Christ as Son of God, or Ancient of days, in His divine title of judgment; and it contemplates the judgment of the assembly, and the judgment of the world, particularly of the last apostate power. In this point of view we must read it, or we shall never understand it. Hence the communications are prophetic in their character. The direct relationships of the Father to His children, and of Christ to His bride and body are not before us; though, at the close, the bride be spoken of in order to identify the city with her. The saints have the consciousness of the grace in which they stand, as also the church at the end of its own relationship; but these are in no way the subject of the book, but distinguish themselves sharply from it. The book is prophetic, because it is occupied with government and the world; and the assembly itself is viewed in its responsibility on earth, in which character it will finally be rejected; not surely as the body of Christ united to the Head in heaven. It is all-important, not only in respect to the Apocalypse but as to truth in general, to enter clearly into this distinction. Without it the church will never be known; as the knowledge of the church, on the other hand, makes it instantly and necessarily felt. All belonging to Christ, save His

relationship to the church, is found in the Old Testament; this could not be. All was open, publicly revealed, that concerned Himself. The church could not be. It lay at the foundation of the church's existence, that the middle wall should be broken down. It lay at the very foundation of the existence of Israel and the law, that it should be kept up. Indeed, the responsibility of the first man would not have been otherwise fully tried. The church, and our relationship to God, repose on the fact, that that responsibility is closed by our being wholly lost, and a wholly new place taken by the second Man risen from the dead; His work being accepted, and thereupon Himself also accepted and glorified, and we in and because of Him.

Our responsibility, even, is of another kind. It is to walk as He walked, not to live up to what Adam ought to have been, or what the law required; but to let this life of Jesus be manifested in our mortal body as dead to sin, the world, and the law; and living in that life which came down in the person of the Son from heaven.

I must, however, add here, that the revelation of the Father by the Son, as dwelling eternally in His bosom, is not to be looked for in the Old Testament. The relationship of son is, doubtless, found therein, so that the thought is not foreign to it; but it is sonship employed in a conventional way (I do not mean, of course, not a true way), or viewed in time, and not founded in the nature of His person in the Godhead, but as a relationship formed on earth. "He shall be to me a Son," and "I will declare the decree… Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This is in time on the earth, the glorious and true title and character of Messiah. So, in the passage referred to, "I will be to him

a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." But in the New Testament we find the Son in His own proper relationship to the Father. "No man hath seen God at any time:21 the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." He has declared, even when on earth, the Father's name. He came forth from the Father. By the Son, God created all things. He puts us in this relationship of children and sons, adopted no doubt, but by becoming our life. So that life is never said to be in us, though we have it, and are said to have it. But "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." This leads me to examine, more nearly, the nature and character of the Apocalypse; because it is specially John who brings forward this last point of view, while speaking of the truths connected with our salvation, especially the presence of the Holy Ghost, and, in the Epistle, of propitiation. In his Gospel it is the Son who is come as life, the life being the light of men. In the Epistle this is taken as the ground-work; and the life communicated to us, and its existence tested by its true character to guard us against deceivers. It is remarkable, that, save in a few passages coming in to complete the truth here and there (and they are very few and short), John never sees this life carried up to its ultimate result in the purpose of God; but manifested in this world, whether in Christ Himself or in us. The fact, that we shall go up on high to the Father's house, is blessedly stated in the beginning of chapter 14, and desired in the end of chapter 17; but it is no where the general subject. Paul, who was born out of due time between the first and second comings of Christ, who knew Christ only in the

glory in which He was in heaven (man glorified, the result with God of His accomplished work), who was not to know Christ after the flesh, Paul, who was especially apostle of the church, the minister of the church to complete the word of God, who was converted by the revelation of the heavenly glory, of Christ on one hand, and of the union of the saints with Him so glorified, on the other22—Paul puts us, perfectly accepted, in the glory in Christ, and sees this life in the risen and glorified One, and in us crucified with Him but alive; not "we live, but Christ lives in us." But John (and hence the exceeding sweetness of the writings he has given to us by the Holy Ghost) presents the divine person of the Son in life (and that in grace in flesh, divine love shewing itself and the Father), in His blessed superiority to evil, and as divine love does, adapting itself to the want and sorrow around it, to everything the human heart could need, yet light all through. We do not get man taken up to heaven, so to speak, in John; but we get God Himself in grace, the Son revealing the Father down on earth. The Gospel and Epistle, as we have seen, reveal this life in itself or in us; but the Gospel (for the Epistle gives us the life between the departure and return of the Lord) gives us at the end a hint of the apostle holding on a testimony to the coming of Christ. He did not say he should not die; but if He would that he tarried till He came. Paul might build the church, or lay its foundation as a wise master-builder; Peter might teach a pilgrim how to follow Him that was risen, and had begotten Him again to a lively hope by it—how to follow his Master through the wilderness, in which, after all, God still governed. These, and others, warn too of coming evils. But he, who was so personally near to Christ (Jewish in his relationships and full of them, but in whose eyes, at

the same time as taught of God, [Christ was] a person who was, in Himself, above all relationship, save with the Father, and who had a place in which He could be in the Father's bosom, yet walk as Man, in the title and manifestation of the Son, upon earth, and withal a place in John's heart; through grace, which attached him to His person, and life in it); such an one (and such an one was John, the disciple whom Jesus loved) could watch, with the power of divine love, over the departing glories of the church on earth in the energy of a life which could not fail in it. And he could pass on with prophetic vision to establish the rights of the same person (out of and on the part of heaven, yet still) on earth; rights, whose establishment should bring peace on the earth, and set aside the evil, and make these rights good, where the prophet had seen them despised, in One he so loved, as manifested on earth, and connect the excellency of the glorified Sufferer with the blessing of a rescued world, which grace could bless through Him, though it had once rejected Him. The way of bringing about this, with the failing church's previous history, is what is given us in the Apocalypse, with the prophetically known person and glory of Christ connecting itself, first with the responsible assembly on earth, though then judicially, and then with the earth.

From the beginning of the book we have the revelation given treated as a prophecy. It is a revelation given of God to Christ to shew what must shortly come to pass. The churches themselves thus come in merely as a kind of necessary introduction; their rejection by Christ as to their testimony on earth, as yet the subject of prophecy and warning, was needed for Christ's assuming the government of the world. Christ sends it by His angel—

not exactly an angel, but one who specially represented Himself—to His servant John. He bears record. It is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, a vision. 23 This sentence is important. It is, no doubt, the character, except the being a vision, of all scripture; but it gives us the fact that the present prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, and the suffering in the time of and according to this prophecy is suffering for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It gives us, moreover, what indeed is evident and cannot be otherwise, but an additional proof of the same, that the prophecy is addressed not to the people of God or saints, as in their normal state, like the epistles, but is a revelation about them to another. In the prophets, those who prophesied when the people were warned carried the word directly from God to the people immediately addressed by Him. So in the epistles, though in another form, the Holy Ghost addressed Himself directly to the saints for their good and instruction. In Daniel it is for the people, but not to them; and even in Zechariah, and in a measure in Habakkuk; so in the Apocalypse. It is something given to John, of course, as all the New Testament, for the church, but not directly to the church in its own natural state.

The church on earth is itself looked at as the subject of prophetic address, and as in relationship with the God of prophecy who governs the world, not with the Father. The Son of man who is Judge walks in the midst of the churches. Grace and peace is wished from Him who is and was and was coming—from the seven Spirits in which the fulness of all His attributes in government is developed, and from Christ as connected with the earth though risen. But the time of the church as such is left

out in this greeting of grace, that is, the character of Christ at that time. He is faithful witness; this He was in manifestation on the earth; first-begotten from the dead, He is risen (that, too, on earth not ascended); then prince of the kings of the earth—what He is indeed, now, in title, but one in which the passage springs over from His resurrection to His governmental title when He comes again.24 We have no church relationship; but all that He was, has been, and will be, as to the earth, and what gives Him His right in the kingdom set up in right and power on the earth.

I have no doubt there were these seven churches in the state thus alluded to; and in the language used, we must keep this in mind. But I cannot think that, with this number seven, the character of the addresses, and details of expression, it is possible not to see that a wider sphere of thought is before the apostle's prophetic eye. But subjects previously spoken of by the apostle call for our attention first. We have Christ in three positions, or characters, in the Apocalypse: walking robed down to His feet in the midst of the candlesticks; the Lamb in the midst of the throne; and Christ coming forth on the white horse (not to speak here of the description of the city, of which He is the light-bearer).

The character of God here is Jehovah, the Ancient of days, who is, and who was, and is the coming One. This is, in fact, the character in which God is revealed, as the One who is to be a great King over all the earth. He was Almighty for Abraham—will be Most High over all that is. But Jehovah is His personal name, in which He takes the rule as One who had counsels and purposes, would fulfil them by His own power, and has given the revelation of it.

As is said in Psalm 83:18, “that men may know that thou, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.” So Psalms 87 and 91, where the three names are brought together so beautifully and strikingly, when the power of the Almighty is promised to secure him who knew the secret of the Most High, and it is answered (by Messiah) I will take the God of the Jews; “I will say of Jehovah, he is my fortress,” the psalm then going on, speaking in the person of the godly Jew, to celebrate the Tightness of the answer, and Jehovah Himself closing it with His approbation: “Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.”

It is in this name that blessing is now wished to the “seven churches which are in Asia.”

Next, we have it wished from “the seven spirits, which are before his throne.” This last word may be remarked. We are in presence of a throne on which Jehovah is, and seven spirits are before it. It is not from the Father, and from the Son, in their communion, and from the divine nature, in its own blessedness, but from Jehovah, the Supreme Governor, upon His throne. And the spirits, as the lamps in the tabernacle, all before the throne. The Spirit itself has His place as the perfect development of governmental power in exercise from God. The spirits are the manifestation and display of this before the throne.

The characters of Christ are also of importance here. I have already spoken of their being in connection with the earth; but there is something more. We have all that was needed to give the rightful place of government over the earth, with which He is here in connection. He is, but much more, He was, the Faithful Witness of God

upon the earth. He spoke what He knew; He testified what He had seen. He declared righteousness in the great congregation, did not refrain His lips (that Jehovah knew); at all cost to Himself He bore witness to what God was, made good the witness of it before men. This was an immense service. He made good the perfect witness of light in the world. “While I am in the world I am the light of the world”; and “God is light”; and that in spite of hatred and opposition because of it. So that John had to say, “This is the message which we have heard of him, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” And what He declared He was in manifestation, He was in every sense—a Faithful Witness. When asked what He was, He could reply, In nature and principle what I also say unto you, “Altogether that which I also say to you,” John 8:25. His words were the witness and expression of what He was; and this and its rejection is just the subject of that chapter, and the proof of man’s guilt; they loved darkness.

No doubt His witness was a witness of life in Himself, too; for the life was the light of men; but this remained in abeyance, so to speak, as to its revelation to us, and the part we could have in it till after His death,25 when we have the Spirit, blood and water (which flowed out of His side when slain, as the Spirit came because He went away), as witnesses that God hath given unto us eternal life, and that this life is in His Son. The life was the light, and the light of men, properly of men as such; but except a corn of wheat fell into the ground and died, it remained alone. Hence He was straitened till that baptism was accomplished. And the witness of all this was consequent on His death, a witness about Him rather than by Him. Hence I do not speak of the witness

that eternal life is given to us in the Son (that springs out of death, and as to any persons who are such, His servants are, with the Spirit, His witnesses), but of Christ Himself as the Faithful Witness. There is always this necessary difference: as for reconciliation, in 2 Corinthians 5, God was in Christ reconciling; then, Christ being rejected, a ministry is committed to Paul and others, Christ having been made sin for us.

Christ, then, has made good His title as against the world for God and as of God, as the Faithful Witness. It is, when we have eyes to see (that is John 9), an immense blessing to us. Light has come into the world, yea the veil has been rent, and we have the light of God Himself, yea the revelation of God as light (and we are also light in the Lord, He being our life), so as to walk in the light as He is in the light. Oh, that that light may penetrate utterly through us, so that all may be light in communion with Him! Yet this is a great thing to say, but the perfection of the Christian, not to say perhaps attained, but seen and, in the nature given to us, sought after. But there was more. He was a faithful Man; but there was an adversary who had the power of death over man, and ruled the world, and could bring the world against this witness as having the power of death. No doubt in Christ, as the Faithful Witness, he had nothing; but then, if Christ had not subjected Himself to death, He must have remained alone, as we have seen, having gone to heaven with twelve legions of angels, in the right of His own perfectness, but left us out and the world under Satan’s power. But these were not His thoughts, nor the counsel of God, nor suited to His glory: the scriptures had spoken differently, and they (the expression of God’s mind; and what could give them

greater authority that this reference to them of the Lord's?) must be fulfilled. "How, then, shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Christ Himself, the Son of God, was to die; the scriptures, the witness of God's mind, the truth, had said it; and He gave Himself, drinking, in blessed obedience and love to His Father, the cup He had given Him to drink. But it is the special side of this which regarded His power and title over the world, and victory over the prince of it, which we are here to consider. Satan committed himself completely in the exercise of this power of death, and dominion over the world; but it was all he had. He was the prince of this world, and it was the hour of darkness. And Christ, in obedience, subjects himself to this last and absolute putting forth of Satan's whole power over men and in death, a power sustained too by the pronounced judgment of God. But it is with the former we have to do here, though it were nothing without this latter. But the prince of this world was judged. By death Christ brought to nought the power of him who had the power of death. In the resurrection He comes up in that power of life which left no trace of Satan's power behind. Indeed, according to His trust in Jehovah, no corruption passed upon Him, no moment's trace of anything that was not the power of the Holy Ghost. He gave Himself up to death, His spirit to His Father, and never saw corruption. In Him, so to speak, resurrection and transmutation were united. In resurrection, according to divine righteousness, He took the condition to which power belonged in grace. He died and rose that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living, being competent and having the title to have all power in heaven and in earth.

In the passage we are considering His ascension is not touched on, but His coming forth from the whole result of Satan's power through sin, through the work which gave Him the place and power of man in the new estate in which the power of God would place Him. He is the first-begotten from the dead, the Man who has made good, in this final and conclusive conflict, the title of God in spite of sin, and against sin; and baffled all Satan's apparent success, so that God is perfectly glorified in respect of that in which man has dishonoured Him, and in which, so to speak, to the creature's view, all that God was, all His moral glory, was brought into question. Christ has taken thus the place divinely prepared for man, the headship of man according to God, the whole question of good and evil having been resolved by His subjugation to the whole power of evil in death (in life He had ever kept it at a distance in the power of the Holy Ghost), and, divine judgment being glorified, made it possible, yea necessary, for God to bring up Him (and, blessed be God! all in Him) into the perfect place of blessing, where divine goodness could have its absolute flow, and that in righteousness—yea as due to Christ, and so to others as redeemed. But here, we take it as the place of power and right, according to God's counsels, in man. The head of every man is Christ, and He will take all men out of the power of death, and Satan's power, though for the wicked it will be for judgment. He is the first-begotten from the dead.

Our book treats of the throne, and of the government of the world. Hence the third title of Christ applies to that. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. This title is so plain, that I do not enlarge upon it. The making it good is, after the letters to the churches, the great subject of

the book; first, by God's power in preparatory dealings, and then by the exercise of Christ's own power when He comes. We may remark, that so entirely is government the subject of the book, that when the bride itself is mentioned and displayed in glory, it is as a great city, the capital (so to speak) of God's kingdom.

But here the church breaks in. When Jesus is mentioned, it cannot be otherwise. So at the end of the book (chap. 22:17), and necessarily, in both cases, with the sense and feeling of her own place and blessings in connection with Him. If a general entered in triumph, if a judge was celebrated as the wisest of his race, the wife's and child's feelings would be, when it was seen or spoken of — "That is my husband-that is my father." Such is the necessary effect of the feelings which the consciousness of the relationship gives, and it is beautiful to see. "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!" He may be the greatest above all princes of the earth, but that is what He has done for us. His own blood has cleansed us. He may be great, but He loves us. He may be great, but He would have us great with Him, and near Him. "He hath made us kings and priests to God and his Father." This last is the association with Christ in the royal place He has connected with the earth. It is not children, sons, His bride, but kings and priests; royal, and nearest, under God, to a divine place in government; and nearest in access to Him, when the world is in relationship with God. It is not children at home in the house. It is official glory, though in its highest character and conformed to Christ's own, for He is King and Priest. The exact words are "a kingdom, priests," as in Exodus 19, and pretty nearly literally as in the Hebrew. This only confirms the character in which

all is seen here. The saints ascribe glory and dominion to Christ for ever.

Here, remark, we have John himself, the Spirit in the name of the saints on earth: “loveth us.” In the following verse the Spirit announces His coming to the world, when every eye shall see Him coming in the clouds of heaven, the Jews too, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. All this is closed, I apprehend, by the Amen of God Himself as first and last —Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai.26 These are the three names I have already noticed, and which are the well-known names of revelation in the Old Testament:27 God, who was revealed to Abraham by His name God Almighty (El Shaddai)—to Moses and Israel as Jehovah. Only He who speaks affirms here, as in the prophets, that as He was at the beginning and the Alpha of all else, so is He the Omega when all is brought to completion by His power, embracing all things and subsisting in Himself, embraced by none. This closes the introduction; and the revelation of the book itself begins in what follows.

In the address of John, we find the same character of relationships, and order of thought as that which we have already seen. We have neither an apostle, nor “he that is of God heareth.” He is a brother and companion in the tribulation, kingdom, and patience of Jesus Christ. His ideas range in the kingdom, and Christ’s waiting for it. Christ sits at God’s right hand, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. At present His saints are in tribulation. The persecution of John was for that which is found through the book—the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. All the word is such, but it takes this character when it becomes prophetic. He does

not say the gospel, though that is, of course, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It would not do here at all. He is not teaching among the saints, but alone in the Spirit seeing visions. On the Lord's day is entirely different, to my mind, from what many take it to mean. It is the lordly day (not the day of the Lord), the Lord's day of the week, the position in which Christianity set us as risen. And thus, though the apostle's testimony was prophetic, it was as personally in his risen place he stood when he gives it. This is always true. No prophet now can cease to be a Christian. When he gets out of a christian place, it is false prophecy. His prophecy may have the character which belongs to the subject of prophecy, that is, God's government of this world; but he is on the Lord's day. I do not say this in reference to prophecies given now, as if there were actually such, unless they be false ones, but as to the necessary position of one who has been, or should pretend to be, one in christian times. It is not that the prophet was in "the day of the Lord "(at most chapter 19 is such), but on the Lord's day he was in the Spirit. He then received his commission: "a voice as of a trumpet," but now speaking on the earth. He does not at this moment see, but hears a voice "behind him."28 The voice29 tells him to write what he saw in a book, and to send it to the seven churches in Asia. He turns to see who speaks to him, and sees, first, seven golden candlesticks, which was the substantive object of the vision; but, for the moment, his attention is attracted to another object. In the midst of the seven golden candlesticks he sees One standing like the Son of man. Here we have the vessel of responsibility for light on earth, corresponding to the unfolding of power in government above. The seven spirits were before the

throne; and, later, we find them as eyes in the horns of the Lamb. Here we have seven candlesticks which should give light by one Spirit on the earth. It is not the unity of the body of Christ: this is perfect, and belongs to heaven. It is the responsible vessel of light on the earth, of the state of which, as we shall see, Christ judges. Here is the key to the apprehension of this part of the revelation. God's throne carries on all secretly, and in the time of this book in revealed ways and power according to the sevenfold excellency of the Spirit—Christ, too, as taking the kingdom. The candlesticks are vessels of light. Do they give it?

Nor is it here Christ interceding for the weakness of individual saints on earth, nor representing them before God or the Father. He is standing with no garments of service (He is clothed to the feet) but taking cognizance of their state. Next, though the details are important, He is the Ancient of days. It is remarkable how we are brought ever into millennial connections, kingdom associations: I do not say, millennial times. That is only at the end—and Daniel, with whose prophecy this so closely connects us, is never in millennial times, but he is always in millennial connections, only in the times of the Gentiles which precede them—and then the judgment. We have Christ's character here, not His going about amongst the candlesticks. He stand there. That is His place; and His character is such and such. The prophet sees one who answers to the idea of Son of man. It is not, I apprehend, any personal acquaintance of John with the Lord as an individual, but he sees one in the character of Son of man: and He is, as I have said, not in service with His loins girded, but His garments down to the foot. He is at ease with power to judge; girt

under the breast with divine righteousness. Then we find Him, just as in Daniel 7, to be the Ancient of days. But further, His eyes are the all-seeing, piercing, power of judgment; His feet, the firmness and perfectness of divine judgment as applied to men according to God's glory; His voice as the overwhelming sound of majesty, out of the reach of man's power. He held in His hand all subordinate authorities, who represented Him in light in the church, and the word as judging men's hearts and intentions; His countenance witnessed supreme sovereign glory.

There is a threefold expression of character and dignity here. Firstly, the garment, girdle, and the hair of His head apply to His person and personal state. Secondly, His eyes, feet, and voice; what He is in divine judgment and majesty towards man. Thirdly, His official authority and glory as man: the stars, the sword out of His mouth, and countenance like the sun.

Let the reader remark this character and various glory of Christ here. The apostle—and this also is man in flesh before the glory, characteristic of visional prophecy—falls at His feet as dead. The reply is the fortifying witness—not of an angel-messenger, as in Daniel—but of the prophet's well-known Lord and Saviour, strength for them that are His, in Him that has overcome. He laid His right hand on him, saying, "Fear not," It is not peace, but dealing with man on earth, as when Jesus was on earth, only that now He possesses the dominion. "I am the first and the last." It is still the Jehovah of the Old Testament, but more, the Living One. But this is not all; He has the victory over the prince of evil and weakness. "I was dead, and am alive for evermore." It is Jehovah; but it is man victorious over all the evil and death itself

into which man had fallen; and He held the place of victory for ever. And not only was He in His person victorious, but He held the power over what had been the sphere of the enemy's—death and hades. No angel could have said this to Daniel. Power—power that had wrought deliverance—was there; power superior to all that the enemy could do; and a power which John knew and now felt to sustain him, and make sure the blessing which God's will purposed to bring in, before the evils and sorrows and trials of the saints came before his mind.

The prophet then receives his commission. There are three classes of things which he is to write. "What thou hast seen"; "the things that are"; and "the things that shall be hereafter": but the two first are closely united together— "the things which thou hast seen"; and "the things that are"; then what is to come afterwards. He had seen Christ standing in the midst of the candlesticks. That was not "the things that are"; but the developed state of the candlesticks is so, and Christ's judgment as walking among them; so that the connection is very close. Besides, this was connected with Christ as John had now seen Him, and as he knew Him himself: not the highest knowledge of Him, but a present one—the church on earth; not properly prophetic, that is, entering into the direct government of the world, though it might, as moral threatening, foretell many things as to the church. Still all here was "things that are," belonging to the church period and state, though to the outward form of it. It has been remarked, that "the things which are" is plural; and "the things that shall be hereafter," singular. This is quite in place

here: “the things that are” in detail before the prophet’s mind here; the future, yet distant, as one short whole.

It may be well to notice here the use made of the characteristics of Christ in the churches, as confirming the interpretation of them. The first two give the state He was in as Son of man generally; the second that He is the Ancient of days. Neither of these is specifically used; nor is the sound of many waters, which is also personal greatness and majesty, nor His countenance as thus seen, shewing in its strength the vastness of His divine majesty, beyond man’s reach and control, and His personal supremacy as man. Thost applied are His eyes as flames of fire, His feet like burnished brass, His sharp sword out of His mouth, in His right hand seven stars, and His reply to John when he fell down—the relative qualities, so to speak, chiefly in judgment, but also in sustaining power. We shall see that they are all employed in the first four churches, and none, save His title over the seven stars, found in the three last.30 The angels stand as moral representatives of the churches. They are addressed—not the letter sent by them—and they are owned of Christ. They are stars (that is, subordinate authority, but in the character of heavenly light and order in the darkness) in His hand; so that we must see that which should stand as a representative authority before Christ, and in His hand. But the church is that which is judged, and, as has been remarked by another, whenever judgment is threatened,31 it is not on the angel; it is, in fact, on the church, or a guilty part of it. The angels stand, therefore, as the accepted representatives of the churches. Both they and the churches are seen in the mind of Christ and of God. The stars are in Christ’s right hand, and the candlesticks are

golden. Both are looked at abstractedly. The candlestick may be moved out of its place; but, in God's mind, it is a golden candlestick of which He speaks.

So the star is that which has the authority of Christ in the church, and stands before Him as representing it, but cannot be separated, in idea, from the church itself. I say this, because I find "Thou hast left thy first love." Who? the angel: so it is said; but surely the church as such. Yet it is "thy candlestick," that is, its public acknowledged status before the world as light-bearer. So that what the ear that can hear is to hear is what is said to the churches, but all is said to the angel. So to Smyrna, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; Satan shall cast of you," etc. Similar things are found in Thyatira. So in Pergamos, "Antipas was slain among you." Indeed, it is impossible to read the epistles to the churches without seeing that the angel and the churches are identified; only that the angel is looked at abstractedly in its representative character, the churches dealt with in their actual state, and as composed of individuals. The whole body is responsible, and dealt with in detail of judgment; but Christ looks at the ideal responsible personage: a thought which will be in fact realised by every one that hears His words. An individual may be in this, if he be the intelligent vessel of Christ's mind, in the midst of an assembly; so all those who are so. But the assembly is responsible, and all that hear Christ's warning.

The history given to us is the moral state of the church, and applicable to every assembly; and, indeed, to every Christian at all times, according to spiritual wisdom in application. This state I shall refer to, and it will, as a consequence, give its historical application in the

succession of churches. The first has left its first love; the last is to be spued out of Christ's mouth. They follow thus:— (1) Ephesus: the church has left its first love, and if it does not repent will be removed out of its place. (2) Smyrna: it is persecuted. Those who pretend to be the ancient people of God are specially in view. (3) Pergamos: martyrdom has been going on, and the church is there where Satan's throne is— the world which has thus persecuted. But corruption of doctrine and practice is beginning within, particularly in associating with the world. (4) Thyatira: we find devotedness and labour, but withal, on the other side, along with it, a sad state of things—Jezebel, who not only seduces as Balaam, to mix the world with Christianity, but commits adultery, and begets children. The evil is active and fruitful in its own way. This reaches to the end; and the Lord's coming is the resource of faith. Judgment will be special and terrible. (5) In Sardis we find a name to live, but death; and, if repentance does not come in, its judgment, just as the outward world. (6) In Philadelphia is little strength, but faithfulness to the word, and the patience of Christ. These are encouraged by Christ's speedy coming, and will escape the hour of temptation which will come on all the earth. (7) Laodicea is to be spued out of Christ's mouth as nauseous, being neither cold nor hot; yet warning is given.

These are "the things that are." I have no doubt that in the Revelation, as in all New Testament prophecy, while the prophecy, properly speaking, takes up the close, when God begins again to interfere directly with the government of the earth, or at least to prepare the way for it, what is analogous in spirit is viewed by the Spirit

of God as a matter of His instruction and warning. There is Babylon, and what is unmistakeably Babylonish, before it is fully revealed. There is Antichrist; and yet many antichrists, the “power of the antichrist,” 1 John 4:3; of whom we have heard; and, as Jude presents it, the manifestation in apostolic days of those of whom Enoch spoke, who are to be judged at Christ’s coming. Barriers would be taken away which hindered the public manifestation of the wicked one; but the mystery of wickedness was already at work, and how has it ripened since! This is an undoubtedly scriptural principle, and I have no doubt it applies to the Apocalypse. We may take the churches as the then state of the province of Asia, a picture of the general state—specimens or samples of all—and God’s history of the world thenceforth unto the end; or we may take the things really signified, and the prophetic part, as God’s history at the close of things.

In chapter 12, where a new part of the book begins, the prophetic character is absolutely according to the form of Old Testament prophecy, Israel coming symbolically directly in scene. Christ’s first coming, as in Isaiah 8:10, is directly associated with His second. The man-child is born, the church has been taken up in Him, and the last close is then there. Analogies may be found in what follows, and identification with subsisting elements under other forms, as Babylon; but the history is the history of the end.

I return to the churches most rich in moral instruction and warnings; but have, however imperfectly, treated of this elsewhere. I now turn rather to interpretation as more immediately in place.

In Ephesus the Lord appears entirely in His general relationship to the responsible church. He holds seven stars in His right hand, has the authoritative control of all in power, and is occupied with the inspection of all. He walks about among the golden candlesticks. The failure of the church is also seen in its first principle, not in consequent details. The judgment is the general and absolute one, if repentance do not come in. The result of overcoming, also, is the general one of eating of the tree of life in God's paradise. This general character of the first church, its statement of general principles in every respect, is a strong confirmation of the successional character of the churches. It is much commended; but oh how weighty a notice for all! It had left its first love. The measure of self-judgment is its first estate. It is not a fallen church awakened up to Christ's coming, and by it; but a falling church reminded of its first planting in blessing. In the responsible church individual responsibility comes in. He that has an ear is to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The promise is the calm and peaceful one, belonging to a walk with God, of full enjoyment of the ripened fruit which belongs to His paradise—not a special one in special danger.

In Smyrna trial sets in, the natural conservative consequence, under God's hand, of growing cold; and the natural portion of the saints, too, yet often not coming till coldness begins, as God holds the first planting safe. But it is measured. The pretension of those who set up to have a hereditary title to be God's people is the commonest feature of persecution, and the church is in a very low and despised state in such. Of the rest men durst not join them. But it is rich. Hence of them, the angel representing the church, as we have

seen, would be cast into prison. God permitted, though He measured, the persecution. Did death ensue, the crown of life would follow it. Overcoming, may our souls remember it is still, and always, the path. They that did would not be touched by the second death: of the first they might. Here Christ—as Satan seemed to have power against and above the church—is presented in a divine character, “first and last,” and in evident special application to the circumstances he had been in—dead, and had lived again. He did not put His people through what He had not gone through Himself before them. He would assure them, in that path, of divine perpetuity and of life through death.

In Pergamos He has the sharp two-edged sword. Here worldliness comes, when the first love had already waxed cold, and when persecution was over, and a hostile world had ceased to drive the church from itself, and force a difference on the church, though not always driven it into its own place—into those joys and hopes which were its own. The motives, the thoughts and intents of the heart came under the searchingness of God’s word in Christ’s hand. The church found itself now in the public place of the world. Not a first action of the Spirit in living beauty, but unnoticed out of its little sphere of testimony; not a Gentile persecution, stirred up because it jostled old prejudices in its progress. It dwelt now, had a position and standing, in the world, of which Satan was the prince—where his throne was. “Your fleets and armies are filled with us,” says Tertullian. “If we leave your cities the empire will become a desert.” Could Peter and Paul have said that, or those who were of one heart and one mind? It was another kind of testimony, not a first love. It had grown

to this, in spite of martyrdom through Gentile persecutions. Then it had stood firm and weathered the storm. Now Christ's sword, not Nero's must be applied. Inward corruption, the seduction to association with the world, and to lead those who bore Christ's name to go in the public path of the world, away from God, when, as an enemy it could not curse and destroy them—this was now the danger—more than the danger. It was going on, and corrupt practice was taught; deeds Christ hated had become a doctrine. The Lord would interfere if they did not repent, and apply His own judicial power within the church, giving His word judicial action in their midst, against those who sinned, no doubt, but so as to act on the conscience of all. It was His coming to the church in judgment though; His war, by the sword of His word, was made on the guilty. The word, despised as instruction and warning and correction, becomes judgment in the power of Christ. He is Son over His own house. But if the sword distinguishes in judgment, faith does in receiving the warning and word in the heart, and receives its reward according to this spiritual faithfulness. That word, which would come judicially to distinguish and sever in the church, wrought in the heart of the faithful; and the spirit and character of Christ was distinctively realised, and communion with Him in His separate path on earth enjoyed. To this the promise answers: they would have the hidden manna to eat; that is, Christ as known in His walk down here, though now in glory—the corn of that heavenly land. The hidden manna was not the daily manna, but the manna which had been laid up in the ark and kept as a witness in Canaan. They would have the distinguishing white stone of Christ's own approbation, and on it a name, a

term of relationship with Him in this approbation which they only would know.

We now come, in Thyatira, to the general public state of the corrupt church, yet accompanied by long and unwearied devotedness. Christ, as we see His servant Paul ever doing, first notices all the good He can. The saints have done the same when their hearts were right with God. How have the sorrows and sufferings and labour and painful devotedness of the hunted but persevering witnesses in the dark ages occupied the mind and feelings of thoughtful Christians! Nowhere, perhaps, is there a more deeply interesting story; nowhere longer and more unwearied patience; nowhere truer, or perhaps so true, hearts for the truth and for Christ, and for faithfulness to Him against a corrupt church, as in the saints of the middle ages. Through toil and labour, hunted and punished in spite of it, by a system far more persevering, far better organised, than heathen persecutions, violent as for a time they surely were; with no fresh miraculous revelation, or publicly sustaining body, or profession of the church at large, clothed with universal acknowledgment as such, to give them confidence; with every name of ignominy that people or priest could invent to hunt them with, they pursued their hemmed but never abandoned way, with divinely given constancy, and maintained the testimony of God, and the promised existence of the church against the gates of hades, at the cost of rest and home and life and all things earth could give or nature feel. And Christ had foreseen and had not forgotten it. Weakness may have been there, ignorance have marked many of their thoughts, Satan may have sought to mix up mischief with the good, and sometimes succeeded;

and men, at their ease now, delight in finding the feeble or faulty spot, and perhaps succeed too; but their record is on high, and their Saviour's approbation will shine forth, when the books ease-loving questioners have written on them will be as dust on the moth's wing when it is dead; and shame, if shame can be where we trust many of them may meet those they have despised, cover their face. This the Lord owns in Thyatira. It made no part of the church for men then. It makes none for many wise people now. It is the first part for Christ. And here we have a larger scene, a general condition going on to the end.

I do not think at all that this refers, as some have thought, to the principle of works as found in popery. Verse 19 speaks of what is approved of; verse 20, of what is disapproved of. We have now one who takes the woman's place, symbolical of a state; not individual responsible activity, but a state, as long ago remarked in the types of the Old Testament. I do not think it matters much if it reads "thy wife Jezebel" or not,32 as the name is moral and the wife of the mystic representative must be the public general state. But those who were morally responsible, as actively representing Christ in the church, suffered this state of things. It had grown into a settled system. She pretended to express the mind of God, to be the authorised expounder of His mind, having the Spirit; and she deceived, and taught Christ's servants to go on in woridliness and corruption. It was not seducing them when the seducer was separate from the body, putting a stumbling-block before them. It was an allowed state; all let to go regularly on. Corruption and idolatry in woridliness characterised the state. This had gone on long. It is looked at as the thing with which

God was dealing. He had given her time to repent; and she would not repent of her fornication; she was teaching it, but she was committing it. It characterised the public state of the outward church. She would not repent. It was the present state. “I have given her … and she will not.” If those who were committing it with her (all who entered into the spirit of her ways, and carried them on with her) did not repent, they would be cast into great tribulation. And her children—those whom she had begotten and formed in these principles God would destroy, and would be known as the Searcher of hearts and Judge. I do not take this as necessarily the judgment of Babylon as such farther on, but the application of God’s judgment to all the religious part of it; though the scene be substantially the same. The character of Christ here given (the reader may see, I believe, justly given) in what precedes, the all-seeing piercing power of judgment, and the firmness and perfectness of divine judgment as applied to men according to God’s glory. “He that hath an ear” is here first seen apart from the general body of the church, contemplated apart. Up to this, “he that hath an ear to hear” comes before the promises to them that overcome; here after.

When the state—the woman—is the thing to be dealt with in judgment, the ear to hear is not associated in God’s mind in the same way with that which is judged. The prolonged state of the professing church is looked at here. It is not, as at Ephesus, the general idea, “I come quickly, and remove the candlestick,” because it does not exactly answer His mind, and He expected it. This supposes, in a certain sense, confidence that all will be exactly as it ought to be: otherwise the relationship

ceases. Here, as to the public state, all was very bad, though there was personal devotedness. And God, the One going to judge it definitely as bad, and as an object of judgment, has long patience. Abraham must go down, or his children, to Egypt, for the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. Moses He was going to kill, because Eliezer was not circumcised. This is God's way; jealous when He admits to confidence; infinite in patience when He must take His character of Judge. Here He is Judge—He gives to every one according to his works. How solemn a thing it is, when the public professing body of the church becomes the direct object of God's judgment!

In verse 24, "to you,33 the rest in Thyatira," that is, those who had nothing to do with Jezebel and her ways, her doctrine, who held the church—the woman—to be (no prophetess, but) apart from the world, and pure for Christ; they had but to be faithful to this. God did not expect from them in this darkness, the light of other days. Only they must hold fast what they had. Remark here, they were only a numbered and distinct "rest."; confirming the idea that Jezebel represents the public state. Not knowing the depths of Satan, that is, what they called so, I apprehend to be plain morality and separation from the world. They indulged in corruption and idolatry; it characterised them—pretending to see a liberty which their acquaintance with the depth of Satan's wiles gave them; and pretending to look on the others as seduced by the deep wiles of Satan, to hold aloof from the church's path, from what God owned on the earth, and where He had placed His Spirit and word, for all this Jezebel pretended to. They said, that "the rest "did not know the depths of Satan, in making them think outward morality and holiness was called for in the

church. So the true saints got the character of being led of Satan; and the instruments of Satan, that of possessing the word and Spirit of God. They were to keep Christ's works: that was the depth of truth at any rate. Knowledge they had little of, even in respect of justification by faith. The saints of that day were very ignorant.

George, who began the practical separation in Bohemia and Moravia, after the fall of the Hussites, began with morality, knew nothing of justification by faith as to clearness of doctrine. It was introduced later among them, and through much opposition, and alas! through the Lutherans with great relaxation of practice.

So with the Waldenses; practice was their great theme. And this was in its place according to God. Not that the truth was mighty as afterwards to deliver countries; but conscience was found in those holding Christ as the one foundation, which, through grace, made them suffer and live for Him.

The promises here are important. They are not simply special promises for those faithful within, though suited to them; but the whole scene of promise and millennial glory to come, as belonging to the whole church. This is notable and connects itself with the view we have taken of the passage, as presenting the whole public state of the church in which corruption had become the mother of children, and its public state.

The Greek church comes little in scene here, though partaking of much of the corruption, because it did not stand before the eye of prophecy (as it has not been, in fact), as that which represented the church in the world. No doubt the accession of Russia has given a large

population and importance to it. But this is quite modern; and all the East was overrun with Saracens and then Turks, in a word, with Mahommedans; and these stood in God's eye as holding the population there—the world's religion; and the Western system as that which was the church before the world. So, we know, it has historically been.

The promises given to the church are the power of the kingdom, but, besides that, Christ Himself. This is so simple and distinct, that what is called for is not interpretation but spiritual understanding. Only remark, that the subject here is not Christ's universal power over all things, but over the nations. It is the rule of the world, when the outward church has been the world and falsely "reigned as kings," falsely set up the millennial reign, and faithfulness has caused suffering; and Christ Himself, as the world will never see Him or know Him, as the Morning Star. As Sun He will reign over the world; as Morning Star, He belongs to faith alone, and is never seen by the world. As Sun, the saints will be seen with Him; as the Morning Star, they will see and enjoy Him themselves. Thus, both answer to the trial of the saints in the church; though it is the general glory of the church— all glory, save indeed as Christ is over all things, and such to the church His body. Here it is the world. The promise of Psalm 2 made to Christ as Son of God is conferred on the overcomers. But, besides that, there is the proper christian privilege. That which the watching eye, he who watches in the night sees, when the sleeping world enjoys itself and sees nothing, to be awakened by sudden judgment as a thief in the night—the Morning Star which Christ declares Himself in this book to be—that is given. Christ Himself thus known,

known to the heart in the trial and difficulty of faithfulness, is given to him that overcomes.

The reader will remark, that this church professedly continues on to the end. Here first the coming of Christ is introduced. In fact, the others were passing states of the church. Here God's loving patience waited, and the saints were called to hold fast what they had to the end, till Christ came.

As a distinct form of existence, the Jezebel character marked it, when there was nothing else. It is the state before God's eye without as yet any other (the three last churches were not yet come up before Him), and to this state the instruction directly applies. But, in a secondary way, the fact that such a state of things would continue comes out, as the saints are called to hold fast till Christ comes, and the promises are directly and openly the church's at Christ's coming.

The church of Sardis presents Christ to us in a striking manner. He is in the very fulness of His power in respect of His relationship to the church—the fulness of power in government—the fulness of spiritual energy to work. He has this; but it is merely the fact. The stars are not seen in His right hand. It is not the regular formed order in its right place, but all spiritual power of working not mentioned in His relationship to the churches, nor what had been seen in the things that were (chap. 1:13-20).

But although thus far seen in a general character, and not a special one, Christ is not presented here as walking in the midst of the candlesticks. I do not mean that Christ had ceased to do it; but He is not so presented here. He is the source of all spiritual power, the possessor of all spiritual authority; all that actively

represents Him on the earth belongs to Him, But the previously existing relationship is not expressed.

It is further to be remarked, that the seven Spirits of God belong to the comprehensive qualities and power of the Spirit in connection with bringing about God's will, not the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church: of this we have nothing here. The seven Spirits are seen before God's throne, and they are seen as eyes in the Lamb. We have got into new characteristics of Christ, in reference to His own power and rights, not what was already revealed of Him as walking amongst the candlesticks. His coming has been announced, and the outward successional church followed to the end. It was a system wholly corrupt, a mere Jezebel, a mother and source of wickedness. The Spirit now takes up Christ's personal character and rights, and, in this respect, looks out beyond church-scenes.

The story of Sardis is soon told. We have no corrupt state, though there was much personal individual evil. On the contrary, there was the reputation of a moral activity which, had delivered from evil—a name to live. But the real character of the church was a state of death. And here remark, that the work of the Holy Ghost is itself not, and cannot be, the object of judgment, This is evident. God does not judge His own working; nor Christ, the Spirit's. It is the result in man's hands. Thus the work which produced Protestantism was God's work, the action of His Spirit; the result is the use man has made of this blessing. Some things remained; and they were exhorted to strengthen them, for they were ready to die. The Lord had not found their works complete. There was something failing—lacking. It had man much in it. Christ had not found them complete before His

God.34 It was not anything corrupt or superstitious exactly, but wanting in their character and motive. Activity, but not such as met the relationship of Christ with God on the earth; they were not Christian enough. Yet they had received much, and were to remember this, hold fast, and repent. If the church did not watch—this was the great point—they had got into the ease of the world, and were living as if things were settled, and to go on for ever; it was not corruption and superstition, but deadness and worldliness; if they did not wake up and watch, they would be treated as the world. Christ would come on them as a thief in the night, and they would not know when.

I have remarked elsewhere the extreme importance of this threat. Because it is directly declared in 1 Thessalonians 5 that those whom the Lord owns as Christians would not be so treated; “Ye are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief.” And they are exhorted to watch. But on the world that day would come unawares, as travail on a woman with child. The professing church, in its Sardis state, would be treated as the world if it did not watch. Not only is the judgment most solemn, but it shews that the spiritual judgment, that professing Christianity in this state is (morally speaking) the world in God’s sight, is just. And note, here, that if we connect (as we should) 1 Thessalonians 5:1, with chapter 4:14, this judgment will take place when the saints come with Jesus. Protestantism, for such I doubt not it is, sad as the thought may be, will be found and judged as the world at Christ’s coming with the saints. It is not terrible tribulation and special judgment as with Thyatira, but found to be the world. Here, too, the true saints are

treated as a remnant. “Thou hast a few names in Sardis who have not denied their garments.” They had practical christian walk. The white linen is the righteousness of the saints. “They shall walk with me in white.” The church’s works were not complete before Christ’s God. There was a lack of what was properly Christian in them. Those who kept themselves in their walk as Christians would walk with Him in white. The same is repeated to him that overcomes, with the addition that he would not be struck out of the registers of God’s people. When the once nominal church was treated as the world in judgment, it would not be even in the register. All professing Christians are, and in that sense, in the book of life. They have not life, surely, unless born of God, but they all stand on the public registry of life; a Jew, a Mahommedan, an open apostate, does not. When the saints were gone, and the nominal body visited as the world, that would have no real meaning, perhaps no nominal existence. The saint, faithful while it went on, would not lose his place on the register. Christ would confess his name as really His before His Father, and before His Father’s angels. Here we have the saints very definitely individualised as to Christ’s owning them, and in contrast with the professing church judged as the world below, confessed by Christ above in the presence of His Father and His angels. The warning to hear, as in Thyatira, comes after this distinction.

The church of Philadelphia is the rich and unqualified encouragement of that which was feeble but faithful. There is little church-character, I may say none. All is a statement of what Christ is and will be for them; only that they have the comfort of knowing that Christ has fully taken cognizance of their state, and that, satisfied

of this, they are to go on, encouraged by His own grace. “I know thy works.” This is all that is said. This character of the address to Philadelphia is very remarkable. The church, the saints, have to think of Christ, not of themselves. Faithfulness to Him, however, is noticed. His word had been kept, His name not denied, the word of His patience also kept, that is, of the way in which He awaits the time of His glory and power, through the long-protracted evil of the professing church, in the accomplishment of God’s ways.

In this also they are specially associated with Christ. This association characterises all the promises made to him that overcomes also. Hence what Christ is personally with respect to such relationship, and His availableness, so to speak, for those seeking so to walk, is presented in the revelation of Him. He is “holy.” This character must now specially be responded to. It is individual conformity (though in the common body and walk of all) to Him that is looked for in this near personal relationship. He is “true,” the one who is truthful in all; the true Son of God, the truthful revelation of what He is, and we are sanctified by the truth; true in His word, so that it can be counted on. But “true” especially here refers to the power of the truth, but the truth seen in Christ’s nature and person, and so known to us. “Sanctify them through thy truth; Thy word is truth … and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” So is He the Holy and the True One; and it is especially where all has failed, that this character of Christ has its application, but a people are yet called to be faithful in special connection with Him.

So it is in John's Gospel, as regards Christ Himself in the midst of Israel; and in his Epistle, where seducers were leading men astray, and piety became individualised. Not, of course, as if brotherly love and union were not to exist, but that personal adhesion to Christ, the Holy and True One, was needed for it. Out of twenty-six times the word true is used, it is used twenty-one times by John, as a kindred word is sixteen times out of twenty-five. It is the personal character of Christ separated to God from all evil, and the true and living expression of all that He presented Himself as; as that manifested also the nature of all that was not it.

The next point is that He has the authority of the house and government to which, as Christ, He has a title, "and openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth" —an important word in present service. So to Him the porter opened. No human power, nor Satan's either, could hinder it. So now for those who hold fast to Him. And He had set an open door before them, and no man could shut it. But little strength they had, but (with the door open) if there was faithfulness, the service was easy. This, "Thou hast a little strength," is real approbation. There was not Pauline energy, nor God mighty in any one as in Peter. Not the energy that led to martyrdom, or brought kingdoms under its sway; but love to Christ and His word, that gave desire for the good of souls, and His being known, He was held to—had authority over the heart. Hence, there was a little strength: a great thing where all was loose as to Christ, and His word was held fast, and His name not denied. People might pretend to be the ancient people of God; but Christ had His place in the heart, and hold on the

walk and conduct of those whom Christ here approves. His word was kept, His name owned.

Two evils were before the eye of the Spirit in these times:— the synagogue of Satan, those who founded religion on ordinances and not on Christ: a present and pretentious evil— “they say.” The other a judgment of the Lord Himself, the hour of temptation which was coming on the whole world to try those attached to the earth, as it had been formed under the eye of God. As to the first, their judgment, after all, was light, but a great strength to the saints; who might seem to act for themselves, and despise the old traditions and truths, or what were said to be such, sanctioned for ages. They would be brought to own, by God’s ways and dealings, that it was those who had little strength but were faithful to Christ, His word and name, whom He loved. They would have to come and bow before the feet of the despised remnant of faithful ones, weak as they might have been, and to confess, at any rate, that Christ had loved them. And this is what contents and satisfies the heart—the approbation and the love of Christ. This is what is presented by Christ, and what constitutes the ruling principle of the heart of the faithful here.

The first point, then, was Jewish principles invading the church outside her Jezebel character; that is, ordinances, traditions, and human authority in contrast with Christ. The second is connected with the consciousness that the world is going on to a scene of confusion and judgment, a time of universal trial. In the light in which Philadelphia stands, this is clear to those who have the understanding given by the Spirit of God. Christ is coming. Christ has to be confessed and held to fast, when all principle is loosed, God setting an open

door before faith, but the world itself uneasy. The saints who hear with the ear given to faith will escape the hour of temptation. The reason is given. Christ is waiting for His allotted crown, and maintains His exclusive heavenly character, till He rises up from His Father's throne.

But the mass of professors are dwellers upon earth, not pilgrims; they have not their conversation in heaven waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. But there are those who have kept the word of Christ's patience, who know that He must wait until His enemies be made His footstool, and wait as strangers in heart on the earth till then. Christ has taught them this, and given the word that in teaching directs the path and spirit and conduct of him that waits. They wait with Christ, according to the word of His patience. It is into this, connected with the love of God, that Paul prayed the Thessalonians might be directed (2 Thess. 3:5). They are thus in the spirit of their mind separate from the world, as He is, associated with Him. It is not needed to try and prove them as dwellers upon earth. Here, therefore, His coming is given as direct encouragement and joy. 'You have to keep the word of my patience. Have patience, but I will keep you out of the hour of temptation which is coming; and not only so, I am quickly coming.' "Hold fast what thou hast [an earnest and important word] that no man take thy crown." In a time when there is little strength, and nothing but the promise of Christ's approbation to encourage, and the return to Jewish principles in those who profess to hold anything, it is a great thing to hold fast that that one has, the word of Christy not denying the name of Christ, to keep the word of His patience.

The open door is before us, and it is a great blessing, and none can shut it. But the special exhortation is to hold fast that we have, and remember that keeping the word of Christ's patience, who now waits the day when His Father shall cause Him to rise up and take the power, is that which gives the assurance of being kept out of the hour of temptation. It will come on all the world, but we shall be out of it. This must not be confounded with the great tribulation which comes on Jerusalem especially, from which the remnant flee. It is far more general—on all the world.

The promise is very special, as is the relationship with Christ. The character of the saint's relationship, if he knew what his place was, is that of Christ's. A heavenly man in the midst of pretensions to be the people of God, which made nothing of Him, his only part personal faithfulness along with them that clung to Him, the whole weight of human traditional religiousness being against them, else all death around him, yet an open door to serve. The glory which follows on this answers to the glory Christ takes in consequence of His walk. I do not mean exactly with the Father, as in John 20, but in the time of His coming glory, walking in communion with Him. The former was the means of possessing the latter. He shall be a pillar, says Christ (yes, he who was weak), "in the temple of my God, and go no more out. I will write on him the name of my God [on the faithful one who had not denied my name on earth, when there was nought else for him], and the name of the city of my God [the place of glory and power which God had prepared, for he had looked for a city which had foundations] new Jerusalem which cometh down from heaven from my God [there his thoughts had been], and my new name."

He shall be fully and openly associated with Me in the glory as he was by faith in littleness overlooked when there was nothing but Christ; but Christ for him was all. In God's day He will be all, such is the promise, so closely associated with Christ Himself in the Philadelphia state of things. I pray the reader to fix his attention on the close association with Christ all through this epistle. Let us look around and see if we cannot see elements such as these—No Jewish principles formed in Protestant countries after a name to live, but death there? No looking out for a time of trouble on all the world? No truth in there being but little strength but an open door? If there be, let the reader mark what the warnings and exhortations of Christ are.

The closing state of things comes next. Church, as to its place in the world, it yet is. It stands with its angel before Christ to be judged as such. He takes its works into consideration as such. But it has settled down into taking things quietly. It has not a name of excellence compared with Jezebel, but death. The living elements have been concentrated in the Philadelphia state. It would not renounce Christ, would keep up profession, would sacrifice nothing for Him, it would keep the church's place and credit, yea, claim it largely on many grounds as a body; but spiritual power, in individual association of heart with Christ or trouble for Him, was gone. Christ abhorred such a state. It was as lukewarm water, which would be spued out of His mouth. Such was the judgment unconditionally pronounced on the church of Laodicea. But, as ever till actual judgment comes, God continues to work, if any man may have ears to hear. So in Jeremiah: the plainest declaration that they would go to Babylon; yet continual calls to

repentance, and a statement of God's way in this respect on repentance.

In Laodicea, all that they professed to have, all that man could estimate the value of, was false and human. I do not mean mere outward riches, but all that could give a large pretension to wisdom and knowledge and learning, perhaps a fuller view of Christianity itself; self-satisfaction in what was possessed: this characterised the professing church in Laodicea, but utter poverty as to Christ, nothing of Him—a name to attach to learning and human thoughts, but of Him nothing. Hence His counsel was to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, true divine righteousness in Him never separated from life, for it is His nature: and white raiment, the power of this association with Christ in what is displayed in man, living righteousness; and to have that true intelligence of the Holy Ghost which makes us see, the unction of the Holy One. In a word, the divine gifts and power of Christianity in contrast with what man possesses as man, with that of which he can say "gain to me"—man's conscious possession of that which gives importance and value to man in his own mind. The relationships of Christ to the professing church here are remarkable. The Christian is a new man, a new creation in Christ, risen into a wholly new place, on the utter rejection and proved insuperable evil of the first man—proved insuperable in the death of Christ. Man's and Satan's business are to exalt and give a place to the old. It is not here in the world, not at any rate in his own eyes. The professing church goes decidedly back here into that out of which we are taken in Christ by faith. Hence though this has still the name of the church, and professes to be Christian, it is really wholly in its own claimed moral

place, though thinking itself wiser than ever, off the ground of Christianity, and on that of the world or natural man, which consequently comes on the scene in its own place; and the church closes. What was wholly wanting was what was divine and new in man. It was the first man enriched, even if Christ enriched him. That would be admitted. There was no divine righteousness, no specific christian clothing, the righteous life, according to Christ, of a new nature to be had only in Him. The teaching of the Holy Ghost was wanting. Man's intelligence was wonderfully and wholly in play. The things counselled to be got make this character of the evil clear; they are specifically divine things connected with man's rejection and acceptance in Christ alone, to be had only in Christ, and from Christ, and nowhere else; not an improvement of man, but what was divine found in and obtained from Him.

To this, and the fact of its being the closing state, all answers. Christ reveals Himself as the "Amen" who secures every promise of God, now man has failed even in the church. He is the faithful and true Witness in Himself. The witness of the church as a witness of Him is gone. He is the beginning of that new creation, of which indeed the church ought to have been a witness in the power of the Holy Ghost; but of which He in resurrection was the Head, the spring, and manifestation; all taking, in the new creation, its starting point of existence from Him, its place under Him. Adam had such a place in the old, the image of Him that was to come—Christ, in the new, of which the saints are the first-fruits. But here, the church, which on profession as founded on His resurrection had this character, having wholly failed and gone back in professed riches of

human nature to the old, Christ comes forward as the beginning of it all, the one in whom it had its rise and its truth j all the rest being wholly dependent on and flowing from Him. The Amen maintains the promises now to be fulfilled—the faithful and true Witness— One who had, and now would fully make good, the character of God—which man, His image, and the church, too, had failed to do—the beginning of the creation of God, one who, when God made all things new, as He was now about to do, was the beginning, the fountain and source of it all, the first in, and the first from, whom it all flowed. The position He takes, in respect of the church, shews the same relationship to it. He was practically without it, looking at it as gone, though it were not yet spued out of His mouth. It is a question, though He warned it yet, of individuals hearing His voice that they may escape—may have fellowship with Him, and He with them. He has not given it up; but it has become wholly human in its real state, as judged by Him; so that He has to come in to the individual if he has anything to say to Him, or Christ to him. “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

The whole body of members of the professing church were judged to be men now, not sons of God or Christians, though judgment was not publicly executed, but Christ still acting in grace; divine things (the alone true ones) recommended, human things boasted in. If the individual heard Him who still called and knocked, though as outside at the door, He would have communion with him. The promise answers to the bringing in of the new order of things, not heavenly joys, still a share with Christ. As they had listened in time, they would be on the throne in the kingdom. It was

immense grace, but no more is promised; not the tree of life, no hidden manna, no white raiment spoken of to the soul, to encourage it in faithfulness within: they would not miss the kingdom. Blessed surely, and wonderful grace, but only just not shut out.

This, of course, necessarily closed the church's history. The reader will remark, that the instruction being moral, a state that is judged, promises ever precious, the warnings and exhortations are available to the saints at all times. The special application may be more or less seized. The words of Christ have power at all times for the heart and conscience; and this is the force of the exhortation at the end to every church:— "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

We now come to the government of the world. The failure of the church as a professing outward body, founded on human responsibility (for as built by Christ for His glory, it never can, but this is in heaven in purpose, and judgment certainly does come in this world), had left only this, and brought in necessarily the intervention of God in judgment.

The prophet is called up to heaven; for no government of God was yet manifested on the earth, and the church was no longer owned as witness; and the first voice which he" had heard as a trumpet, the voice of the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the voice of Him who was behind him in the midst of the golden candlesticks, now called him up to where His power and activity was to display itself—the Ancient of days, whom we shall now first have to see on the throne; but whom we shall also perceive as a distinct person as the Lamb.

We have a throne in heaven, instead of candlesticks upon the earth. In the “things after these,” or hereafter, we find evidently the last part of the verse which gives the division of the book; and, whether translated “after these” or “hereafter,” the sense is the same; as the preceding things were “the things that are.” The judgment of Daniel 7 is here largely developed. The jasper is divine display. I go no farther. It is not essential nature, though this be what is displayed; but display of divine glory in government and judgment—what secures and protects from evil. I say this merely from its use, not from any notion as to the stone. (Compare chap. 21:18, 19, and 11.) It characterises divine display thus in the book. The rainbow is covenant with creation. The throne thus gives the government which secures from evil and blesses creation. The saints, kings and priests, are seen in glory, enthroned and crowned as kings here (in the next chapter, priests), and decked with the ornament of righteousnesses in life. The throne was one of majesty and judgment (not 01 grace) Sinai-like, and before it the perfection of attributive power; the seven Spirits of God were seen. And that which erst was the means of feet-washing, and cleansing before judgment came in, was now solid purity on which cleansed ones could walk and find no uncleanness to take up. The cherubim (four not two, completeness, not witness) were in the midst of the throne and around it, characterised it in its inward nature, and surrounded35 it with what was their peculiar character. That character is judicial power, as I have elsewhere remarked, and as all the cases, in which they appear, shew.

But the details shew other elements in their attributions here. They are heads of the four parts of created

existence on the earth. They have this under their power as their attribution, so to speak; man, beasts of the field, cattle, and fowls of the air—not of the sea; every one characterised by rapidity of flight, and power of inward perception. In verse 8 their service is referred to, and the eyes are within; this characterised their intelligence, its nature: a figure easy to comprehend. We know more or less what it is to have within us a clear perception of what is, of the nature and motives of what is, around us. These were full of eyes before and behind; they saw all things on every side. The administrative knowledge of the throne was not a partial knowledge. It was not a mere outward knowledge of circumstances which governed. The eyes were within. God, in His Old Testament characters— Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai—God, the Supreme Governor, and God once of promise, always of fulfilment, and the Great King over all the earth, the Creator who faints not, neither is weary, was unceasingly celebrated by the administration of His power in providence and creation. But they do this in a peculiar character—Holy! holy! holy—in that character, which allows no evil to be near it, but will be sanctified in all that were nigh to Him. But this is celebration, not worship. The elders fall down and worship. Nor only so; they give— and that characterises in general the worship of the elders— they give motives and reasons for it. It is intelligent reasonable worship. They worship Him that sits on the throne, Him who has title over creation, by whom and for whom all things were created: “For thy will they were and have been created.”

Redemption is not yet touched on. I have largely noticed elsewhere, but must not here pass over, the exquisitely beautiful character of the moral state and position of the

elders. When the throne of judgment is set, they are on thrones. The lightnings, and thunderings, and voices left them in unmoved peace. Why should they not? Their place was the witness and result of divine righteousness in which they sat there, which had crowned them; and the exercise of this judgment left them necessarily in the peace it gave. But when He who sat on the throne was celebrated, then they were all activity. They leave their thrones, they cast down their crowns, ascribing all glory to Him who alone was worthy. He that sits on the throne is Christ, but viewed as Jehovah, and sitting as such, not as a distinct person seen apart from Godhead, nor as a Son with the Father in Godhead; but the Jehovah of the Old Testament revealed in the Son. It will be remarked, there is no manifestation of angels here.

We may remark here, that the whole scenery is taken from the temple, a remark which aids in the intelligence of the structure of the book, only it is changed in several particulars, and, though permanent, answers in some details more to the tabernacle—the shadow of heavenly things.

In the right hand of power of Him that sat on the throne was a book, the unfolding of the counsels and purposes of God, according to His power. It was filled with these, but perfectly sealed up. The personal glory of the Opener is brought into evidence by the inquiry, who could unfold and give effect to them. None anywhere could be found; but the heavenly elders have intelligence of the ways and mind of God. Christ can. He is spoken of in His Jewish character, but in the way of divine power—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the source of promise, and the Mighty One to prevail; but, after all, it was redemption, and suffering

for the glory of God, which had given Him the title. Blessed thought! The prophet must see a Lamb as it had been slain. Full power and competency to execute it according to the perfection of God's attributes were in Him—seven horns and seven eyes. He was the centre of all that expressed divine power and its displays and results—the throne, the beasts, and the elders.

The beasts and elders are distinguished here. The Lamb was in the midst of the throne and the beasts; and in the midst of the elders. That is, the power of government, providence and creation, whoever instrumentally wielded it; and in the midst of the crowned and enthroned company, who were as added heirs to this, the redeemed kingdom of priests. The seven Spirits which were before the throne, part of God's glory on it, are seen in the Lamb, but as sent forth to accomplish the divine purposes in all the earth under the Lamb's authority. He comes, and takes the book. Now redemption is celebrated. I would here make some remarks, as regards the beasts and elders, not with the certainty of teaching but submitting them to inquiry, in which state they stand in my own mind, though the inquiry be based on elements settled in my own mind.

In chapter 4, creation and providential power were brought before us as such, and no angels. Here also redemption and the angels are seen. Further, in this whole book (indeed in all scripture), the cherubic animals hold the place of judicial power, and administer it providentially. The elders everywhere have divine intelligence of the motives for praise. This belongs to the saints as such, and indeed especially to Christians, who have an unction from the Holy One and know all things, but to the saints as such. The administration of

governmental and judicial power is not exclusively theirs. They get it in consequence of redemption. Further, in chapter 4, the beasts celebrate the glory of Him that sits on the throne—announce His character—the elders only worship thereupon. The angels are not seen. I have supposed then that, redemption not being yet manifested, the administrative power is not viewed as taken out of the hands of the angels, for we know that the world to come is not subjected to them. Creation and all its glory is seen as such, the living creatures are not yet the saints; and the angels are not seen apart from that glory of which they have been the heads. When the Lamb is manifested, those associated with Him must take the first place as connected with Him, and the angels delight in it. This we have in chapter 5. Redemption brings in the reign of man in Christ. (Compare Eph. 1:20-23 and 1 Pet. 3:22.) The Lamb being now manifested as Redeemer, this also is manifested. The beasts36 worship with the elders, are now associated, and the angels are seen, as such, apart. As we go on to the farther parts of the book, we shall see that the beasts recede, and the elders take the first place.

Here, the beasts and elders, the heavenly saints, I apprehend, in their double character of heads of creation, and kings and priests, exercise distinctly the office of priests, not in interceding, but in offering up the prayers of the saints. The intelligence of the elders, the saints, viewed in this character of priests brought near to God, whose lips keep knowledge, celebrate the Lamb as worthy to take the book, and open the seals, and why He is so; namely, that He has gone through death and wrought redemption—redeemed to God. I

suppose the “us” is justly rejected. It is not who are redeemed that makes Him worthy; but that He has redeemed people to God out of every nation, and made them kings and priests, and that they will reign. It is His work, and its effect and character, that make Him worthy. Who should open that book of the kingdom, or the ways of God in bringing it in, but He who had brought it into existence and all in it, by sacrificing Himself? And here the angels come in with willing chorus in a beautiful way, owning the effect of this work, and standing farther off, but in the best of places since it was the one that owned and gave glory to the Lamb in His work. They stood in a circle around the throne and the beasts and the elders. So every creature joined in the chorus. And the four beasts say “Amen” to the creature. It was their place. The twenty-four elders fall down and worship. This is their own worship. It is more than the “Amen” of the beasts to the praise of the creation. This, though we have made progress as to the facts in the prophetic history (for the book has been now taken by the Lamb in order to open it), yet gives an anticipative expression to universal praise. John hears it prophetically. The twenty-four elders and beasts made part of the subsisting glory from which all was to follow —crowned and enthroned before there was any history.

For the history to begin, the Lamb must take the book. This is all-important as to the saint’s place when the Lamb takes the book. To the prophetic eye and ear the angels fall into their natural place in the kingdom; and then his ear hears the voice (as Paul’s before the groans of every creature everywhere) celebrating the glory of Him that was on the throne, and of the Lamb. Seen they could not be yet thus; but it was, so to speak, the natural

result of that which was now taking effect. Many a groan would go up, and many a sorrow be felt. But the book the Lamb had taken, the elders were manifested in their redemption-place, the angels joyful in that which redemption gave them; the Lamb not yet indeed seen as having taken His kingdom on earth, but His title to it loudly proclaimed above by those who knew and were the firstfruits of it, and the ways ready to be unfolded which led to it. The voice of the result is prophetically heard, and, as heads of government and creation, the beasts say, “Amen.” The voice is true and right. As elders, the saints worship Him that never fails in promise, but makes good in immutable nature what He has purposed in grace. It is not “him on the throne “here; the creatures were not yet in actual relation with it; but He lives to make all good.

All this is introduction; to put all in their places for the kingdom and ways of God—creation and redemption each having its due glory. And now the history itself will begin. As yet the beasts are in the foreground—providential dealings; the (to man) hidden ways of God are going on. The Lamb opened one of the seals. And one of the four beasts, these leaders of the governmental ways of God, of His judicial power, speaks with thunder. It is known that many leave out “and see.” Should they remain, it is clearly a call to John; but I hardly see why it should be a voice of thunder. The idea that it is the voice of creation looking to Jesus to come seems to me wholly out of the way. The groaning creation, or longing creation, does not speak in thunder. It seems to me more naturally as the expression of God’s thunder and power—a call to the horses to come forth. The reading must first be determined, of course; but if

this be right, it is not without importance, as settling what I have, at the same time, never doubted, without any such ground, that the four horses have the same character. The horse is always the action of divine power, gone forth into the earth, accomplishing, whatever the agent may be, divine purpose and providence. A white horse characterises triumph, as is well known: such is the white horse here, triumphant conquest. The next is a state of war and conflict which takes peace from the earth. In the third God calls for famine on the earth; in the last, all His four sore plagues (Ezek. 14:21). It is not special dealings with a revealed antagonistic state, which are presented to us. It is history, history of the condition of the earth, the special scene of God's dealings, where He has been made known, but where man does not care about God, or perhaps favours His enemies, and persecutes His people. God deals with them, and, though at first all seems fair and prosperous in his hands where active power is, the judgments of God soon reach the scene. For the force of horses as a symbol see Zechariah 1 and 6, and Revelation 19. It will be seen in all these cases, that it indicates a matter of public general dealing of God, something that characterises the state of men and God's dealing with them.

The opening of the seal brings no longer the cry of the beasts. John sees those who had been martyred among men, had offered up their lives for God's word and for testimony which they held. Hence they were seen under the altar. They looked not for peace themselves, but for judgment on the earth. We are here not in the gospel scene or spirit of things, but of the throne of judgment and government, as we see in the Psalms. The time for

executing judgment and avenging their blood was soon coming, but not yet come. Their faithfulness was owned. White robes were given them, the witness of accepted practical righteousness, the. witness of its acceptance before others; but they must rest a little while. Others must yet suffer in the last days. God has begun to deal with the earth; but the last scenes are not yet come.

But another character given of God to men here comes in view, already prophetically introduced in the promise to Philadelphia— “them that dwell on earth.” They are settled, and have their habitation there. It is not necessary to be of the church, in order not to have this character. It is true of the church; but in Daniel 7 also we have saints of the high places. And before Daniel Abraham “looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” He declared plainly that he sought a country, that is, an heavenly, so that God was not ashamed to be called his God. So it was with him, who could say for himself and others, “I am a stranger and a sojourner with Thee, as all my fathers were.” It may be that the very departure of the church may have stamped this character of saints of the high places on many that are left behind. At any rate those who have been slain for their testimony easily know the settled worldly character of those who had slain them, how they had the earth for their place and name.

Remark, that we have no time or date as yet here, only there is but a little season to follow. How long the horses have been pursuing their career in accomplishing God’s will, since the book was opened, is left wholly untold; only they were, when the church was present and owned of God, future things. How the witness is given to them, the white robes, is not said. The cry is for vengeance on

others, not for blessing on themselves. If it be not resurrection, there is no reason why even those of the church and all saints martyred for God's word may not be there. I apprehend it is since the church's rapture. The date of the passage is wholly forward, there is none as to the time they were martyred. There is—as to getting the white robes, and evidently confirmed by what follows—an intimation of the closing-in of God's ways. They are going to become direct, with revealed (yea evident) causes of judgment, not providential.

The next thing is a general break-up of all established authority, and general confusion; everything that seemed stable on the earth ruined and broken up, so as to produce bitter terror in the minds of men. But the end was not yet. They think it is the day of the Lamb's wrath, and of Him that sat on the throne. The martyred saints knew that others were to be slain; but men had a bad conscience, and they feared the judgment of the throne and of the Lamb. I think this marks conscious enmity to them too. It is hardly a state of superstitious service; while the character of their fear seems to intimate that it is the fear of them that dwell on the earth, when Christianity, the profession of the knowledge of the Father and the Son is gone, and is known in conscience to have been rejected. The throne they had to do with, and the Lamb, speak of wrath to them, not worship. Why so? We are here surely in another scene of things where this is on the conscience when it awakes through fear.

If the great day of His wrath was not come, the harbingers in rapid and terrible succession were soon to break in on the unrepentant earth; but meanwhile God must have and secure a people through them all. This securing of His people is what chapter 7 sets before us—

the servants of His power holding the elements ready to devastate the earth. But another servant of God from the rising of the sun, I suppose in connection with the blessing of Messiah, the light of God in the midst of Israel (Luke 1:77-79), who has authority over the four prepared to hurt the earth and the sea, charges them to hold back the elements of destruction, till the servants of God are sealed. I have little doubt this intimates Christ (though in a new character, and in connection with the earthly people) and the saints. He holds the seal of the living God. Of course He alone could; but the saints are associated with Him. He says, “till we have sealed the servants of our God.” He cannot now be separated, in the accomplishment of God’s ways, from the heavenly saints. Not that this is yet manifested, but is here revealed for the intelligence of faith. What is preparing is the gathering of all things in one in Him, as Head, the heavenly saints at least. The church, all save those exceptionally to be killed in the last tribulation, are gathered to Him. His own proper heavenly company are there. And He intimates their association with Himself, and must now provide, according to the will of God, for the people of the saints of the Most High. He does not yet come to secure their bodies, but to mark them irrevocably for God. His elect people in Israel. Trouble of every kind might come, but they were marked for God. In general indeed even temporal security is here assured. (Compare chap. 9:4.)

In the special tribulations of the last day, I do not see that God’s servants in Israel are slain.37 At any rate, in the plagues immediately coming here, being judgments, the sealed saints are not the objects of them,. (See chap. 9:4-6 and 20, 21.) I speak here of Israel, for with that we

are occupied. The woes are on the inhabitants of the earth, the opposite exactly of the sealed ones. This sealing is a usual thing from the time of Christ's coming, when righteousness existed which could be sealed. He was sealed by God, the Father. This was the Holy Spirit. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, He being our righteousness on high. But this is in association with heaven; though Christ was as yet associated with earth. It is the living God whose seal it is here; not exactly the seal or promise of the Father, but that their sure part is from the living God in connection with the dayspring rising on the earth. The elect number of the twelve tribes is sealed—the 1000 x 12 x 12.

But there are others who are characterised as Gentiles. The associations and character are quite different here, and partly in connection with this point, of their going through the tribulation; and it leads to a remark, which facilitates the apprehension of the order and contents of this part of this book. We have, to the end of chapter 9, three distinct classes of persons; the sealed 144,000 of Israel, the multitude who praise God in white robes, and the dwellers on the earth, men who are not sealed. If we take out the white-robed multitude (chap. 7:9-17), the rest is angelic care and judgment. All is in angelic hands. We come down to providential secret care, and God's ways by outward means, of which we may have the secret here, but which are providential. Nor is anything seen of the Lamb. Indeed this is the case as regards His being in the scene, though with a very special revelation of the beast, and we are in Israel, and do not find the Lamb again, till chapter 14—a chapter which gives the scenes of God's ways. It is not that the dealings of chaps. 7:1-8, and 8, and chaps. 10-12 are the

same; but they are the same in this, that we are in angelic scenes, and Jerusalem and Israel is everywhere the centre, though the oppressing power might be Gentile. I do not think chapter 13 an exception to what I have said. The Lamb is not in the scene, only the names are written in His book before the foundation of the world. Those saved and spared could not be in any other way, or on any other account. But we shall see all this more clearly in following the different facts of the chapters.

Chapter 12:10, 11, is a confirmation of what I mean. It is the celebration in heaven of what took place at another time.38 I return to chapter 7:9. It is entirely a distinct vision from what precedes. The difference, I apprehend, in their character, is this. The vision of the 144,000 sealed ones is their being marked by God, so as to secure them for Himself in grace through the coming trials. It is wholly prospective; they are there marked for this. The vision of the Gentile multitude is prospective too, but they are seen simply in the result coming out of the trial, so that no time of commencement is set. Whenever the time of tribulation began, those who were in it are found here. The slain ones have been seen (chap. 6:9). It may be, that this tribulation begins with the universal break-up of the end of chapter 6; but it may have gone on in the previous seals for aught that is said directly, as far as I am aware. Doubtless it continues afterwards in the following chapters. At all events those seen in the vision belong to the time of tribulation.

We have now to consider a little more closely their character. In chapter 14 the 144,000 are with the Lamb —those of Israel, I apprehend, who have passed through circumstances analogous to those through which Christ

passed in Israel, and are associated with Him in His Israelitish royalty on Mount Zion— the remnant of the Psalms. The white-robed multitude are before the throne; they have suffered for Christ more than the Jewish remnant, but are not associated with any special place of His. They have overcome. Their conduct is fully owned as righteous. Their relationship is with God who sits on the throne, and the Lamb—that is, the God of power and deliverance of the earth, the Judge after the church is gone; they stood before the throne. They are not sitting on thrones around it, nor even standing around it, making part of the heavenly circle. This the angels did, though the outer circle. They stood around the throne, the elders (who have here the first place), and the beasts; and these worship God, falling on their faces before Him. It was now in truth a new scene and display of God's working, and there must be new worship. When the Lamb was revealed, these celebrate His praise. Now they praise the God whose glory they own, and who is about to make it good on the earth. The intelligent church has now, as such, the first place. The immediate activity will be in what has the character of being creation's providential power. But another interesting element is found here. He who has the Spirit on earth is associated in intelligence with the heavenly saints, only He receives it here prophetically; that is, not by the presence of the Holy Ghost, the unction by which we know all things. That is the elders' part—the church of glory as such; but it is communicated to the prophet according to the intelligence of these, and they are interested in the christian prophet's knowing it. One of the elders says to him, "Who are these?" and the prophet says, "Thou knowest." The intelligence of the Spirit is ever found with the elders.

Another point is brought to light by this intercourse between the prophet and those who represent the church as such on high. The white-robed multitude are entirely another class. They are not the church on high. They are not those who, in the time of millennial peace, knew nothing but its enjoyment. They have passed through the time of trial in the time when the throne was now set; but the Lamb was in the midst of it, and had not yet come to exercise judgment on the earth, to put down oppression, and to claim His rights in power. Hence they have a special place—a place, even in the time of blessing, in connection with their faith in the time of trial; and this is, I suppose, the general order of God's ways. They are manifestly redeemed—those who belong altogether to the millennial time, yet exposed to trial; then, having gone by grace faithfully through the trial, they are manifestly, and manifested as, sheep. Their robes are white, washed in the blood of the Lamb. They are publicly owned as redeemed and approved, as in Matthew 25. This is a very great and distinctive privilege, though they are not in heaven. They serve the God to whom the throne belongs, always in full access to His presence in His temple. In heaven there is no temple; but they have association with the true temple. Christ has not come again, and received them to Himself where He is in the Father's house; but they stand in the presence of God, as on the throne, in full acknowledgement and blessing, and always. They have a fixed, and blessed, and acknowledged place, which even the saints of the millennial time have not. He that sits on the throne tabernacles over them, as over Israel once, in the revelation of His presence (not "dwells among" them), and they are for ever secured by His own care from all trial and evil. The Lamb shall feed them, and

lead them to fresh springs of living waters. God shall remove every remembrance and trace of sorrow; for they have had sorrow for Him, though surely to their own blessing and gain. Still God owns it. The suffering for Christ (in whatever time or circumstance it may be, Old Testament saints or these) always implies participation in redemption and special privilege, though the peculiar relationships may be different for the various displays of God's glory, and blessing from His hand. So it is with the white-robed multitude. God's state is various.

The unfolding of God's ways on the earth is now prophetically proceeded with; and we return with it into angelic or providential dealing, though, as carried out by angels, of more distinct and direct judgment. The seventh seal is opened (chap. 8). There was a lull for a time. No open dealings to call men's or the prophet's attention; a short lapse of quiet. But God's ways are preparing in secret (revealed to the prophet). The seven ministers of God's power stood before him, and seven trumpets, loud announcements of the interference of God, were given to them. But this intervention follows on what goes on below. The great High Priest—still here seen as an angel—comes and stands at the altar (of incense), and gives efficacy to the cry of the saints who suffered on earth; but He was the minister of power; not here as sounding the trumpet, or as sent, but as giving the answer in judgment to the cry of suflFering. He casts the fire of judgment on the earth; and the signs of God's terror and judgment, and actual convulsions on earth, follow.

But specific judgments were ready to follow; and the seven angels prepare to sound. Such is the connection of

the ways and dealings of God with the saints. All is prepared for judgment; but as they, however feeble, represent God on the earth, the wickedness of the wicked, which must be judged, is directed against them, and their cry brings the judgment, being offered up by Christ according to the efficacy of the incense He can add to it.

Remark here, that when the saints (chap. 5:8) act as priests, they add no incense at all—privilege enough to have such a place, but they can add nothing. The odours are the saints' own prayers on earth. Here (chap. 8:3) the Angel-High-Priest adds much incense to give efficacy to the cry of the saints.

I have nothing very distinct to communicate to my reader on the character of the judgments, revealed as coming on the earth in this chapter. Our best plan is to follow the symbols as a language. I apprehend it is in the western Roman earth. Chapter 9 is not, but in the east. At least the seat of the prophetic agents is there. It is not a mere state of things under God's providential ordering as in the early seals, but positive judgments inflicted in a public way by signal historical facts. On the other hand, the working of these on men is indirect; in the woe trumpets direct—on "the inhabiters of the earth." Hail is judgment, what I may call violent stormy judgment: fire is judgment in general, but in its penetrating character discovering and reaching evil. The judgment here had this double character. Both were mingled with blood. I am not quite so sure what this symbol means, but in general it seems to me to be death, not in the sense of being simply killed outwardly, but of the power of death, death in a moral way, the spirit of death in a shocking and revolting way, death as

connected with sin as its character and cause. It was the power of death working as evil in man.

The outward effect of the judgment was the destruction of the great in the western earth, of what was elevated in dignity, and the universal destruction of prosperity. The second angel brings a great mountain burning with fire into the sea. A mountain is great established power. This is cast, but in the way and with the effect of heart-discriminating judgment (it burned with fire), into the mass of people, and they are filled with, brought into, a state characterised by this deathful power of evil. They become blood. All however did not die everywhere among the peoples, but it reached, in the wide expanse, to what answered to the extent of the seat of the evil. I suppose “dying” here to be departure from the profession of association with God, public separation from Him or apotsasy.

The next is a great star falls from heaven, a mighty though subordinate authority, which should have been the means of light and order from on high, a star (not the sun), but who loses his place, is apostate from his place of connection with God as such; and this with mighty and ardent brightness and heat, and falls on the sources of popular moral existence. It was bitterness itself, and exercised the influence of what it was upon the spirit of the people, so that they were completely animated by it. They became wormwood; and it brought death too; it was destruction and ruin to individuals from the way it worked according to its own nature in them.

In the fourth trumpet sovereign authority is smitten, and all dependent on or subordinate to it, which cease to

regulate the order of the human course of things within the sphere assigned to these plagues, of which I have already spoken. I suppose the third part to be the Roman earth (west), because the dragon with seven heads and ten horns sweeps the third part of the stars, and they are cast to the earth—they lose their place of connection with God, carried away by Satan's power. Not only the public course of things was cast into confusion and darkness—the day in sunlight darkened; but the more private and hidden life of man lost the light that guided it. There was darkness and stumbling, no perception of God's will, and no way or light to walk by, which the human understanding (faculty of seeing) could profit by.39 The last trumpet or woes are to fall on the inhabiters of the earth, those attached to this world and its course, not on the state and circumstances of the Roman empire. The two first trumpets must first occupy us, as they are spoken of apart. A word on the structure of this part of the book is necessary. The course of the prophecy passes over evidently from the end of chapter 9 to chapter 11:15, and this part closes at the end of verse 18. Chapters 10, 11, to the end of verse 14. form a parenthetic portion, the communication of the little book. We have, from chapter 11:19, the fully revealed final dealings of God, and the evil in respect of which He so deals; the resolving of the great question, whether Christ and the saints with Him, or Satan and the powers under his control, are to have the upper hand in this scene of the conflict between good and evil.

The first of the woe-trumpets brings forth a peculiar power of Satanic evil; the second, a more earthly distress, though both were woe. When the fifth angel sounds, one who rules, or should rule, on high, becomes

apostate, loses his place of connection with God, as such, and becomes the instrument of letting loose the power of Satan; he has the key of the bottomless pit. Sovereign authority was obscured, and the whole atmosphere of men's mind darkened, and in confusion. Out of this the destructive activity of evil was let loose upon the earth. Its instruments were deadly and tormenting to men. Yet they did not affect the general prosperity, nor the grandeur of those that were exalted, but those who were not sealed with the sealing of chapter 7. But the object of this judgment was not to put to death, but such, as that death would be a refuge from the torment that these instruments of Satan's malice and God's judgment inflicted on men; men who, servants of Satan and the world for their lusts, were now so to their pain and grief. Those who were not openly God's servants were subject to it.

We are here, I doubt not, in the East, and I suppose especially in Canaan and in Israel. This was the woe. But identifying characters are given of the instruments of torment. The general idea is warlike instruments of God's providential power in the earth—horses prepared for battle ravaging as to devouring power, but not independent (their hair was woman's hair), though in appearance they came in their own strength and intelligence. They swept with violence forward, as a rush of chariots of many horses. But whatever outward character they had, there was one definite and distinct—they were directly led by the power of darkness, the angel of the bottomless pit, the destroyer. It was God's judgment by outward means, but by Satan's power on the ungodly on the earth, who sought their portion in it. Men might persecute the saints, and would grievously,

the Lord using it for blessing. But His hand would be now upon the ungodly, not yet in final judgment, but a witness of His penal anger against wickedness. The stings in the tails seem to me principles and doctrines which they disseminated and left behind them.

The second woe was of a more outward character; not devoid of Satanic power, but not so directly so. It was not so absolutely characterised by its subtlety and power. There was more brutish violence; men were killed by them. Still the men mounted on the horses were far less important than the horses themselves. Men, though instruments, did far less than the orderings of God's spirit in providence, and His ways on the earth. Fire and brimstone are, no doubt, judgment, but not by the word, nor by chastenings or actings of God in the earth on men. The lake of fire burns with fire and brimstone. It is God's judgment, inflicted but having in its own nature a consuming power of evil. Scorpion-work was poisonous, the devil's tormenting mischief, a terrible judgment too, to be exposed to it; but this had the character of human violence and hellish misery and ruin. It seems to come on members of the Roman world, though its action be from, and especially in, the East. The destructive power of judicial evil was connected with what they announced before them. They killed by that which they proclaimed, where it reached. It cost people their lives. But they had, besides, mischievous teachings, teachings concentrated in a power by which they did mischief on the earth—they had heads on their tails. Their defence was from hell and its power—their breastplates were fire, jacinth, and brimstone. It was hell's destructive power, as God's judgments before. It was the serpent's mischief behind, but concentrated in a

head of power. But no repentance was wrought. Put men, so to speak, in hell's hands, they do not repent. Idolatry and wickedness, wrong against God and man, still characterised them.

I would remark, that the objects of the first woe were the unsealed ones, which carries us, in effect, eastward to Israel. The point of departure of the second was the East, its objects the inhabiters of the Roman earth. Thus the whole Roman world has been judged: the West, in general, in the first four trumpets; the East in the first two woe-trumpets, including the Jews. The final conflict, and their judgment is yet to come; and the prophet must prophesy again.

This properly begins,. I apprehend, in chapter 11:19, which is in effect a new prophecy, though it connects itself, of course, with what precedes in the chronology of the matter, and is thus interwoven. Indeed, the place of much of it, of its main historical parts, is given in the parenthesis. It is to be remarked, that the voice which calls out the second woe comes from the golden altar, is the fruit of the intercession of the Lord in favour, of course, of His saints. This gives a distinct character to the judgment, as in favour of the saints, which is indeed given as a general principle at the beginning of the trumpets; but distinguishes this from the first woe-trumpet, which was distinctly on the unfaithful, as contrasted with the sealed ones—on those who were not servants of God. The four angels give the second woe a very general and sweeping character; as we have had four seals of judgment, four angels at the four corners of the earth who hold the four winds, four trumpets of devastation on the Roman earth, so here the cry comes from the four horns of the altar, and the four angels are

loosed. I suppose the Euphrates is to be looked at as the natural, and, till God so interferes, the maintained barrier of the Roman earth.

In chapter 10 we come to the parenthetic communication of the little open book. It had not seals to be opened; it was given open. It was no longer mysterious and providential preparatory ways to introduce the Lamb, to unfold which redemption was needed; nor among mere Gentiles, where God had no direct government, in respect of Israel. Nor does the Lamb appear here as hidden in the throne. Christ comes to assert His own rights by His own title and power. Not that it was yet made good; but this was the ground He took, and from which the revelation that was given flowed. The hidden times were going on, before even the empire which was the subject of the course of prophecy had yet appeared. Now the question is openly raised—Is Christ to rule? And He openly lays claim to the title. On the other hand the beast, the great public subject of historical prophecy of the “times of the Gentiles,” comes forward too. Along with this, Jerusalem and the Jews come upon the scene. This could not be otherwise, when the earth and the beasts and Christ are the subjects treated of. They are then the necessary centre of God’s ways. But this gives a distinct character to this part of the prophecy.

The character given to Christ represented by the angel is, in covenant with creation, supreme authority, and the firmness of discriminating judgment. The source of it is heaven, and, I apprehend, as “clothed with the cloud.” He still maintains this character, though He comes down. He holds in His hand now the open book of prophetic revelation, and claims the wide-flowing mass

of nations, and the ordered government of earth. The perfect expression of the divine authority and power which was to make it good accompanied it, but the expressed detail of this was not to be revealed. There was now to be no longer delay. There had been long patience with failure and evil to gather men to blessing. The time to close it was come. Two angels had sounded, and in the days of the seventh or third woe-angel, when he would sound as he was about to do, the mystery of God would be finished. It would be the plain manifestation of His government and order, and blessing on the earth, and known authority, where it ought to be. John was to take the book and eat it—sweet in his mouth to receive the communications of God, but bitter for every feeling when its contents were digested. He was to prophesy again in view of peoples and kings. I should hardly think the prophecy begins with what follows. It affords the character and place in prophecy of that which is afterwards opened out in all its bearings—the internal history of the scene itself at the close, not its origin, relationships, judgments, etc., which are afterwards unfolded.

The language of this chapter 11:1-18, though sometimes figurative, is not symbolical but literal in its general character. The prophet was given a reed, and he was to measure, to put under God’s care and in His acceptance, the temple of God, the true inward place of His worship where priests could come, true worshippers among the Jews and in the consciousness of it, and the altar (I suppose, of incense), and those that worshipped there—the true Jewish worshippers of that day. The court outside was not accepted; and the Gentiles trod under foot the holy city forty-two months. But as heart-

worship, it would be there in the remnant, so would testimony, and for a like period. Day by day, the two witnesses, the adequate testimony of God, prophesy in the midst of trial. They bear witness to the order and blessing of the Jewish state, when Messiah shall reign, but they are not in that state; not a candlestick with two olive-trees, but two candlesticks and two olive-trees. But they are before the God of the earth. God preserves them to complete their testimony.

The very terms, “holy city” and “Gentiles,” lead us at once to Jewish associations here. All is a testimony to the state of things which exists before He who could put His right foot on the sea, and His left foot on the earth, whose voice the seven thunders accompanied, makes good His power in the earth, and makes the Jerusalem which He loves the seat of His power on the earth, before the God of the earth makes His rest-giving power known there. The power of judgment proceeds out of the mouth, that is, their word brings it on their enemies, according to their testimony, to devour those who would prevent their testimony. They have great power in this way. Verse 6 ascribes to them the same order and extent of power as was possessed by Moses and Elijah. The latter shut up heaven; the former turned water to blood, and smote Egypt with plagues. To this latter there is no limit—every plague whenever they will. This is great power; but they are in sackcloth—in sorrow and suffering: only this power is in their hand in time of need. But it is only to secure and maintain their testimony, not to set aside the power of the beast itself.

When the witnesses have completed their testimony, the beast that is known as the one ascending40 out of the bottomless pit shall make war with them, overcome and

kill them. It is very likely there may be literally two witnesses; but the main point, I apprehend, in the mind of the Spirit is, that there is, during the time of the beast's power and the treading down of the Gentiles, adequate testimony to the title of the God of the earth. There was an owned worship and an owned testimony, though only narrowed up to the straitest limits which preserved it, the house and the altar of incense, and an adequate witness. What was really priest and really prophet, the little remnant, was guarded of God. The beast was in his last form, here anticipated in expression as is the whole passage (see chap. 17:12), when animated by, and deriving his power and being from, Satan. It does not follow from what is said, rather the contrary, that the witnesses are killed the first moment. The beast makes war against them and overcomes them, as soon as their testimony is complete, and kills them. But it does not, on the other hand, suppose any lengthened period. The triumph of evil seems complete. They were to be likened, in a great measure, to their Lord. Only their bodies are exposed in a public way in the great street of the city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. Israel is expressly called Sodom spiritually, and Egypt is the world; utter corruption on the one side; and the oppressing power of the world or Gentiles on the other—that idolatry and independence of God, out of which Israel had originally been called. The victory seemed complete, and the dwellers on earth rejoice over the witnesses slain, and make merry, for the two witnesses had tormented them.

A God of the earth, about to take His power and claim His rights over the earth, it was no resting-place for those who dwelt. there at ease defying Him. But the

triumph of the wicked is short. After three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood up to the dismay of those who saw them. They ascended up, like Christ in great measure, only with this difference, answering to the full insult heaped on them even when dead, which God could not allow as to Christ,41 to whom, save in the moment of atonement, God gave ever testimony (however He suffered), namely, that their enemies beheld them. The likeness, atonement apart, of the history of these witnesses to that of Christ is remarkable. They suffer for their testimony in Jerusalem become Sodom and Egypt. They lie dead awhile, stand on the earth, and then go up to heaven. But we have the solemn truth that, on the one hand, a testimony is given to the Son of God which could not fail, that is, to His person; and on the other, He remains in His own holy power, not seen of His enemies, but giving comfort and a place of testimony to His friends. All this is fitting. Further we find, that as to outward human evil, things had ripened. There is more insolence, more joy, more open contrast, more public power of testimony; but the evil more openly unrestrained. A violent revolution on the earth accompanied the call of the witnesses to heaven; a tenth part of the city, the great city—I suppose, the city, fell; the organised system of the earth, a complete number of men42 known of God, the fulness of His then purposed judgment, but not further—the rest are affrighted, and turn back in ignorance (not repentant or converted), to give glory to God in a relationship in which He no longer stood to the earth. They think to save themselves. This proves that they do not know God at all, nor His ways. But these men were not the public enemies of God. Still, a suitable outward

effect is produced, as turning men outwardly towards the true God.

The second woe, that of the horses and riders let loose from the Euphrates, was now closed. But how serious were the events of another kind which had happened in the period allotted to it of God! The holy city trodden down, the testimony of God raised up, and for a time stopped by the power of Satan exercised by the beast. But this gives occasion to the last intervention of God, not now by instruments in mystery providentially ordered, for there has been open testimony, and open rebellious opposition. This testimony had been rejected, and the time for mercy, long displayed, now closed.

Judgment was come. The seventh angel sounds. We have not, as yet, any details of the closing dealings of God, by which His wrath is exercised; but it was come. “The worldly kingdom of our Lord,” say the voices in heaven, “and of his Christ are come.” Such is the song which sounds out of heaven. It had been announced, and heaven knew what that trumpet announced. The elders then come in, and, as usual, give the reasons for praise. God is again proclaimed as at the beginning—Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, the God of Israel and of the fathers, of the world, of the promise, and of power. Only now He had taken to Him His great power and the kingdom. The nations were angry, but how uselessly! Jehovah’s Messiah and Son would be set up in Zion; the dead would be judged, the prophets and the God-fearing rewarded, and the destroyers of the earth destroyed. It is the general statement of the close of God’s ways; of judgment and of its effects; the government of God made good in its final results.

The time of the dead seems to be taken absolutely, and is a very important element. The time of this world's activity is not the time of the dead. There is no device or understanding there; but when God's time comes, it is the time of the dead—but to be judged (only here the Spirit turns more exclusively to what in fact will then come to pass, the case of the saints) and "give the reward unto thy servants, the prophets," and to all who have been faithful. The order of thought or revelation runs thus: "The nations have got angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead to be judged "[or that there may be judgment] "and the reward given," etc. The force, I apprehend, of the passive form of the verb "to be judged"43 is, that judgment may take place. I should not exclude at all those, properly speaking, judged at the end, the wicked dead. But, save what is done at the beginning of the thousand years, all is given exceedingly abstractedly. What does happen at the beginning precisely? It is not of the dead being judged or for judging the dead, but "the nations angry and Thy wrath come." This last sentence, though general, is the way God treats the open rebellious anger of the nations. The time of mercy is now closed, and the wrath is come. "The time of the dead "is wholly general; so is "to be judged." The giving reward is definite, and so is the destroying them who destroy the earth. The objects are precisely named. The first point is the contrast of time. It is not the time of mercy and patience, but of wrath and judgment; also of reward to prophets and the just, and the putting away evil on the earth. I confess this looks little like the precise time of the setting up of Satan's great power and wrath. It closes the whole unfolding of the seven seals, and the ways of God.

His providential dealings with the earth are now over. His direct governmental dealings now begin. Not that many other events had now to be revealed. Their place had been shewn in the little open book; but they were a new and distinct prophecy, a prophesying again, but still, and yet more clearly and openly, in connection with the Jewish people. The brief summary of the same history brought in in the trumpet period, though the direct object be clearly Jerusalem and Palestine as a centre, is so expressed, that what is called a spiritual application may be made of it. Here, unless in the vaguest generalities, it seems impossible. To this prophesying again, the special religiously viewed result of the last days, I now turn.

The temple of God was opened in heaven. The book was open. It was a direct prophetic revelation of events according to the known tenor of prophecy, when the known relationships of prophecy were renewed, and God occupied Himself according to them with the earth, though it were in judgment. The temple too was opened. Heaven was to be in relationship with the earth; not in the secret way of providence, the bearing of which was revealed as a result, not the things or agents in relationship with God, but in dealings in which the objects were owned; in which, though heaven might be and was wonderfully brought in, God, in His ways, had to say directly to the earth. But then He must, as we have said, have to do with Jews. The ark of His covenant is seen in the temple— God’s infallible connection with the Jewish people, only now according to heavenly counsel, purpose, and perfection. This was accompanied by all the signs of God’s power in judgment with

resulting convulsions on the earth, and positive judgment falling on men on the earth.

The vision now begins: what precedes only characterises it. A woman is seen in heaven. All is in divine thought and counsel here, not yet manifestation on the earth. It is as it stands in the divine mind. The woman, as remarked elsewhere, is a state of things, not an agent—a subjective vessel of God's display of His purposes. Here it is the Jewish people; but they are seen as in the mind of God, clothed with supreme authority, all the mere reflected light of the previous state of Judaism under her feet, and crowned with the emblem of complete authority in man, twelve stars. Twelve is complete ordered rule in man as of God, the stars are the light and witness authority gives, that is, authority viewed in its character of light and moral order. But she was in travail to bring forth. Here was one side of the picture: on the other, the power of evil still having his place in the sphere of power, in heaven— a great red dragon. He had seven heads, completeness in an inward way, constituted completeness in a thing in itself, not in relationship to others; not compounded but constitutive completeness. Seven cannot be divided; it is the highest uncomposed number that cannot. Twelve is the most perfectly divisible of all. I attach no importance to this, save as the way scripture uniformly uses these numbers denotes their character.

The dragon had ten horns, power or kingdoms, very much of it, but not complete; there were not twelve. The heads were sovereigns, were crowned. The dragon had influence over the third part of those subordinate or lesser powers which should have given light and order from God on earth, and had cast them out of this down

to a merely earthly, dark and subject condition. They ceased to lighten or govern the earth. He stood to frustrate God's purposes, and to devour the child of the woman which was in travail. Here we must, properly speaking, see all the church-saints in Christ Himself. If we seek the church in Old Testament prophecy, we shall find only Christ. (Compare Isa. 50 and the end of Romans 8.) Christ is to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Ps. 2). This He has imparted to us, to have it with Him (Rev. 3). Hence the catching up of the man-child is our catching up, too. There is no separating Christ and the church in God's thoughts and purposes. It would be the head without the body. This then was in the counsels of God; not to make good power in the male child at the beginning, but to have it caught up to God. Next the woman, the Jewish mother of Christ, and, in Him, of the church, has thereon her place in the wilderness. It is not what is united to Christ which has this, but what preceded Him, out of which He sprang. This closes the ordering of the scene and persons; their taking their places in God's order.

What follows is historical prophecy. There is war in heaven. And the dragon (called the devil and Satan), who deceives the whole world, is cast out of heaven never to return, and his angels with him. This is before the beginning of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the woman's being in the wilderness. The first dealing of the dragon, before his casting out, was seeking to devour the child; this is met, not by acting on his position or his being cast out, but by the child being caught up. All this embraces the whole time of Christ's rejection from earth, and being taken up, and our being caught up. Then the saints being with Christ, and the

heavenly Man who is to rule complete and with God, after this Satan and his angels are cast out of the place of rule. When cast out (v. 13, 14) he persecutes the woman; and the date on earth begins with the commencement of her staying in the wilderness. Historically, we are only as yet at the time of his being cast out (v. 9); but this casting out of Satan (the angels have nothing to do with this, the heavenly or accusing part) calls out praise and gladness in heaven. In truth it was a great change. Satan was cast out of heaven, and all his deceit and work as in heaven was over for ever. He might raise up the earth in open war against the Lamb, or, subsequently, from all quarters the deceived nations on the earth against the Lamb and the beloved city; but his deceits connected with heaven and his accusations, his carrying on a system pretended to be heavenly, but where his power was developed, His working under the name of the true God, but against the true God, and true Mediator, and true saints—all this was closed for ever. This was the great fact, the blessed and all-important fact, full of rest to the spirit in hope.

But several details must be here entered into for the interpretation of the book. The loud voice which often occurs has the natural force of a great public fact, to which universal attention is called. It carries authoritative announcement from heaven. But we have further to inquire who speaks here; because he says our God and our brethren; and the voice is an abstract idea, so that it does not in itself determine the person or persons who utter it. They are various in the Apocalypse. Here it is not without importance. It is a voice in heaven, yet it is naturally of many— “Our God, our brethren.” It contemplates, however, others on earth who are their

brethren. Those who speak have the consciousness of near relationship to God, and celebrate the setting up of the kingdom of their God, and the power of His Christ. Christ, however, is seen in other relationships than with themselves. God was setting up the power of His Christ.

Thus we have three classes or subjects: those whose voices are heard, their brethren, and the kingdom set up. Add to this, that the event they celebrate is followed by the manifestation of a distinct body of persons belonging to God on earth, before the kingdom is established there—the woman and the remnant of her seed. That is, we have those who utter the loud voice, their brethren, and the woman and her seed, subsequent to this period, but before the kingdom on earth. This is important as to the order of events too. Those who celebrate the event with a loud voice are a class already exempt from the difficulties from which the accused ones are only as a class delivered.

The saints who have part in the rapture, as it is customarily called, who form part of the man-child, who are actively associated with Christ, while that association is carried on by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven in its proper power, until the moment that this whole process of union is closed by their going to meet the Lord in the air—these who have their glorified position are corporately placed in it, united to the man-child. These it is who celebrate the deliverance of brethren, just escaped from trial upon earth, associated with heaven; for Christ was not yet manifested for earth, nor the last public trial of His title there begun. Satan had been yet on high till now, to resist before the throne of God the blessing of those whose hearts looked up there, so as to be ready to suffer anything rather than

deny the truth and the Lord. Grace had given them the victory. Their victory was martyrdom. Satan accused these saints, and exercised his power from heaven over those that were not saints. He is cast down; this accusing work ceases, and he loses this place of power. Power is exercised in heaven to drive him from this seat of power. The kingdom of God and of His Christ was set up in the seat of power. The effect would follow on earth when the time was come; but the power of the kingdom of God was set up in the sovereign place of authority; for Satan was cast down.

The brethren were the saints who had been on earth, faithful in testimony, between the rapture and the casting-down of Satan. For the church is here looked at as a complete thing in itself (of course united to Christ) before the government part of the book begins. The brethren are the saints of the Apocalypse, whose prayers, for example, were presented (chap. 5), who were under the altar (chap. 6) till now that Satan is cast down. Now all that is in heaven, all who dwell there, can rejoice. There is “peace in heaven,” but, as yet, terrible things on earth. For as yet the king was not yet come there in the name of Jehovah. The saints had been killed, perhaps, by him that had the power of death; yet they had overcome him. So had Christ, who died too. “By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony,” does not mean their instruments in the warfare, but the cause of the victory. It is (dia to) because of, not (dia tou) through. How far they may have used both is not the question here. But they were in conflict with Satan, the accuser. They did render testimony, and that brought death, as it had the Lamb’s j but His blood and the word

of their testimony were the cause of their moral victory, though, as in the body, they might succumb.

There is no fixed time here till the casting-out of Satan, or rather the woman's flying into the wilderness, which begins the last half-week. Outwardly the ascension is the only point of departure as to time. So it is in Matthew 24. It goes from the ascension to the abomination of desolation as one time, because it speaks only of the remnant's testimony in Palestine, adding the fact that before the end it would go to all nations; then a precise date in the setting up the abomination of desolation. In Matthew 10, it goes from the mission of the twelve, then setting forth to the coming of the Son of man without any supposed break, leaving out the sending to all nations. For prophecy the church was a mystery. Here then we have the same order as in Matthew 24. But as the church is already gathered and on high and John sees from heaven, we have the additional element of its heavenly apprehension of the effect of the casting-down of Satan. Their brethren's toils too are closed—the victory won.

We now turn to the present effect on earth. The dragon, thus defeated and cast out, has the consciousness that his time is short, and has great wrath, a source of woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea—of the ordered scene of God's government and light, and of the general mass of nations. The efforts of the dragon are directed against the woman who brought forth the man-child—against the Jewish people. God grants a mighty and rapid escape from this attempt of Satan. The woman has the eagle-wings. That is, she has no power save of rapid escape, and this she does, and is nourished in the wilderness (deprived of the present resources of the

civilised earth) three times and a half (forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days) from the face of the serpent. The serpent sought to overwhelm her by a flood of people under his influence, in vain. The earth, the scene of divine order in the world, opened its mouth, and swallowed it up—absorbed, in some way, the flood of people who would have overwhelmed the Jews. But the body to be preserved is removed from the scene of witness; and the dragon proceeds to make war with the remnant of the woman's seed: those Jews not hidden away with the body, but who kept the commandments of God—godly Jews—and had the testimony of Jesus Christ; that is, the Spirit of prophecy, which speaks of and reveals Jesus, and is His word. This is the Jewish aspect of the scene.

We now turn to what, in the Gentile world, is connected with it, at any rate in what regards Daniel's monarchies or the beast. The prophet sees a beast rise up out of the sea; the origin of the Roman empire, now viewed however in its end. So it was in chapter 12, where the origin of all in the exaltation of Christ to heaven, and the consequent wilderness state of the Jews as God saw them, was brought forward, but really for their history at the end. Only there the purpose of God, and object of the prophecy in the glory of Israel, is first brought into view, because they were the objects of purpose. The beast is seen as coming out of the mixed mass of peoples. But the heathenish state is not before us. The heads are not crowned, but the horns. The distinct kingdoms subsist, and are in view as such. The seven heads identify it with the Roman empire as a whole, but it took in the previous empires; not necessarily in extent of territory, but it absorbed them, and had the seats of

their power in its possession—the horns with the kingdoms into which it had been divided. But now the dragon, Satan's power in the world, gave it his throne, and power, and great authority. One of the forms of the government of the beast had been slain, but it was healed—I suppose the imperial—and all the earth (not world) was in admiration. They acknowledge the dragon, the prince of the world, in his Roman form. The Latin world revived, and the new revival of it, the beast. "Who was like him? Who able to make war with him?"

But more, the beast, thus in scene, used great words against God. It is the beast of Daniel 7; not only oppressor of men and of saints, but one who exalts himself openly against God. He was to continue forty and two months, the same time the woman was in the wilderness, a half-week. He is then presented to us as active in blasphemy, to blaspheme God's name and His tabernacle, His heavenly church, and those who dwelt in heaven, all saints who belonged on high and were on high, even if they could not be called the tabernacle of God. The dragon could yet give him a throne upon earth; but he was out of heaven. The beast, inspired by him, could only blaspheme those out of his power and reach. This confirms greatly, its being after the dragon's being cast down, if that were needed. But earth, for a little and a measured time, was more within his power. He makes war with the saints and overcomes them. Here detail is not given. It is characteristic. From other passages, we know that there will be those slain who will go to heaven; those who, persecuted and driven out, will escape his hand on earth. He has the general dominion of the beasts over kindreds, tongues, and nations. It is remarkable how the Russian and German nationalities

are ignored here.44 As a general thing, in the world at large, power belonged to the West, to the beast. Finally, all that dwell on the earth will worship him, save only those written in the Lamb's book of life. Remark here, that the dwellers upon earth are not an evil class in contrast with what was to be supposed heavenly—the assembly. But the heavenly saints as such being in heaven, all who remain are held dwellers on earth, with the exception of an elect remnant. I have elsewhere remarked, that it is "written," not "slain," from the foundation of the world.

All this is more descriptive than historical. It was what was needed. Those who have to do with him know the features of this deadly enemy. If any had an ear, he was to hear. But physical opposition by violence was not God's way. Power was left with evil till He judged. Then the beast of violence, and his followers, would be killed. Meanwhile they must possess their souls with patience. And here was where their patience and faith would be tried.

But another power, a second beast, rises up; not out of the mass of nations, but out of the ordered scene which has professedly to say to God. He had the forms of Christ's power, but his voice, to a discerning ear, displayed the dragon. He is the proper Antichrist; false prophet and king in Israel. The heavenly anti-priestly character of Satan was closed by his casting out. He gives the same proof lyingly of his power, and the beast's title, as Elijah did of the divine supremacy of Jehovah. He makes fire come down from heaven in the sight of men. He exercises all the power of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth, and those dwelling on it, to worship the renewed Roman empire. I

do not say he does not deceive the nations; this I suppose 2 Thessalonians 2 proves. Still I find myself here in a specially Jewish circle. In 2 Thessalonians it is more amongst Gentiles, who have not received the love of the truth. They are given over to strong delusions, to believe a lie; and there the signs referred to by Peter, as given by Jesus to prove He was the Christ, are attributed to the man of sin, of course lying ones. Here it is the proof of Jehovah.

But I should doubt that the Gentiles trouble themselves about His being the Christ, save as a rationalist might; but they believe a lie, for they are given up to it. His testimony they will receive of course. A Jewish Christ is not for Gentiles; but in Judea he will be an Antichrist. He denies that Jesus was the Christ, and he denies the Father and the Son. Those who have hated true Christianity willingly accept this, and his other pretensions with it—of course the Jews as well: indeed both his negations and pretensions, so that he takes Antichristian and, withal, Jewish ground. But in connection with Christianity and the truth, it is negative and a lie; while, in Judea and in the world's scene of government here, we have the positive side (the historical in Daniel 11—the king): he is a false prophet (so found at the end); and here especially, pretending to the royalty of Him that suffered, he is Messiah, the king, but linked with the Satanic power of the revived Roman empire, and setting that up. This goes so far, that he leads the dwellers upon earth to make an image to the beast, and gives breath to it; and it speaks and causes those who would not worship it to be killed.

Thus idolatry is set up, and Gentile power, as set up by Satan, honoured. Times and laws are given into the

beast's hands, and the abomination that causes desolation set up; but the glorious empire protects Jerusalem and God is cast out. All are forced by the second beast to have the stamp, in public avowal or service of the beast, upon them. I cannot but think that the proper subject of the history of the second beast, and here we have history, not merely character, is Palestine—Jerusalem—in connection, no doubt, with the Roman empire but still, centrally, Palestine. The first beast comes up out of the sea at large; the second beast, out of the earth. He shews his power in the sight of men. But those spoken of are not merely characteristically dwellers on the earth, but those who dwell therein, where earth seems land. I see power in Palestine or Judea; deception going wider. The world, as such, was running voluntarily after the beast; but here the setter-up to be Messiah, the king, compels them to own and worship him. There was not readiness to do this where he was. Still, in general, while power was in the hands of the first beast, deception and wickedness were exercised by the second. The result would be the blasphemous renewal of the Latin empire, with general power over the world, blaspheming against God and persecuting the saints; and in Palestine, a false Messiah, denying Christianity altogether, and the claims of Jesus Christ, who deceives men by false miracles, leads them under his power, and sets up an image of the beast, and forces them to subject themselves openly and avowedly to the beast, and that with extreme governmental tyranny. He enchains men in his deceptions, and has his local character and sphere in Palestine. It is not difficult to conceive one setting up to be Messiah, having power in Palestine, and also religiously deceiving men in general.

Such is the last scene of the prophetic world, as far as under the original beasts' power, the times of the Gentiles. We have now the intervention of God in respect of this power, and of all evil. But first we must have the earthly saints owned, as before the heavenly ones. The prophet sees a Lamb standing on Mount Zion. He who suffered takes His royalty, and particularly the royalty on Mount Zion or of David, and with Him companions of the royal sufferer, 144,000, with His Father's name written on their foreheads. Having suffered like Him, they are associated with Him in the royal place of earthly glory. They have the place in principle, in which Christ was revealed on earth. He was Lamb, but revealed His Father's name. They, though late, had taken this place, and they had His Father's name on their foreheads. It is not said, "their Father's"; that is, they had not had the Spirit of adoption on the earth; but they had walked in the Lamb's steps, who had this relationship, viewed as born on earth. They were associated with the Lamb, who was to reign as king on the holy hill of Zion, and held His title by that word, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten Thee"; that Son whom all the kings and judges of the earth were to kiss, or perish.

But there is connection now with heaven. It is the Lord from heaven, who establishes the throne in Zion, where His followers are seen anticipatively; for the throne is not seen there yet. But the voice of glory and of praise sounds from heaven. They sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and before the elders. This is a remarkable statement; for who are the singers? There is a general idea (as in chap. 5:9), "there was sung." Still there is here added, "before

the beasts and elders." So that we have another class of singers. It is in no way the song of the church-saints. Those who sing, sing before them. The church-saints are viewed apart, identified in position with the throne.

As contrasted with chapter 5:9, we have power, might, praise; that is the public testimony of this, but no priestly intercession, nor reason given for distinct praise. The celebration of in-coming power is in its place here. The intimacy of worship, service, and priesthood belonged to the living creatures or elders. What was heard from heaven now was the former. This the 144,000 could learn. They had gone through the tribulation on earth, and could understand the heavenly song of this kind, though not the beasts' and elders' association with the throne. It would seem to be the heavenly and earthly portions of those faithful after the rapture of the church; some in heaven who praised there; others, who having faithfully passed through the same circumstances, can learn their song though on earth. These last are the firstfruits of earth (not the church, but for the millennial earth before the harvest), firstfruits to God and the Lamb; that is, to God as known in the display of government, which is the subject of this book. They had not been mixed up with the Jezebel, or Babylon, or heathenly idolatrous systems, which had gone on; their hearts were fresh for God. Nor was there guile in their mouth; they were without fault; they had been kept pure, and pure (truthful) in heart from all by which Satan had seduced men.

Next, in these ways of God, the everlasting gospel is sent out into the earth and every nation before the judgment comes. Such is ever God's way. It is not the special witness of heavenly salvation and the church, but

the old glad-tidings belonging to the course of God's dealings with the earth— that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, and the kingdom and final blessing be brought into the creation. Hence men were warned of the judgment just coming in, and called to own Him who made heaven and earth.

Next, the fall of Babylon is announced—the idolatrous fornicating system; but the beast was not yet destroyed.

Hence, in the fourth testimony of God's ways, or third angel (for the first was not the acting of God, but the manifestation to the prophet of those who had been previously faithful, and had a special place)—in the fourth testimony men are warned, that if they own the beast they will have God's wrath. Those who had rejected the beast had been exposed to his wrath; now, God's judgment was just coming in, and woe to those who owned the beast. Here was the trial of the saints' faith.

This closed the testimony of God, nor would any more now be killed for the faith, but the dead receive the public reward of their works. It is not the church's special place which is noticed here, but the condition of those who have died in the Lord, as connected with this book. I doubt not that all departed saints will come in; but the direct occasion is the closing of the time of suffering on the earth, and the public reward of labour in the appearing of Jesus.

Hence the Lord is immediately introduced, coming in the cloud. And the two following and closing testimonies give the double character of His judgment. The Son of man comes crowned, with a sharp reaping sickle. The earth is reaped. Here He gathers in judgment on the

earth, that is, the mixed wicked ones are dealt with in judgment, the righteous are spared, and the wicked taken by the judgment.

But there was another character of judgment—that which had a special religious character. It is not the earth was reaped—the judgment of the general state of the world, the population as it stood in the earth; but that which, before God and at Jerusalem, held a religious character—had, however apostate, been the seat of religious profession and fruit-bearing in the earth —what Israel had been of old: Christ alone on the earth in truth, by a certain analogy the professing church for a length of time, and lastly Israel joined with Antichrist, and the beast (in religious matters) at the close. In this last state, it was judged; and here there was no sparing, as in harvest: all was cast into the wine-press of God's wrath.

Thus we have, with the counsel of God as to Israel, the whole history of the period from the ascension of the Lord, and of the church to be with Him, to the public destruction of His apostate enemies on the earth. The heavenly church is only seen as caught up—and the history is the history of what passes afterwards, till all is closed, essentially of the last half-week of the beast, and God's actings on the earth during the same period. This is a complete portion in itself.

In chapter 15 we have another distinct revelation, complete in chapters 15 and 16, but a part of which is developed in chapters 17 and 18, The general subject is expressly the seven last plagues, in which the wrath of God is filled up, closing with the destruction of Babylon before the marriage of the Lamb and His public

manifestation in the earth. But, before their pouring out, the spared remnant are seen secure. The 144,000 were Jews who, faithful in the time of trial, had a place with Christ in His earth by royalty. These, in chapter 15 are not Jews—"them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image." And, without excluding a Jew to whom it might apply, these having been noticed in chapter 14, it applies essentially to Gentiles. The reader will remark another thing—chapters 12-14 are of far wider extent. It reaches from the rejection and ascension of Christ, to His appearing, and executing judgment, and includes, as a period, all that is here, and far beyond. This, the special judgments of God (not of the Lamb) within that period, and towards its close.

God is celebrated as the King of nations. The song sung is in connection with God and the Lamb. It is again Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, exacting judgment in righteousness on the earth, and on the Gentile power which had oppressed His people. Hence the song of Moses; but it was withal the victory of the rejected Lamb. God's ways were shewn in it (of old, only shewn to Moses, His works to the people), but now made manifest, and that not to mere destruction, like that of Pharaoh, but to bringing the nations—all nations—to come and worship Jehovah, whose judgments have been made manifest. For the earth this is all of the last importance. It is the result of all its history.

A word as to the place where the overcomers are found. They are on the sea of glass mingled with fire. They are not sitting on thrones round the throne, nor have they suffered previous to the manifestation of the beast's power, at any rate had not been martyrs and brought to heavenly joy, before the half-week of his power came.

But they had gotten the victory over him, his mark, and every form of subjection to him. They had been purified and saved—still through fire. They stood on what was the sign of purity—the sea of glass. When it was water, it was the sign of purifying; but here it is the result, and it is purity; but they had passed through the fire of God's judicial tribulation to obtain it. These are the owned ones of God, the overcomers, even to death, of the time of the beast's power, having part in the first resurrection.

After the vision of these the preparation for the execution of God's judgment comes. It is not, as in chapter n:19, the ark of God's covenant, His sure relationship with Israel; yet it is immediately connected with it, and in view of that people. The "testimony" means strictly the two tables of the law. Thence even the ark, as enclosing them, was called so. It was the throne of God withal, who had this as the testimony and witness of His governmental requirements in the world. The sprinkling of blood on it made it a true propitiatory; but with that we have nothing to do here. The house is opened, not to look into it, to see covenant-relationship with Israel, but for the seven angels to come out with judgments on those who had heeded neither the throne nor the rule according to which the throne judged. It was the house of the tabernacle of the testimony. It was not Christ as Lord who was coming out, but providential ministers of God's power.

We can readily understand how these vials were the expression of the judgment of the throne of the Lord God Almighty— of the wrath of Him who never changes, and must, according to the testimony of what He is, put down corruption and iniquity and oppression on the

earth. It was not yet giving the throne to Christ to govern as Prince of peace in righteousness, but it was providentially the righteous judgment of the throne of God; and this, though coming from heaven (for the throne was not yet established on earth), yet was associated with the whole character of the testimony given when the earthly throne was set at Jerusalem. The nations would come and fear the God revealed in the Old Testament, Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai, for His judgments were manifested. His earthly throne had been, we know, in Jerusalem, and would be again in Christ. This judgment characterised the whole scene. God displayed His glory in this way, so that none could approach Him; as when the cloud was on the temple in Solomon's time.

The judgments fall on the same spheres of human existence (only not solely the third part, or Roman empire) as the first four trumpets, save that, instead of destroying the prosperity of society and the great of the earth, the first judgment falls on the men who had received the mark of the beast, bringing them into a wretched and distressing state. The next judgment falls on the mass of the peoples; and all who abandoned God, that is, in profession, died. Then all the sources of popular influence, which characterised peoples and nations, became deathful. What they drank in was death, the principle of alienation from God. In the fourth, the supreme power on the earth became consuming and oppressive in the highest degree. These, like the first four trumpets (as it was of the seals, too) stand apart from the last three, which have a peculiar though judicial character. Penal judgment falls on the throne of the beast. The Euphrates being dried up, the way of the kings of the East is prepared, and the kings of the world

are gathered, by the threefold form of evil, for judgment; and, finally, Babylon is brought to remembrance for the cup of wrath, while convulsions rock the earth, and judgment from above provokes their rage. This last vial was poured out into the air, the whole circumambient influence that acts on men.

The judgment on the beast's throne (fifth vial) is felt in the extent of his empire. His enterprises are not arrested, but his kingdom is full of darkness, and "they gnaw their tongues for pain." And now the forces are gathered for the great final battle of good and evil. The principle of Satan's power as the enemy of Christ in the Latin empire—the renewed form of imperial power—and the false Messiah in Palestine, a prophet-king—are the sources of this gathering power. They promote and proclaim the principles that gather. It is a notable fact here that the excessively miserable state of the beast's kingdom does not hinder his pushing his war against the Lamb. Under the influence of these three spirits of evil the apostate armies are gathered to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, the final conflict of good and evil—heaven and earth. I suppose Armageddon refers to Judges 5:19, 20. This gives occasion to the solemn warning to the world that the Lord was just coming as a thief. When the seventh vial is poured out, there was a universal subversive convulsion, such as never had been in the world. And the great city, the public confederation of the civilised earth was broken up into three parts; and Babylon came into remembrance, to give her the cup of the fierceness of God's wrath. The details of her judgment are in chapter 18. Men were plagued with the terrible judgments of God falling on them; but they only blasphemed His name. We have three parts of the effect

of this final judgment of God: the city is divided into three, the cities of the nations fall, and Babylon comes into remembrance. The great city I have alluded to is the practically unified association of European civilisation; the other centres of social life fell. Babylon is the third. It is more particularly Western civilisation viewed in connection with its corrupt religious side.

We are now arrived at the important chapters which describe the connection of Babylon with the beast, and the destruction of the former. One of the ministers of God's judgments calls the prophet to see the judgment of the great whore who sits on many waters, that is, the grand corruptress of religion, who turns away souls from the truth of God, exercising widespread influence over the masses of population. The kings of the earth had had intercourse with her, cultivated it in this prostitution of Christianity; and the inhabitants of the earth—those settled in the sphere of the civilised order where God's ways and dealings were known, had been mentally steeped, besotted with this corruption of Christianity. Rich as all was to man's eye, and pious, and religious, to the Spirit all was wilderness, desolation, and drought—anything but the garden of God. She sits on a scarlet-coloured beast, the imperial Roman power in its last blasphemous form. She herself was enriched with luxury, power, and splendour; in her hand a cup of gold, full of that with which she corrupted and made drunk the earth. To a spiritual eye her character was stamped upon her forehead, though a mystery to those who were not. She was judged, however, as a mystery by the spiritual man; that is, he was spiritual enough to judge her— saw how, if unrevealed, her true character was not understood. She was the heir, as the great

moral characterising capital of the world, of that great city, which first was the seat of idolatry antagonistic of the true God, the fertile source of all corruptions of primitive Christianity, and of all idolatries in the earth. She was drunk with the blood of persecution in a double character; first of saints, and then of the witnesses of Jesus. This was the character of her who rode. The riding it, or the time of that, was a distinct thing—the saints she could not bear—the witnesses of Jesus she could not bear. The prophet was astonished at seeing her. This astonishment clearly intimates, I think, something special and extraordinary. And so it is, that what should call itself the church should be drunk with the blood of the saints. The foolish notion of the rationalists (and what have they taught, that is not foolishness?) that all this is the history of Pagan Rome, makes this astonishment without any sense. It is Rome, but Rome under special circumstances.

Here the reader will remark what aids us in the apprehension of these symbols, that the beast, now that the explanation is given to the prophet, wholly fills this scene. At the close, we find the destruction of the woman, and who she is. Her name at the beginning of the chapter had fully told what she was; her own character as such, independent of the beast, though seen sitting on the beast. Verses 5 and 6 give the proper character of the woman herself. When I come to the history of the beast, though identified with the whole Roman empire, I get the special history of its last form—of the very last days, and of the fact that, as beast it had ceased to exist, yet was found again. The woman may have been all that she was described in verses 5, 6, while the beast was not.

But we have now to consider the beast in its full description, as seen at the end. The beast carries her. No doubt she thus exercises influence over him, but it is not her strength. She sits on him, but he carries her; and to the beast the prophet now at once turns. It is the seven-headed ten-horned beast, known as the old Roman but now ten-horned beast. But its character is followed out more precisely. It was—is not— and is going to ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into destruction. It had been, it had ceased to exist, and at the end it would ascend out of the bottomless pit—have a distinctly devilish character. In this it is we have seen him persecute and slay the witnesses; in this he goes into destruction. The deadly wound the beast had received in one of his heads was healed, but now he was in his last form going into perdition. All but the elect pay homage to him in this last form, seeing the beast, which had ceased to exist, now present again. This gives in general, the history and character of the beast.

But there are more particulars as to the heads. The seven heads have a double application: first they are seven mountains, on which the woman sits. We may learn here how, while giving much more light as to facts, a symbol cannot be literally taken. The woman was sitting on the beast. So Rome is seated on seven hills, as well as on the Roman empire by its influence. But, besides this, the heads of the beast were seven forms of power which characterised it. Five had already passed away when the angel spoke to the prophet; one was existing, the imperial form. Another was to come and subsist for only a short time (perhaps Napoleon I; in the protracted system, Charlemagne); and then an extra head, the last beast, but which is the same as one of the

seven; in which form the head and beast, and all is destroyed. Seven complete the form.

But the beast that reappears after ceasing to exist, the renewed Roman empire, with its confederate vassal kingdoms, is a distinct and special existence of the beast, a resurrection form of the Roman empire come out of the bottomless pit, Satanic—a substantial devilish existence, in which, though peculiar in form, the Roman empire reappeared, that is, the Western, as the empire historically was. In this state the beast would be destroyed. The ten horns did not exist at the time the vision was given, but would subsist one same period with the beast the prophet had before his eyes, that is, the beast in his last Roman form. These ten kingdoms would give their power and influence to the beast—would exist, but play entirely into his hands.

But this brings us to a point of the greatest importance. The formation of this beast, the empire or imperial head of power with the ten helping kingdoms, brings evil up to the point of open war on the part of the kingdoms, with the Lamb who now appears again. Here the kings are mentioned as making war, because the object is to give the character at this time of the great body of nations which form Western Europe. In the end of chapter 19 we find the beast who is at their head engaged in the war, but the ten kingdoms shall make war with the Lamb. But the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Here we have, not the governmental dealings of God by angelic power, or in a providential way, but the Lamb Himself manifesting His power to the destruction of those who rise up against Him. But He is not alone. They that are with Him are called, chosen, faithful—the saints of God,

not angels (though they may be too); angels are not called—with this war they have not to do. Of the waters we have already spoken. It is the influence of Rome over the populations.

Finally, the ten horns and the beast shall hate the whore, make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. I think that this statement marks that the beast and the kingdoms' dealings with her are not instantaneous destruction in an historical point of view. God's final judgment at the end may be. They hate her. It is a change of mind and feeling which takes place as to her, and makes desolate and naked. There is progress in this: they deal actively with her; next they eat her flesh. This is more—they make her contemptible, expose her first; then deprive of her wealth and possessions, what formed her personal body; finally destroy herself, burn her with fire. They join the beast in this. Their mind, what was unnatural for these kingdoms, which might have been jealous of the beast, is governed by God, to unite all of them to give their kingdom and power to the beast; but this was not giving it to the woman. And the beast, being a power on his own score, they join in destroying the whore. The prophet then states in the distinctest language that it was Rome.

I think, then, that the statements as to Babylon imply a human desertion and confiscation of wealth first, and then the utter destruction. To this, I judge, chapter 18 answers. It is a distinct vision; the display of power, not Christ, God's instrumental glory, yet signally displayed—he had great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory. The second verse, I apprehend, to be, not the finally utter destruction of what had been glorious Babylon, though anticipative of it in her evidently losing

her pre-eminent place and fair show. “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit.” This was not yet her ceasing to exist, though to exist in power and rule it was. Yet, I apprehend, this is only the general announcement of her judgment, when she loses her place of power; just as in chapter 12 salvation and the kingdom was announced when Satan was precipitated from heaven. She had had the supremacy, by her idolatries and fornications, over the beast and the horns; she was now a cast-off harlot, degraded and fallen; and the beast is the leading power. The details then follow, where her burning with fire is not the first and immediate thing.

But before the final judgment (but I think, applicable at all times, when the character of Babylon is spiritually seen), God’s people are urgently called to come out of her, that they may not partake in her sins, and so in her plagues. Hence, I think, the absence of precision is notable here, and like all difficulties in scripture, introductory to light. The time of destruction is precise enough. It is at the close of God’s judgments, and before the coming forth of the Lamb. It is when the seventh angel has poured his vial into the air, for final judgment on the part of God (chap. 16:17-19), and before the rising up of the beast and his armies against the Lamb coming from heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. But the woman, as to her place and seat, could be pointed out to John then: not her state (chap. 17:18). And if there was spirituality enough to discern, the mystery could be left (perhaps at the expense of life—all the blood of saints was found in her) at all times; chap. 18:4.

But there is a special character and special time, the character that she rides the beast with seven heads and ten horns. A long while she contended, so to speak, with the beast, or it was wounded to death, and she took practically its place. Towards the end (having seduced the horns for years and centuries—her habitual character—and made the people drunk), she rides the beast, the beast having taken a blasphemous character, the woman drunken with the blood of saints. The beast had been, was not, and then appears again. The elements may have been there before, but when the subject of the vision is complete, you have ten horns during the same period with the beast, and at first the woman riding it, I suppose in this state, but I am not yet quite clear upon this point, when the beast has ascended out of the bottomless pit, that is, is directly under the guidance and influence of Satan. At first I have said, the woman rides the beast; but this changes, she loses her influence and power, and is deprived of her wealth and everything, and destroyed; and the beast acts, the horns having done with the woman, giving all their power to the beast in open opposition to the Lamb. The heavenly voice must be heard to get out of Babylon.

We may remark, that the saints are seen here entirely on governmental and, in this sense, Jewish grounds. Not that they are Jews; I speak of the spirit. They are called out to execute wrath. I do not at all believe any saints on earth do this work. Here the horns and the beast do it. But these judgments are the avenging of God’s people, their cry has brought it. They rejoice in it as righteous judgment in their favour. Verse 6 is not, I think, an appeal to the saints to act necessarily (the “you” is left out after “rewarded”), but it is in the mind of the

prophet in thinking of them. Evil comes suddenly on Babylon, though her burning is not the first thing; still I doubt not it is very rapid; famine for one literal day would not be much, but it comes in one day— “and she shall be burned with fire.” The cry of this self-styled civilised world—all the classes of modern civilisation—is, however, on her burning. The ten horns are the ten kingdoms. The ten kings are the kings of those kingdoms which had committed fornication with her; these mourn, as all those interested in modern civilisation. The fall and the final ruin of this great system, of which Rome was the centre, is a grief and pain to them. The apostles and prophets rejoice: God has avenged them on her. Terrible judgment for her who had professed alone to have their teaching! Babylon would be violently thrown down, and not found any more. This is in allusion to Jeremiah 51, which I refer to as shewing that it is met by ordinary providential judgment—here perhaps, more summarily than ancient Babylon. Note the whole system of Western papal Europe is not punished for, but in, its wealth and civilisation.

No doubt this slighted Christianity had an apostate character —would order and moralise and embellish the world excluding Christ; but the idolatrous character of Rome was the cause of judgment. The nations, deceived by her sorceries, had turned wholly to this world, and their moral condition was met by a judgment falling on this state of civilisation and prosperity. There is no judgment on the merchants and kings and navigators; but they mourn the loss of the great city. The system is all broken up with her. The royal commercial civilised world falls with the upset of Rome, the people’s power not: but it is given to the beast.

But another secret was found there by divine light: the blood of prophets and saints, and of all the slain upon the earth. She had corrupted the earth with her sorceries; this, though mysterious, was hardly a secret; but Babylon had inherited the sad place of fallen Jerusalem. The blood of saints, and prophets, was all of it found in her. Religion without God is the cruellest and most relentless enemy of all testimony to God. But she who was essentially characterised by this in the world, in whom all the blood of the slain was found, was now in her final judgment utterly and for ever destroyed.

In chapter 19, I find, for the first time, a reason for praise given by others than the elders or body of saints, the church called up on high. But there this is intelligible because they praise for accomplished judgments, in which they are avenged. The elders and beasts only fall down, saying “Amen”; and worship. Those who praise speak of the salvation and power and glory of our God; so that they are in heaven as His heavenly saints, who are not the elders or beasts. They have suffered, and are in the place to celebrate the avenging of the blood of God’s servants. Compare the souls under the altar, in chapter 6. Their joy is that Babyjon is judged, and in fact, her smoke goes up continually.

God is here praised as on the throne, not as He that liveth for ever and ever. He is seen in government. A voice out of the throne then goes forth, but which associates him who speaks with the saints below. “Praise our God.” I suppose that it is the voice of Christ; but what characterises it is that it comes out of the throne. It is a summons to praise, addressed from this centre of authority to all the servants, and whoever feared His

name. We shall see the subject of it in their praise, which, on this summons, sounds forth as thunder. I should say “subjects,” for there are two distinct, though connected, ones. Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai is the subject of praise, according to the summons, “our God”; and the praisers are viewed as servants and fearers of His name, not the church or children as such. On the other hand if this thought be just, and it is the Lord, we see Christ associating Himself with the whole company of singers in heaven, not bearing the character of the church, and we get an insight into their place. The two subjects of the song are— “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and the marriage of the Lamb is come.” One is “Hallelujah”; the other, “let us be glad and rejoice.” These two indeed are, as to the setting up of divine government, the great elements of its establishment, direct and accessory in God’s counsels. The Lord God omnipotent, Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai, the names of the Old Testament, are revealed in power. He has set aside all that He, as God, judged of corruption, and now was actually introducing Christ as King of kings, and Lord of lords, before whom the beast’s power was to disappear.

But, further, He must have His bride, His spouse. No doubt His rule goes farther, but that is not the subject here. But the church must be associated with Him when He takes the power and the rule. He could not be alone in it, though He alone has the power and the rule. We have thus, in these verses, the source, Him whose authority He represents and wields, and the associate by the counsels of God; not yet the actual ruler coming forth—the Lord God omnipotent, and the Lamb’s wife. The marriage of the Lamb was come, this purpose of God now accomplished, or in the act of being so; and

“His wife had made herself ready.” She was arrayed in fine linen, the righteousness of saints. Note, that this individual excellency adorns the whole church. We have then, indeed, another class—assistants, those called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb—I suppose all the saints gone up, save the church.

This closed the revelation here. The angel talking with John declares that these were the true sayings of God, and forbids the homage he was disposed to offer. He was a fellow-servant, and of those who had the testimony of Jesus; for the angels must serve Him. And (what might have been called in question, because of its different character, from the usual manner of the Holy Ghost acting as the witness of Jesus in the church), “the Spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus.” The proper testimony of Jesus was that of the apostles and Paul, and the Holy Ghost, in the church; but this prophetic part was the testimony of Jesus too.

Now heaven opens again. It opened on Jesus as Son of man and Son of God in the Gospels, the object of divine delight. It was opened to Stephen when the Son of man was standing on the right hand of God in heaven, which is the christian state. And it is now opened for Jesus to come out as King of kings, and Lord of lords, to execute judgment and justice on the earth. Triumphant power as the operation of God first appears, and characterises the vision—a white horse. But there was one that sat on it called “Faithful”; such He had ever been, at all cost, to God, in the testimony of righteousness, in glorifying Him even to death, that His name might be made good. Obedient till it was given to Him to rise up and take the power, and “true,” so that the witness of God which He did render was a perfect witness of all God was, and all

His thoughts. His name was “Faithful and True.” “Holy and True” was His name for Philadelphia, for us. This was what was subjectively needed for us—but now rewarded, and He coming forth as the faithful and true One. He now does not serve but judges in righteousness, and makes war on the power of evil in the same righteousness. His eyes had the piercing discerning power of judgment, many crowns were on His head.

But there was an essential glory in His person—a relationship to God which none knew but Himself. A name in God is a revelation of what He is, and in general of what He is in relation to others, as Almighty, Father. A name in one who takes a place under God is what He is towards God, or for Him. We have a name on the white stone which no one knows but he who has it. It is our special place and relationship in the favour of Jesus. So has Christ here. He has public names made good in all His ways, or displayed in glory; but He has also what is the expression, in that glory, of His secret relationship with the Father which none knew but He Himself. It is not without interest to have the analogy of our associations with Christ and His own in glory.

But other signs of what He was and other names remained yet to be noticed. He had a vesture dipped in blood. He came as the avenger. He tramples now the wine-press of God’s wrath. It is not in the lowliness of humiliation, and to be trodden down by man that He comes; He comes to tread down in power. With this is associated another name— “The Word of God.” “Faithful and True” would make good promises. The Word of God reveals God, but now in judgment according to what He had revealed Himself to be. “The word that I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last

day.” He was the Word of God, the perfect expression of that nature, which must have everything subject to itself. He was it when the expression of it awakened all the hostility of the flesh which hated the light. Still He made it good in this humiliation at all cost. He was it, declared God’s righteousness and truth in the great congregation, did not refrain His lips. “I am altogether what I am also saying to you”— “the Word of God”: but now, in judgment, making good this in power and vengeance against rebellious men, the children of disobedience to wisdom’s voice. The armies which were in heaven followed Him. These had not the signs of treading the wine-press on them, but of declared accepted practical righteousness, while partakers of the triumph. They were on white horses also, but clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Next, the sword of the word goes out of His mouth to smite the nations. This is general. He judges by His word. Further, Psalm 2 is now fulfilled. He rules them with a rod of iron. The wine-press is the unmingled fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, which He executes. Lastly, He has on that which shews His public character in the world, His clothing, the title which He now takes in the world— “King of kings and Lord of lords.” I do not know what the meaning of “on his thigh” is, unless the clothing be His bearing it in peaceful government, and His thigh, His bearing when He makes Himself bare for war.

The summons of verses 17 and 18 seem to be general. The angel stands in the place of universal and supreme authority, and summons the fowls of the air to the supper of the great God. I do not see that it specifically refers to the beast here; verse 19 does. We come back in it to the history of the beast. The kings of the earth are

first, the ten kings. I cannot say that it is absolutely confined to them, but, I suppose, those under the influence of Rome. They come to make war against Christ and His heavenly armies. Satan had raised up the earth, into which he had been cast, against heaven. The issue was not doubtful. Deceive he may—never conquer. Both the beasts of chapter 13 (the second, now seen as false prophet) are taken, and cast into the lake of fire—its first victims. The rest are slain with the sword of Him that sat on the horse, the direct execution of judgment was Christ's alone; this was outward present judgment. The invited guests were satiated with prey. These armies of the beast formed, at any rate, a prominent part at this great supper of God. But this was not all. This was the public judgment of men by Him who was King of kings and Lord of lords.

But God was dealing in power after another manner, by divine, and to us unseen, instrumentality. An angel comes down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand—figures, of course. The dragon or serpent, the devil or Satan, the power of evil is laid hold of, bound for a thousand years, and cast into the prison that belongs to his nature, whence he cannot act on the earth: not the place of divine torment and punishment. Out of that he cannot come. But he was shut up, and a seal put upon him, so that he cannot deceive the nations till the thousand years of his confinement are over. After that he will be loosed a little season.

We are thus arrived at the beginning of the thousand years. Babylon, the mother of harlots, the corrupt worldly church on the earth, judged; making way for the heavenly one fully associated with Christ in the heavens.

Professing worldliness done away, Satan's seat under the garb of Christianity. The beast, the power of antagonist evil, on the earth with the false prophet who had stirred it up in Jewish and Antichristian shape, is cast into the lake of fire. Satan is bound and shut up. Thus the source, and all the forms of evil, of corruption and violence, idolatry and apostasy, were swept away. This is a great act of powerful and mighty judgment. The storm of God has passed over the earth, and laid low all that opposed itself to it.

The thrones can now be occupied for judgment. Previously it was judgment in the way of war; now the session of right. It is not simply the throne. In Daniel 7 the thrones were set, but the Ancient of days alone is seen sitting, and thereupon the beast is judged, the Ancient of days Himself coming to execute it as we have seen here. (Compare Rev. 19:16 and 1 Tim. 6:14-16.) But now there are sitters on the thrones: amongst these, two classes are mentioned who might have seemed otherwise not to have had their place there—the witnesses slain for the testimony, and those who would neither worship the beast nor own him. All reigned with Christ a thousand years. All this is very simple. This composed the first resurrection, for there was another. A general resurrection is a thing wholly unknown to scripture.

This first resurrection fixed the state of those who had part in it. The second death had no claim on them. They are priests of God and of Christ. Note here, the language is all literal, we are out of the symbolical language of the book. This once seen, the following verses require, in this short sketch of the book, few remarks to be made. The saints reign a thousand years with Christ over the

earth. Satan is again let loose, deceiving the nations on earth (he never returns to heaven), and gathering them together against the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem). Judgment from God then closes the scene on earth. The working of Satan had separated between saints and the unconverted, who had remained mixed up together when no temptation was there. The devil is now cast from earth into the lake of fire, being finally judged, as before cast out of heaven and then subsequently shut up.

After this the great white throne of judgment is set. It was not now government; though in that there might be final righteous retribution—the judgment of the quick, as indeed it was as to the living who had rejected the testimony in Matthew 25, and of the beast and false prophet. But the present judgment was that of the secrets of men's hearts, and their answering for their works. Thus the saints had no part in it. Death and hades wholly lost their power, and for ever. This is the second death. Death and hades, being the power of evil in its effects, ceased to have a provisional and separate existence. That power which they exercised is now merged in the complete judgment. Death was death; it is fixed in the second. Hades is the closing up the soul in unseen darkness and separation from the light of life. As far as its effect on the natural man went, this was done, and finally, in the lake of fire. All that was in any way associated with death as an instrument referred to living man, that is, to man in the responsibility of the first Adam; all this was cast into final condemnation and separation from God—the most terrible of punishments. The second death had absorbed the first. Those who had escaped it were in the power of life in Christ. Satan, who

had had the power of death, was himself under the power of this in the lake of fire. Whoever had not life in Christ was there too.

This closes the scene of this busy world—closes it finally, and for ever. In the first eight verses of the next chapter (21) we have the wholly new creation, where God is all in all: a new earth and a new heaven, and no more sea. Some remarks are called for here. And, first of all, how little is revealed! The course and judgment of the state we are in, and the glory of the heavenly city, is so largely; but of the post-millennial state scarcely anything, save some great general principles, which mainly bear upon our present condition. “Sea” bears a general notion of what remains vague and unreclaimed, unsubject to man, not reduced into any order, or regularised relationship to God or amongst men. This exists no more. I suppose fully this will be physically true, and many appropriate physical changes would be associated with it; but into this I do not venture myself. Atmosphere would cease—human life, by breathing and blood. I refrain, the rather, as it is simply negative, and, I think, meant to be so. The imperfect waste of tumultuous separation would have no existence there. All would be connected and in order. Further we get the heavenly city (the Lamb’s bride, the-assembly) coming down to be the tabernacle of God amongst men—not a special people, but the glorified church, the seat of His power and presence amongst men. It is not said how these are changed to be ever there, or what their peculiar state. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption. More we cannot say: only God “dwells with” (not “tabernacles over,” as in chapter 7) men. They are His

people, and He Himself shall be with them and their God. The whole family of man, redeemed men, have this relationship, such, after all, as angels, cannot boast of; though more glorious in other respects, they are never called His people. Previous orderings of this, such as Israel and the temple, were only premonitory and preparatory to this great and blessed position. But His temple we are. The church never loses its own proper and peculiar place, but the two forms of blessing—the temple or tabernacle, the dwelling-place of God, and the people of God, positions brought out in the church and Israel—are maintained for ever. Only Israel was more figurative and passing than the assembly, because it was in flesh, the church not. All sorrow would here have ceased for ever.

This reproduction and connection of the two systems of Israel and the church is full of interest, and gives a great moral importance to each. In their nature they last for ever. But it is in perfect peace and joy—the former things are passed away. All, save the fact of eternal life, is provisional now. They are ways, dealings of God with what is creation and failing, an admirable occasion of the display of His grace and all He is, but not in and for itself as such, the fruit of His absolute and only work, what He has produced. Now it is— “Behold I make all things new.” Sorrow He owns, and wipes away its tears. It was a right thing in the disorder of sin. Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Death was there too; and Christ, in grace, underwent death. He must come divinely under all that evil had brought in, that God might be owned as forgiving it, glorified as to it, and good have the victory over all evil. This made His work so profound and glorious, so complete in itself, and

for the glory of God, whence man in Him has entered into the divine glory: so He states it in John 13:31, connecting it with previous glory in chapter 17:4, 5.

I return to my remarks on the passage. There are a new heaven and a new earth, and no more sea. I do not look for more than the atmospheric heaven here—the connected system of heaven (not heavens) and earth, Ephesians and Colossians heavens, here heaven—the first were passed away. The second verse, I take as characteristic—the city was the true holy city, New Jerusalem; it was not human or earthly. It came down from God—out of heaven, and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, fit for Christ as to what she was appareled in, still characteristic, not historic. The bride was married long ago, before the heaven and earth passed away; verses 3-5 already noticed are the earthly character and state of things: God's tabernacle with men, they His people, and He their God, and with them. He wipes away all tears—they belonged to the former state. Death is no more; that, too, belonged to the former state. Sorrow, crying, pain, are all gone; they were former things. Verse 8 closes the statement, and applies it to conscience now. It is the God who sat on the throne, but now His working and ways are done. He is the beginning and end of all. Two principles are thus stated as belonging to His ways: first, whoever is athirst gets of the water of life freely; secondly, he that overcomes shall inherit all things. God will be his God, and he will be His son. The free power of life is to the comer, the blessing to the overcomer. But, if there was giving way through fear, unbelief, and sin, the lake of fire, the second death, was their portion—not death because of sin in Paradise, not terrible judgments on the

earth, but the second death because of casting away and rejecting the truth when grace had come in.

This closes the history of the book. What follows is a description of the heavenly city when the Lamb is there; and His glory made manifest. It is the city, but the city in its millennial relationships with the earth. It is presented, too, in the character of millennial association, not of the verses 1-8, last considered. It is the bride, the Lamb's wife. It is description, not history, which, as often remarked, closes in verse 8. The description is given here as that of Babylon (chap. 17). The prophet gets, figuratively, a vantage point of view, like Moses, and like the Lord Himself from Satan. He first describes it all from without, as it appears; then its nature— what he did not see in it, but the absence of which is of immense importance. Lastly, we have what is more prophetic declaration than vision. It has the glory of God: immense truth! "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God"; its display and its dwelling-place shall be in us. The light of the city was such; for He that sat on the throne was like a jasper stone; now it shines forth clear as crystal in unsullied brightness, even when displayed in the redeemed assembly. It is in perfect security, figured here according to the image of a city, a wall great and high. There is the perfection of administrative order and power in the creation, twelve gates. As we saw of the idea of people (v. 3), it had been foreshadowed in Israel, and the names of the twelve tribes are found here. The foundations, however, were not the patriarchs, but the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They were the foundation of all christian governmental and administrative power.

We may remark here, that though, of course, the bride is the same, it is not in its Pauline character, the one body, but in its governmental, as founded in connection with, and an offspring of, the Jewish and earthly system, just as the child was born of the woman. It is a city, not a body. We now get its proper perfection. It is measured with its gates and its walls. It is finitely perfect. It is four square—the length as large as the breadth—its platform was perfect. It was twelve thousand furlongs, the number twelve again marking the administrative perfection in man, only largely multiplied in fact; but it was as complete as its platform was perfect. It was a cube, not merely a square—a circle or sphere has neither beginning nor end—a square and cube are equal in every dimension, but each line ends. They are finite perfection; the square in principle; the cube in completeness also. The wall has its perfection, 12 x 12. It is not divine in its nature—it is the measure of a man, though God measures it by the angel. The wall, its security, is divine glory. The jasper here, is not spoken of as clear. It were out of place. The city is divine righteousness and fixed unalterable purity; as it is said: — “after the image of him that created him,” “and in righteousness and true holiness.”

Next, the foundations of the wall are garnished with precious stones. Besides the general idea of every character of beauty, there is the special character, elsewhere remarked, of the stones—the variegated display of colours into which light transforms itself, when seen through a medium, when God is revealed in and by the creature, or in connection with his state—in creation, intercessional representation, and here, in glory. The names of the apostles were in the foundation

which God had laid for the security of the city, as they had displayed the truth on which that rests, but the varied display of the light of God was found therein. The beauty and comeliness which delights Christ in the church, meet the eye at once when arriving at the city. The gates were each one pearl. Within, and where one walked, was righteousness and true holiness, as the very character and nature of the city itself. There was no temple seen. God displayed His glory— the place of His worship, unclouded, unhidden. God's glory lit it up, and it was in the Lamb that glory centred and shone. This closes the direct description of the beauty and glory of the city itself. What follows is what belonged to it, in relation to others, and what was enjoyed in it.

Within the city, the glory of God gives light, and the Lamb is its light-giver. The nations walk in the light of the city itself. That heavenly glory now enlightened the earth. They have it, not directly; but the sight of the church in glory is a yet more fitting, more instructive sight to them. They learn what faithful ones have got, what the humiliation of Christ implies. They will know how the Father sent the Son, how those whom the world rejected were loved as Christ was loved. They will have Christ in His glory and joy in His reign, but they cannot learn the other truths in the millennial state, nor can they, therefore, learn them directly. It would not be suited. They learn them in the church, in glory. The kings bring their glory there to it (not "into it"). Its exalting is owned by them, and they honour it as the place of honour. Nothing defiled enters, no idolatry, no falsehood. It cannot be corrupted as the assembly on earth. It rests not on man's responsibility, but on God's power, and redemption, of which it is the heavenly fruit.

We now come to the descending blessings which are its blessings, but which flow down on earth. Note here, the throne of God and the Lamb are now in it. That throne, which was acting in judgment to bring about blessing, was now fixed in the heavenly city; but it is not the seat of judgment now. The river of water of life flows out of it —divine life-giving blessing. The Lamb still holds its place in the scene, and it is the throne of the Lamb as well as of God. The reader will remark that now for the first time it is called the throne of the Lamb. We had the throne of God, and the Lamb in the midst of it, but the throne distinct from the Lamb. It was He that sits on the throne. In chapter 21:1-8 God is all in all. But here we have the throne, the Lamb's throne as well as God's and the time and the character of the time distinctly marked.

Next, we have the tree of life, the constant supply in the street, and on either side the river, ready for all to enjoy, ever fresh, the full ripe fruit of life as Christ has displayed it. The outward manifestation of this, its leaves were to heal the nations. Evil was not absolutely gone below, though its power was, but remedy was there. Curse there was none at all. This was wholly gone. The throne of God and the Lamb was there: there could not be a curse. But His servants should serve Him. Observe how God and the Lamb are thrown into unity here. His servants (God's and the Lamb's) shall serve Him and shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads, that is, they shall be evidently and avowedly His. These are the three characteristics of the waiting people in glory: they serve Him directly and perfectly; they see His face directly and fully; their connection with, and confession of, His name are complete and evident. Doubtless this is God, but we

cannot at all separate the Lamb, for when it is said “His name,” it is God, so known as revealed in Him. This is deeply and blessedly characteristic, and, indeed, so it is of the whole book, save the mysterious angelic part; and then the Lamb opens and introduces it, so that the same truth shines out more fully. Thus what the Lamb is, the suffering and enthroned One, shines out. Night or obscurity there is none there, nor need of artificial or even created light. Jehovah-Elohim gives them light, and they reign for ever and ever. This is not, I apprehend, their reign with Christ, but the statement of their glory and joy which will never cease. “Ye have reigned as kings without us,” says the apostle. This was false. That will be true and eternal.

This closes the book. There are, however, concluding observations, besides what is said to the church, from verse 16, which require some notice. The angel declares the truth of all this, and adds, the Lord God has sent His angel to show to His servants things that must shortly come to pass. This last expression must be noticed. It is one of the difficulties of the book. The same expression is used in the first verse. But I do not think that the whole key to the expression is in the fact that it begins with Ephesus and is a whole. In God’s mind the church had failed as a witness. The time was come for judgment to begin at the house of God. Hence whatever the patience of God, there was no more time recognised till judgment was executed, save 1260 days which belong in fact to a period marked out in Jewish chronology. Perhaps I should say, that the church which belongs to heaven having lost this character and left its first love, and Christ having hence taken a judicial character in view of its earthly testimony, the time of taking up

computed time and judgment was a question of divine patience—might be at any moment there. If it were not, it was grace, working as long as love could produce blessing, while all was, in spite of mercy, ripening for judgment. But the Lord warns that He was coming quickly— “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

Here again, we may apply all the book, provided we see the church in its responsibility, and not in its connection with Christ as its Head. Christ is viewed as coming in reference to responsibility. To such prophecy applies—the hope of His coming to receive us up is another thing. It is hope, not responsibility and warning. His coming, in connection with responsibility, is always His appearing; and the church, though doubtless saved and coming with Him, stands on the same ground as the world, that is, of the consequences of its conduct. Hence the difference is not made here, though from chapter 4 the book be more directly prophetic. This verse applies to those who have the book. The testifying angel again rejects the proffered worship. Surely this has reference to the time the book treats of when the very position of the church as connected with the Head being out of view, holding the Head by Christians would tend to give place to excessive reverence for the higher instruments of God’s government, in whom He used to reveal Himself, and above which the minds of Christians did not go. In both cases here the worship was proffered when the witness has closed, saying— “These are the true sayings of God.” But the angel does more than refuse the worship: he is a fellow servant, the prophet is to worship God. Now God has ceased thus to reveal Himself angelically. Not only has God alone the title to

be worshipped, but it in man He has revealed Himself. We know this by faith.

The close of this book contemplates its public manifestation. The angels have their own known place for the Christian in service, as creatures of course, not objects of worship, not the beings or form in which God reveals Himself, never mediatorial intercessors and not for the Christian those in whom God is seen; and, once Christ is glorified as man, not even administrative authorities though ever willing servants. God I worship, Christ I worship, because He is God and Lord. In Him God is perfectly revealed. He with the saints, that is, Redeemer, Ruler, will govern and inherit all things. All here, even the prophet, are servants. The sayings of this book were not to be sealed as Daniel's were. That was in place. The fulfilment was to come out in the last days. Between, all the wonderful church or heavenly system was to come in, and what was revealed was to be sealed till this; and the decay of this on earth, which let in these earthly ways of God again, had made it timely by the speedy taking up again of these ways. Now that is exactly what we have here. The professing church got into the place of judgment and the divine preparation made, the Lamb being seen in the throne and opening the book, for the fulfilling the things which had to be sealed in Daniel's time. Hence the book was not to be sealed, for the time is at hand. The time in view in it was not that of restoring grace, of the gospel but of judgment, of man's responsibility, in which there is no change in man. Even in the churches, which is not the strictly prophetic part of the book, those who hear and are righteous in the churches, are directed and guided in the way, but supposed to be already righteous. Still,

here, I doubt not the closing scenes are looked to, and the saints to whom the prophecy is addressed, as already such.

The Lord was coming to judge, and quickly. Verse 7 addresses itself in warning to those engaged in the circumstances of the book itself, and the things are shortly to be done. Here, in verses 10-14, all is closed. The Lord is coming to judge every one according to their works, and their state is viewed as a fixed one. Hence, in verse 13, He closes all with His own nature, as First and Last. Verses 14, 15, need not be confined, I apprehend, to those who form the city itself, but include all those who, having washed their robes (I think Codex Sinaiticus has confirmed this reading), have the right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates of pearl into the city: redemption, leading to life, and fitting for a state lovely in grace in Christ's eyes, what meets the entering person at once, and for association with divine holiness and righteousness. This, even the blood of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit, is the foundation of the blessing of all who are blessed. Without are the evil and the violent, the corrupt and the idolatrous. In chapter 21:8 it is final judgment; here it is exclusion.

This wholly closes the book; and Jesus presents Himself as such to the prophet, as revealing all this for the churches. He comes personally forward, still in connection of course with the subject of the book, as the Source and Heir of the promises of Israel, and as the One known to the faith of the church and none else—a heavenly One, not the day for this world, but the Bright and Morning Star for those who watch in the night. Whatever the state of the professing church might be,

this remained true and bright for hope, and the brighter, the darker all seemed to be. It is no announcement of coming or warning now, but Christ's announcing Himself, "I, Jesus" — announcing what He is for the Jews, and what He is for the church. When what He is for the church, her special portion in Him, is named, all the affection of the church in her own relationship is awakened: indeed what love produced in her in ever respect, as animated by the Spirit which dwells in her. Indeed He is first named. The position of the church is this: she has the Spirit, and longs for Christ. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is not merely affection or a wish, but the mind of the Spirit as down here on the earth.

The church looks for Christ, for Himself and herself, in the consciousness of her own relationship. No doubt, it will be blessing for the world. That, she enters into and delights in; but Christ Himself is before her mind. Thus her heart, or the Spirit speaking in the prophet as associated personally with her in position and testimony, turns round in love, first to him who hears; let him who has received the testimony of Jesus say "Come." That is the thing to desire. After Christ Himself, the Spirit first turns to them that are His; then to any one who has an awakened desire and need of soul, "Let him that is athirst"; then in the power of that love with which the church is filled, and with which the Spirit works, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The church longs for Christ, but she has the full stream of life already. She says to every soul, "Whosoever will, let him come"; not to me, as Jesus alone could. Still she possesses the water, and invites to come as freely as she has enjoyed. In a word, we get the full place of the

church and her testimony while waiting for Christ, and for nothing else, and thus for Him directly. This desire the Lord meets then. “He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly”; and this satisfies the heart of the saints. “Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.” A solemn sanction is added to the authority of the book, and to maintain its integrity. The book of life is not life, but the presumed and apparent possession of it as inscribed among professing Christians.

I have thus attempted a sketch of the book in its structure and meaning. To complete this, something might be said of its historical application, at least as warning as to the present time, and perhaps something of a vocabulary of symbolical language.

[End Of Expository—Volume 2.]

20 Those who are its members are the means of spreading it. The church does not teach. Apostles and prophets first, and then teachers in their place, as evangelists in theirs, do that; the church receives, holds fast, and professes the truth. The state of the church may be such as to cast the holding fast and professing the truth on the fidelity of individuals; but the church’s duty, in her right and normal state, is to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

21 Compare here, 1 John 4:12, to see the unspeakable privilege of the Christian.

22 Although this doctrine is found in many parts of Paul’s writings, it may be interesting to remark, that though in God’s plans (chap. 8) he sees us glorified, and Christ in heaven interceding—in doctrine, the Romans presents man as a sinner and Christ only risen so that the individual is justified—not the church, save in

relative duties. In Ephesians, on the contrary, he does not see Christ living on earth, nor us as living in sin, save, as alluding to it as a past history, when speaking of practice. Christ is first seen as dead, and God has raised Him and set Him above all: we, dead in sins, and God has raised us with Him. Hence, it is wholly a new creation, absolute relationships, according to this. Hence, we have the church, and our place before God, as Christ now has it.

23 It is known that it should not be read, “and all things,” but simply, “all things.”

24 It is remarkable, that in John 1, where we have the names and titles of Christ so wonderfully displayed, exactly those are wanting which belong to His place in heaven, and present relationship with the church exclusively. He is neither Head of the church, nor High priest. This is significant as to John’s writings.

25 In chapter 10 with the sheep the Lord speaks of eternal life, but He speaks also of His laying down His life for the sheep. It is after chapters 8 and 9, that is, rejection of word and work.

26 The reading is this: “I am Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord God, the One who is, and who was, and who is the coming One, the Almighty.”

27 Compare the use of these names in 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18, where He who bears them takes the place and name of Father with us.

28 I am strongly disposed to think this intimates that his real prophetic position is looking out to the government of the world as then immediately before him. The church was past; and, as prophet, he was in times beyond it, but

he must turn and give a rapid and general account of the way in which the course of the church led up to this time. Prophecy always leaps over from the present time to the end, and specially does not know the church; but here it was necessary to give the course of the church on earth.

29 The first part of verse 11 is left out by the editors.

30 It is very possible that John had been visited by messengers (angeloi) from the seven churches; though, of course, as it is not revealed, I speak of it, but as suggested by the term angeloi, and as he was really writing to these churches. Were it even so, the purpose of the Spirit was not to send an ordinary epistle to the churches, but to use the occasion for a prophetic unfolding of the whole scene of God's ways as unrolled before God's eyes.

31 At least in the first four. A closer examination of the churches will lead us to see that in the four first, where there is blame (in the epistle to Smyrna there is none) and threatened judgment, the threat is to be executed not on the angel, but on the candlestick in Ephesus— or on the guilty parties, as in Pergamos and in Thyatira. But in the three last it is not so. In Philadelphia there is no blame; and here, as in Smyrna, the angel and the church are not distinguished in the address itself; but in Sardis and in Laodicea the threatenings are continued as a part of the address to the angel himself. This, I suppose, connects itself with the distinction already made between these two classes of churches; the four first have a definite church-place, and the angel, that part which in God's sight really represented the church, is abidingly owned at all events, and the judgment is on

the inconsistent part, or what falsified the public testimony. But, when we come to Sardis, we go back (for Thyatira goes on to the end); when speaking of the mass, the better and witnessing part comes out as witness, witness against Jezebel; if they are not a witness they are nothing at all. The corporate constitution is null here. Hence, if there be failure, the whole thing fails and is judged with the world, and any faithful ones become a distinctive blessed remnant; because faithful witness is the whole thing. Hence, when Christ has to become that, the church so ruined is to be spued out of His mouth.

32 All the best authorities, read “the woman.”

33 Not “and” the rest. “You” is plural, and means “the rest.”

34 Note that “complete before my God” is the correct reading.

35 Around and round are different in Greek. The first gives the idea of distinct objects surrounding; the other, what is round anything, not necessarily distinct, but viewed from it and connected with it as a centre. In chapter 7:11, it is around.

36 Verse 8 may very well be read as if “having harps” applied to the elders only. Very competent judges so understand it; but in chapter 19:4, at any rate, the four beasts fall down and worship. Verse 9 should be “they sing.”

37 Psalm 79 gives the case of terrible slaughter in and around Jerusalem by the heathen; of the application of which I am not sure. It is not, I think, certainly, the beast who is there active. Nor am I quite sure they are real

saints, and not the saints, taking all in as a holy people, though as a nation they are said to be al chesed (not holy). In Daniel 7, “given into his hand” refers to times and laws, not to the saints. The beast prevails against them, but they flee as a body and are preserved.

38 The truth is, this goes farther, when duly weighed, than at first sight appears. We have no action of the Lamb from the opening of the book.

39 The four trumpets, remark, affect all parts of the symbolic creation —the verdure of the earth, the sea, the fountains and rivers, and the celestial bodies.

40 “The one coming up,” Rev. 11:7, is purely characteristic, as the same form is in a multitude of cases.

41 Their sufferings, of course, bore no comparison at all to His, seeing He suffered from the wrath of God, and in the spirit of love in which He had no equal.

42 I doubt whether “names “has a particular force, save to individualize them. (See chap. 3:4).

43 Bengel refers it to God, as in Romans 3:6. But I apprehend it is quite general for judgment, for people being judged.

44 But not perhaps wholly in other expressions.

Appendix

2 Kings 2:2. Bethel (Genesis 28, especially verse 15) where God promises to preserve Jacob, type of Israel, wherever he went, to bring him back, and not to leave him until the promises were fulfilled which he had made before. This name, Bethel, plays a great part in the word of God, as recalling the eternal care of God for His people. Here Elijah is type of the man Christ, who enters into the midst of the people, and identifies Himself with them, starting from the principles proclaimed at Bethel.

Verse 4. Jericho recalls the most complete curse. It was where Christ goes after His identification with the people.

Verse 6. Jordan is death.

Verse 8. The power of death, which falls at the touch of the power of Christ.

Verse 9. After the victory Christ can distribute gifts.

Verse 10. If one can see Him far beyond death, He can give everything.

Verse 14 and following. Elisha is the character of Christ after His resurrection.

Verse 22. He returns to Jericho, and destroys the effects of the curse, and brings in blessing instead of it.

Verse 23. He returns to Bethel—full realization of the promises made to Israel; but He exercises judgment.

Verse 25. Then he goes to Carmel, the garden of God—millennial rest. Then one finds Elisha exercising the

power of the age to come. The miracles are for the profit of the people of God.