# The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 33 (Miscellaneous 2)

John Nelson Darby

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# Review Of “Lectures On The Second Advent,” And “The Apocalypse Unfulfilled.”

Editor's Note1

To the Editor of the “Christian Herald “

Dear Sir,

The increasing extent and progress of conviction as to the truth and nearness of our Lord’s coming (to which I can bear personal witness), and the practical shape which it has assumed, makes it the more important that those most occupied in it, and therefore most likely to speak much of it, should have clear and consistent views upon the subject—clear, and consistent with the full statement of scriptural truth.

The publications which are set at the head of this article contain the most popular and common exposition—perhaps the only full one—presenting, on some very important points, a very distinct view, commonly current amongst the expectants of our Lord’s coming. Into this view many have been led by the actual clearness and apparent accuracy of the statements in these very books. You will not, therefore, I trust, think it amiss that I should briefly attempt to inquire into their soundness, and expose the error into which the author appears to me, as to a part of his subject, to have fallen. They have, however, I should state, very different value in my eyes. Of the first of them, I can say that I read it with the greatest satisfaction; perhaps the more so, as, with the exception of that part which more properly belongs to

the second publication, I found it so exceedingly consistent with my own views. I should except, indeed, also the view given of the seventy weeks, on which I will offer some comment.

The introductory and sixth lectures are as clear and succinct an exposition of their distinct subjects as one could desire in so brief a shape. In fact, on all prophecy that is properly Jewish, it appears to me that Mr. Burgh has been favoured (with the exception only of what I conceive to be a confusion between the Assyrian and Antichrist) with great clearness of apprehension; as all, I suppose, will recognise the lucidness of statement which, with a supposed carefulness of proof from Scripture, has given currency to his views, even where they appear to me to be unfounded. But, on the other hand, I think that Mr. Burgh has wholly failed in this—that he does not see the mystical use of the language and circumstances of literal prophecy to the great parenthetic anomaly of the Gentile dispensation; and that consequently, as a whole, his exposition of the book of Revelation, which is the expression and history of this, is founded on a false principle, and fundamentally erroneous. It is a transfer of that in which he is right as to the Jews, to that which uses the characters for another purpose, and in which, therefore, because he continues its original use and force, he is precisely and exactly wrong: that is, his view of the book of Revelation arises from his not seeing that in which it consists—the use of the language and characters of prophetic testimony hi another and special way, by which the history of the mystical body of Christ is developed, as that of His literal bride, the Jewisir church, was by its ordinary use. This is a definite and important principle,

as it is evident that upon its truth or error depends the whole tissue of the interpretation of the book, whatever diversity there might yet be in detail; while we shall see that the principle on which it is founded affects many other scriptural interpretations. The confusion which has consequently arisen in Mr. Burgh's mind, by the exclusion of any general development of the character of the Gentile apostasy, and the confinement of the statements of the Revelation to "Crisis," has, as I think I shall be enabled to shew, by leading him to confound Antichrist's actings amongst the Jews, where it is in Crisis, both as to them and the Gentile powers, with his actings in the general Gentile apostasy, induced direct contradictions and inconsistencies in his statements. And at this we cannot be surprised; for, if he has forced himself to apply to one period, passages applicable to two very distinct states of things, it is no wonder that, when brought into juxtaposition, they are not found to hold together. Some of these contradictions I shall now notice—not, I trust Mr. Burgh will feel, with any invidious object, but as illustrating the error on which, it appears to me, he has framed his system. I will only make two observations before I do so. One is, sir, to complain of the Church a little, for their readiness to receive a system when any one will make it for them, without investigating the proofs of its statements; and the other is, that the importance of my present inquiry consists in this— that Mr. Burgh's views divert the attention of Christians from the present actings of antichristian principles, as now deceiving the nations, to some supposed or future actings of a personal Antichrist, with which they may have nothing to do; and this I conceive to be most injurious. The time and principles of Antichrist I believe to be daily developing

themselves, and the time to be fast approaching in which it will be said, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still. And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Nor do I know a more solemn consideration, nor one which drives a believer closer to Christ, and the supply of the Spirit, for salvation and direction.

The first example which I shall take, as illustrating the careless confusion of Antichrist’s actings in Jerusalem, and his evil in the Gentile apostasy, is the exposition of the little open book, in the Sixth Lecture on the Apocalypse. Mr. Burgh applies the whole of this to the personal acting of Antichrist in the literal temple of Jerusalem. Now that Antichrist will place his abomination there, in the way understood by Mr. Burgh, I fully believe, and think it a very important truth. But it is equally evident to me that this passage can have nothing to say to it; for the very gist of this passage is precisely opposed to the special point of Antichrist’s actings there. There the point of Antichrist’s actings, is, that he sits in the temple, and the sanctuary is defiled. Here the precise point is, that they are measured, and the rest is given—the court without and the city is given —to the Gentiles; so that they are diametrically opposed in their essential characters. I do not notice this as an error merely, but as illustrating the confusion of principle in applying what is literal, and Jewish, and consummating, to what is Gentile, and moral, and mystical.

Take another point, arising from the same principle—page 152 of the “Lectures on the Second Advent.”

“For half of the week (three-and-a-half years) he (Antichrist) is true to this covenant; but he then breaks it, and for the last half, the remaining three-and-a-half years, the “time, times and a half,” “forty-two months,” or “one thousand two hundred and sixty days,” he “causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”; and …” he places the abomination that maketh desolate.”

Now, if we turn to chapter 8 of the same book (of Daniel), we shall find the consequence of thus forcing all interpretation into the literal crisis; for there we learn—“How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice” (that is, “by him was the daily sacrifice taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down”), “and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Now, if I am to take these things as declaring the literal actings of Antichrist for so many days, I have, in one case, the dominion and treading down of Antichrist to continue 1,260 days, or half the week; and, in the other, 2,300 days, or very nearly the whole week. (Compare “Lectures on the Revelation,” pages 133, 134.)

Again, in Lecture 8 on the Revelation, the 144,000 are the remnant among the Jews.

“In verse 6 commences the part of the prophecy which more immediately and exclusively affects the Gentile world.” “Hitherto we have been occupied with the future destinies of the Jewish people; … now the Gentile world and the other nations of the earth come under consideration. This is after the beast has arisen, etc. Nor even is this preaching of the gospel for the purposes of

conversion; it will be to test, not convert, the nations—"for a witness to all nations"; that is, as I take it, finally to decide the great controversy between Christ and Antichrist—to shew who is for Christ, and who is against Him."

Mr. Burgh then refers to the warning of the third angel, as confirmatory of this character of the testimony: that is, that "If any man worship, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God," etc. (Rev. 14:9).

Mr. Burgh continues:—

"As, then, I before said, the period here alluded to is the period set for the decision of the great controversy on this earth between Christ and Antichrist—between the true God, as revealed in the gospel in the Person of Christ, and him who will then "sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." This eventful crisis will be ushered in by a renewed preaching of the everlasting gospel to every nation under heaven," etc.

In the ninth lecture we then read, that in which I fully agree:—

"The faithful servants of God are removed from the scene of judgment." (Page 158.)

But previous to this crisis, every nation under heaven has been tested. Those that have been faithful, and killed, or appointed unto death, removed; and those that worshipped the beast are to be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever. Who is for Christ, and who against Him, has been shewn. But "The apostasy must first be consummated, and afterwards judged, before there will be a free course for the word of God." (Page 160.)

And

“Then shall the nations be converted to the faith of Christ.” (Page 161.)

Here, again, in the course of these two chapters, from this love of crisis, concentrating all the prophetic testimony of the Revelation to the actings of Antichrist in that crisis, we have a positive interpretation inconsistent with itself. For, after the withdrawing of the saints, and giving up of all others to the worshipping of the beast, and therefore to irremediable torment consequent upon the critical test of the everlasting gospel being put to them, we have, upon the judging of Antichrist, the nations converted by another and subsequent preaching of the gospel, as associated with the new dispensation.

Another instance of inconsistency, arising from the same cause, is to be found in the view taken of the dragon and the beast, in Lecture 3, on the Second Advent, and Lecture 7, on the Revelation. All is to be forced into the crisis in Judea. But what is the consequence? The dragon is the fourth beast, previous to the existence of the ten kingdoms; the little horn, before whom three fell, is the Antichrist, the second beast, during whose continuance the ten horns are in existence. That is, Antichrist personally, as the head of the ten, or rather seven, horns, is the persecuting power of the Jews in Judea. But this dragon, during whose time the horns had no existence, “Persecuted the woman, that is, the Jewish nation, against whom Antichrist, in this his short reign, will, for reasons before stated, direct all his malignity,” etc.

So that, from pressing it all into one scene, the identity of the dragon and the beast is denied and affirmed almost in the same breath; for the dragon is affirmed to be the fourth beast, exclusively before the ten kings, and they to have their place with and under Antichrist, directing all his malignity, when thus formed, against the Jews. Yet have we the dragon, as Antichrist, acting against the woman, that is, the Jews, and that in the land (see page 136, on Revelation), though, as yet, characteristically of his dragon state, there are no kings at all. And yet, Antichrist is the horn that rises after the ten horns, or kings, and subdues three. The cause of the inconsistency is obvious: all was to be brought, at any rate, into the climax. And indeed, though all the malignity of Antichrist is here directed against the Jews, elsewhere we learn that he is to kill all the Gentile saints also, or, at least, they are to be delivered to death. What conclusion do I draw from all this? That the attempt to force everything into the three years and a half, during which Antichrist is to sit in the temple of God in Jerusalem, involves necessarily, in contradictions and inconsistencies, which prove the falseness of the principles from which they flow; besides that, the exercise of that power by which all the nations are wielded against the Jews in that day, supposes, and especially as regards the ten kings, the exercise of all that evil and deceivableness, as “man of sin,” previous to the holding and exercise of that power in Judea, which especially concerns Christendom to beware of; and that the system, which supposes the dangerous actings of Antichrist to be confined to the time of his evil reign in Judea, necessarily, in contradiction of itself, supposes him to have previously so powerfully practised by deceit or violence, that the ten kings have given their power to

him, and that he is there, by virtue of those deceivings, as agent of Satan, the prince of this world. And, what is remarkable, Mr. Burgh's system precisely puts out of sight, and treats as a nullity, all that part of Antichrist's actings, in which alone, even according to his own system, we are concerned; that is, the power by which he deceives and carries after him the ten kings, or kingdoms; and, I may add, this confirms the argument previously gone into, as to the everlasting gospel. For the. kingdoms of Christendom have manifestly been deceived previously to the preaching of the everlasting gospel, if that be subsequent, as Mr. Burgh supposes, to the setting up of Antichrist's throne in Jerusalem.

You will observe, sir, that I am not considering these merely as particular misinterpretations, but as inconsistencies flowing from, and therefore shewing the fallacy of the system of interpretation. It seems to me exceedingly inconsistent to call the beast Antichrist, when Antichrist cannot be till the horns are all crowned; for he is to arise up as a little horn after them, and subdue three; and yet the ten are to "have power as kings one hour with the beast."

But I have no object in going at large into mere errors. One or two, which in another way affect the system, I shall notice. Popery, by those who hold these views, is made but little of, and all that is not concentrated in the personal Antichrist is immaterial. Thus, the fifth trumpet having been settled (for no other reason, that I can see, but having a king called Apollyon) to be Antichrist, that is, observe, the last great final opposer of Christ, including everything, of the next, "far more terrible," nothing decided can be spoken. No wonder! Again, the sixth seal, it is quite clear, we are told, can be nothing

but the final wrath of the Lamb, closing the whole scene of earthly power. It is so plainly His second coming, that "there is no room for difference of opinion "(page 52). Yet the next thing we read of, is, the holding of the winds, previous to the outbreaking of all Antichrist's doings; and, says, Mr. Burgh, "the trumpets are but the detail of the seventh seal" (page 87); that is, after the final wrath of the Lamb, which none could abide, come all the manifestations of Antichrist's power; and the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, set up against the Lamb; and Antichrist himself desolates, according to Mr. Burgh's system, for the whole period of prophetic history, sitting in the temple of God, as God, raging against all, even to death, who will not worship him. The question, then, sir, is, who is able to endure his wrath?

I confess, sir, that, plausible and easy as it may appear, when read by itself, it appears to me a very superficial system, and, when compared with Scripture, not to be for a moment tenable; and the whole of it arises from the effort to contract all to the three years and a half, and apply it to Judea, with yet the forced consciousness that it does concern the Gentiles. Thus, the prayers of all saints are the prayers of the hundred and forty-four thousand sealed Jews, wherever all the other saints are, and whatever they are doing; yet, the first four trumpets, in answer, fall literally on the earth, sea, rivers, and trees, sun, moon, and stars. The fifth, however, and (page 87) all the trumpets, afflict only the Jewish nation; though, what part of the Jewish nation the literal sun and moon are, it would be hard to say; however, so it is argued (pages 87, 88). Again, as to the seals, we are told to conclude that, because there is,

“Behold a white horse, and one that sat on him,” and that a white horse is mentioned in chapter 19, therefore he that sat on him is clearly the same. It may be so, but I do not see why, on any ground that would not prove each individual in the armies of heaven to be Jesus Christ also, for they all sat on white horses. The emblem of the white horse has nothing to do with who sits on him. But we are told that it is Christ’s second advent, and the horses which follow it are the actings of Christ in judgment, as come—I say, as come, or else the coming, after all, is figurative; and, to say the least, Mr. Burgh’s language here is very vague. But, as far as I understand, it is King Messiah Himself come forth to destroy His enemies; and then we are referred to Matthew 24 for the identical signs. But there, all these things precede the coming of the Son of Man; and we are expressly told, that “the end is not yet”; in a word, they are but “the beginning of sorrows”; and, after all, the coming is as the lightning. Yet we are told that the parallelism is perfect, not only in the events, but in the order of their occurrence. I wonder the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, the great test, as Mr. Burgh has stated elsewhere (a statement I am by no means disposed to question, though I do his use of it), did not arrest his mind as to the accuracy of this most unfortunate comparison.

Again, sir, the supposed uncertainty of interpretation, as to the two-horned beast, is made the subject rather of triumph, on the part of Mr. Burgh, though he gives no additional light whatever on the subject. But it ought to have led Mr. Burgh, I think, to more soberness of consideration on the subject, when he found, besides his favourite Antichrist, the beast, the third, or two-horned

beast, at Armageddon, as the false prophet, and a distinct subject of destruction. He appears, too, in his zeal to substitute the personal Antichrist for Popery, to forget, that whatever may be the wicked and monstrous presumption of the Antichrist in Jerusalem, in Babylon "was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." I leave to more full development the connection between this and chapter 17. This only, that it is not itself the beast, and that in her was found, etc.; and that, supposing, now, it be merely the literal city of Rome (the lowest supposition), it is not Antichrist at Jerusalem which is thus charged with the accumulated guilt of the blood of all that were slain upon the earth. In a word, sir, it is plain to me that there are two characters in which Antichrist (I use it now in an extended sense) is developed. The one of deceivableness, and perhaps using power, and so sometimes causing to be killed; the other of power, in which he acts haughtily against God as the revealed "man of sin." In the latter of these two characters he acts against the Jews in Jerusalem; in the former, and now especially, in deceivableness as separated from power, we particularly have to do with it, and in this is his great guilt. In this way he gathers the power which he will use to his own destruction in that day. I say not what desperate deception, as well as power, he will use in that day amongst the Jews; but I say that the spirit of evil, by which he gathers and carries up there the power which he then exercises, is that with which we have to do. And "the deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved," will find its application, not amongst Jews, but amongst Gentiles, to whom the truth was preached. And this character, though finding

its full manifestation in his false anti-regal power, and therefore not excluding this, is that in which he is also fully developed in the New Testament scriptures. And if this be once admitted, the system on which this interpretation of the Revelation is founded falls to the ground; and we are enabled, with whatever additional light the investigation may have afforded us, to pursue our inquiry into the Revelation, unfettered by a system which, as it appears to me, must be added to the many which it rejects; and which, while I must feel it to be superficial in its inductions, is founded on a principle as all-important, which, to my mind, is simply ignorance of the whole frame of New Testament prophecy, and mars its great aim— the warning of the Gentile church. For, I repeat, it is quite clear that, with all its confusion of application, Mr. Burgh's system does not at all contemplate those actings of evil, by which the nations are carried up by Antichrist to, and against, Jerusalem, and their doom irrevocably sealed.

Save as applied to the point in question, I have stated little of my own views. I confess I find it more profitable to learn from Scripture, than to frame a system. If the Lord permit me, in time and service, I will send you some things which appear to me the mind of God in Scripture, and shall be glad to be corrected by any of your correspondents; merely saying, that the two great symbolical powers of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius seem to me to give the full clue to the history of the times of the Gentiles, ended in and by Antichrist.

As regards, then, the Jews, and the great results, it appears to me that Mr. Burgh is exceedingly clear, and may be always read with profit. As regards the Revelation, I think he has manifestly mistaken the whole

principle and structure of the prophecy, from beginning to end. I must also add, that his views of symbol appear to me to be without any principle whatever, as his statements on the subject are most astonishingly hasty and unfounded. It would be impossible to go into this at large in such a communication as the present; I will only remark, that his assertion (page 83 of the “Lectures on Revelation”), “Scripture history affords a precedent for one interpretation, but Scripture does not afford any precedent for the other,” is one of the most unprecedented assertions anybody ever met with, to a person who had ever read the Scriptures at all.

And I would here, sir, remark, that, clear as Mr. Burgh’s interpretation of the seals may seem to some, I confess I can gain no determinate idea of what he means from it. I find, in page 28, that “The book of Revelation is thus the book of the Lord’s second advent, and is solely occupied with the account of the last great crisis, with the coming of Christ, and the attendant events, during the several acts of His taking to Himself, and redeeming, His inheritance.”

Accordingly, the first seal is Christ going forth, to which he makes parallel the question, “What shall be the sign of thy coming? “though, what the force of such a question can be to the parallelism, I cannot see. However, it is the last great crisis, and Christ’s going forth to it. Now, I must ask, What does Mr. Burgh mean by “Christ’s going forth to it”? It is not, manifestly, His personal coming in Judea, though the quotation of Psalm 45 would lead one to suppose so; for, in page 55, we have merely preparatory judgments, instead of improvements, till “God’s four sore judgments shall have devastated the world. And all this is to be but “the

beginning of sorrows”—the beginning of sorrows, I will here ask Mr. Burgh, to whom? He has parallelised Matthew 24 with this: whose sorrows does he think Matthew 24 refers to? Here he says, “Will the Church of Christ remain couched?” etc. However this may be the first seal is, “The Lord Jesus Christ Himself going forth—going forth in the character of His second advent—going forth to redeem His inheritance, and rescue it from the hand of the enemy, and assert His claim to His possession.”

Then, the following seals are the arrows in His hand (see page 48), and are said (page 47) to be “Sharp in the heart of His enemies, in reference to His conflict with the confederate nations, who, at the era of His advent, shall oppose Him, and shall then fall under Him, as in Revelation 19; and thus is every part of this seal proved to refer to that conflict.”

That is, Mr. Burgh allows (and indeed reasons at large elsewhere, and, as I have said, I think very clearly), in Judea; yet, as we have seen, all these arrows are the judgments which devastate the world, and all this to be but the beginning of sorrows. Again, all the arrows refer to that conflict, the book being occupied solely with the last great crisis; yet, speaking of these very seals, or arrows of judgment Mr. Burgh says:

“And when these several signs have been developed, these several seals opened, then the sixth seal opens with the day itself of His coming, or, at least, those signs by which it is more immediately announced.”

So that, after they have been shewn to be arrows in the hearts of “the confederate nations, who, at the era of his advent, shall oppose them, and who shall then fall under

Him, as in Revelation 19," we find the sixth seal itself to be after all those as signs— "at least those signs by which it (His coming) is more immediately announced." To me, clear as it may seem to others, there is nothing but confusion in all this; and the confusion, it appears to me, is simply this—that Mr. Burgh saw nothing but with the last great crisis before his eyes, and it mingled itself confusedly with all, while the intrinsic evidence of the passages gave them a positive force which he could not help stating; and in the system he had formed obliged him to put them in an order, which made the confusion more determinate and marked.

I think students of prophecy are indebted to Mr. Burgh, as to every one else who has written candidly on the subject; but I do not think he has interpreted the book of Revelation rightly or successfully, and, by making a system of it, he has made all his errors hang together. I will freely submit my own thoughts to his judgment and criticism, I trust for the same just and useful purpose that he has done, when opportunity is given me.

I have merely been able, my dear sir, in much occupation, to trace hastily those things which appear to me evidences of the fallacy of the system which Mr. Burgh has put forward in his Lectures on the Revelation; and I point this out as the fallacy—the concentrating the actings of Antichrist to the last exhibition of him in Judea; and it is exceedingly material for us to see it so, because it is his previous actings with which we are concerned, and by which, as Mr. Burgh's system implies (while it denies), we are liable to be deceived. And here I must charge these lectures with inconsiderate confidence of haste; because, if Antichrist was to sit in Jerusalem, as head of a great apostate system, it ought

to have involved, instead of refuted, the consideration of the apostasy of which he had previously made himself the head—an apostasy at present working in the world, and in which we are all vitally and immediately concerned. How much this presses upon my mind, I shall not at present dwell upon; and Remain, dear sir, Yours unworthily in the Lord, John N. Darby.

P.S.—This paper has extended to such a length, that I have omitted some remarks I had to make on the seventy weeks, and the days. I shall only now say, that I do not think (though quite open to believe it) that the covenant is Antichrist's, as Mr. Burgh supposes; and that he is unwarranted in so constantly putting 62, 7, 1, when the Scriptures as decidedly put 7, 62, 1; yet on this his view depends; I have already stated that it appears to me erroneous. As to the days, the readers of The Christian Herald may recollect a principle once stated by me in it,2 that, as to the Jews, we might look for what was literal; as to the power of the Gentiles, and their times, we might expect protracted symbol. However imperfectly stated there, I am still inclined to believe in the truth of the statement. If you, or your correspondents, think it worth while, I will give you the evidence and interpretation which is connected with this subject, and the distinction between Antichrist and the Assyrian, as well as some remarks on Matthew 24, and the analogous passages.

1 By the Rev. William Burgh, A.B., Tims, Dublin, 1832.

2 See an article on "The Twelve Hundred and Sixty Days," in Vol. 1, No. 12, for December, 1830. (Collected Writings, Vol. 2.)

## Reply To An Article In The “Zionsbote” Upon “Darbyism”

Editor's Note3

“Now if any man build upon this foundation [Jesus Christ] gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it.”… (1 Cor. 3:12, 13).

It is, although not a pleasant, at any rate an exceedingly easy task to answer a hostile attack, when the opponent himself gives the answer. Such is the case with the article contained in the “Zionsbote,” “upon Darbyism.” The arguments of the writer are chiefly summed up in the statement of two antitheses, expressed in the words: “We say, Everything must be restored, as it was in the apostle’s time; We can never return, the Darbyites say, to what existed at the time of the apostles.” In his opinion everything must be revived in the church according to apostolic model; and his censure affects the so-called Darbyites, because, instead of assenting to his conception, they rather maintain that, since the church has abandoned her first state and is in apostasy, according to the clearest and most unambiguous testimonies of the Scriptures, she is not capable of restoration.

Then, after the writer has been somewhat zealous over the bad principles of the brethren he indicts, he finds occasion for the remark, which defeats his contention: “Moreover nothing remains until the Lord come, but that every Christian take pains according to the best of his knowledge and conscience to ascertain and to carry

out the mind of Christ; but so that the fullest brotherly relationship may obtain between the different church parties." In fact, no Christian who is unprejudiced and free from bias will be able to close his eyes to such contradictions. What is the meaning, then, of wishing to restore everything in the church as it was in the apostle's time, if it must be confessed that at the end nothing remains but Christian parties, in which every member has to ascertain and carry out the will of Christ according to the best of his knowledge and conscience? Were there such parties in the time of the apostles? Do they so much as bear the seal of apostolic recognition? Certainly not. Jewish prejudices, as we know, threatened to split up the assembly at Antioch into two parties; but the wisdom of God prevented the deadly evil; and peace even and prosperity grew out of this very evil for the assembly at Jerusalem; Acts 15. In Corinth also church parties displayed their first germs; but apostolic power was present, and apostolic energy was exercised to restore divine order in the church. But where is there now that apostolic energy? Where is there an assembly that sends its ministers into all communities, so that all can enjoy the blessed message? Neither such energy, nor such an assembly is within the range of possibility in our days.

The restoration of the church according to apostolic model, consequently, makes the previous restoration of apostles an absolute necessity. As Christians will not recognise their inability to restore everything, they sink into the state of indifference in respect of the evil which they cannot remedy. But instead of a recognition of their own incapacity, the willingness to continue in a bad, unscriptural, condition is in fact one of the saddest

phenomena amongst Christians of our day. They refuse to bow in the dust, and humbly acknowledge, “We are to blame, we have abandoned the first state of the church, and are unable to restore everything; God is faithful; we are to blame.”

The writer must allow me to alter a word in his thesis; for without this alteration, the sentence is devoid of force and meaning. He says, “We must restore everything, as it was in the apostles’ time.” He ought to have said, not we “must,” but we “can,” restore everything. For if we cannot do it, our labour is useless. We know well—and the Lord be praised for it—that His grace is fully sufficient, just as much for our low state, as for that of the apostles. But to what a degree the pretension of such Christians has reached, who ascribe to themselves the ability to restore to its old state whatever the power of the apostles wrought and set up, I leave to the judgment of the reader. Christians need apostolic power in order to be able to do apostolic works. They are able by grace to be faithful, amidst the circumstances in which they are found as the result of the continuous power of evil. They can abandon the evil, but as we have said, to be able to do what the apostles did, they need apostolic power. Why do they not restore apostles? why not gifts? Why not prophets, and miracles? In fact, to restore everything is a wide field!

Where do we hear in our days words like those of Paul, of Timothy, and of Barnabas? Where is the power of the Spirit, which in the days of the apostles was so very active? Paul says, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock,” Acts 20:29. Why such intimations for

times after his departure, if others could do everything which he had done?

The principles which the writer supposes to be scriptural only help to confound ideas still more; and they betray only too clearly how little people in general seek to inquire what holy Scripture says about God's assembly. It is clear that Scripture knows only of a general assembly of God. Christians are regarded as members of the body of Christ. To be a member of an assembly is a thought of which one finds no trace in the word of God. And yet this thought forms the basis of the whole system to which the writer addresses himself. As we are shewn in 1 Corinthians 12, as well as in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12, all gifts were introduced of God not in one fixed and local assembly, but in the whole assembly. Apollos ministered with his gift as teacher as well in Ephesus as in Corinth, because this gift had been bestowed upon him not for an assembly but for the assembly, and consequently, for the whole body of Christ. But where do we find in our days anything like the condition portrayed in 1 Corinthians 12? "Now, that was for apostolic times," our brethren will answer. But how can they then say, "We must restore everything as it was at the time of the apostles?" Will they then imitate only outward forms? That power cannot be imitated, no one will dare to dispute; for one needs the power to be able to exercise it. But they have not even the form, for to be teacher of an assembly is not scriptural.

But how does it stand with the question of elders? Scripture teaches us that they were not elected by the assemblies. As we find in Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas "chose them elders"; and of Titus we know that he was sent back to Crete to appoint elders; Titus 1:5. Who now

could claim the right to do that for which the persons named were divinely authorised? Where is there now in our days a Paul and a Barnabas, a Timothy and Titus? Moreover, there still remains the question which settles everything, whether it is in general the will of God to restore all as it was at the time of the apostles. As we have said, “we must” is without force and meaning, if it cannot be supported by a positive “we can.” Therefore Scripture must decide whether restoration is a thing permitted or required by God. We deny it. For “we must” is not scripture; and the writer has in general brought forward no passage for his assertion. He speaks of a command, but he assigns no command. Let us examine then the word of God, to see if it does not speak of the results of man’s unfaithfulness in respect of the kingdom of God, and His assembly upon the earth.

First of all, I would refer briefly to the “Parable of the Tares.” I find on the part of the writer—in noticing some thoughts from a tract dealing with this parable—many hard and bitter expressions, accompanied by the remark: “How much might be said upon this fundamental principle!” But he neither gives another interpretation of the parable, nor does he seek to refute the “singular “one given, by the citation of even one passage. But all such shibboleths are powerless, if not founded upon the word of God.

Let us turn therefore to the alone infallible word. The tares are sown by the devil where good seed has been sown by the Lord. The subject is, of course, not the church itself, but the kingdom. The field is the world. But this parable is of great importance if it be a question of the restoration of the good state of Christianity. The question of the servants, if they should root up the tares,

the Lord answers in the negative with the words: “Let both grow together until the harvest.” A restoration of the earlier state is not prescribed, and consequently is impossible. The judgment alone will deal with it. But someone might object, “Why do you not remain in the state-church?” I answer: Because Scripture knows of no state-church, but only of the church, and because it expressly says, that in the last perilous days everything will demonstrate the ruin, and men have the form of godliness but deny the power thereof. “From such turn away,” says the apostle; and thus in following the divine exhortation and turning away, I act in obedience, even if I remain alone. But why, it might be further asked, since everything is not to be restored, do you not remain alone? and I bring forward in reply 2 Timothy 2, where I am taught that, since the Lord knows His own in spite of the confusion in the last days, I am not only to depart from iniquity, but to walk with those who “call upon the Lord out of a pure heart” (v. 19, 22); whilst at the same time I possess the precious and comforting promise: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” Matt. 18:20. So saith the Scripture. And if now I order my course according to these divine directions, the pretension to wish to restore everything is in no wise hidden therein; but with thankful heart I make use of the instructions which God has given for the last days in His precious word, in individual obedience.

As a whole, the passage quoted enlightens us clearly as to whether a restoration will take place in the last days. But “this know also,” says the apostle, “that in the last days perilous times shall come,” 2 Tim. 3:1. Then follows (v. 2-5) a picture of the sad state of Christendom,

become like heathenism. (Compare Rom 1. with 2 Tim. 3.) Will the church then, not be roused again out of this state? No: it will grow worse and worse (v. 13). There is not a trace of restoration. In 2 Thessalonians 2 we see that the apostasy comes, and the man of sin, the son of perdition, shall be revealed (v. 3). Will the apostasy have an end, or the man of sin be removed, by the renewed power of the gospel? By no means. Already in the time of the apostle, the mystery of lawlessness was at work. And this fire, smouldering in ashes, has developed— "worse and worse," as the apostle foresaw, and will not be stayed until, as soon as every hindrance is taken out of the way, the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (v. 7, 8). There is nowhere a thought of restoration. Jude also teaches the same truth. In his epistle we see that false brethren had crept in, of whom Enoch had prophesied: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints," … (p. 14). They go the way of Cain, give themselves for reward to the error of Balaam, and perish in the gainsaying of Korah (v. n). That is the character of the evil in the last days, which already had begun in the days of the apostles. For in 1 John 2:18, we read, "Little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Already, then, as Peter teaches, the time of the judgment of God's house had come; 1 Pet. 4:17. In short, everywhere we find testimony to the apostasy, and nowhere a word of restoration, although in the days of the apostles the principles of evil and apostasy had already penetrated into the church.

It may perhaps be asked, “Shall not the world then be filled with the knowledge of the Lord by the gospel of grace?” No. The gospel of the kingdom will indeed be preached amongst all nations, but then will the end come; Matt. 24:14. “The everlasting gospel” will be sent to every nation and every kindred and every tongue, with the announcement: “Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come,” Rev. 14:6, 7. Then follows the destruction of Babylon, and finally the appearing of the Son of man on the cloud. But then, will not the world generally be filled with the knowledge of the Lord? Certainly. But how? By the gospel of grace? Not at all. There are three passages in holy Scripture in which mention is made of this subject: Numbers 14:21, Isaiah 11, Habakkuk 2:12-14. But none of these passages speak of grace: all speak of judgment; and in Isaiah 26:9, 10, it is declared definitively that the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness when the judgments of God are in the earth; but that, though favour be shewn to the wicked, “they will not learn righteousness.” The reader will also see in Isaiah 25:7-9, that at the time when the veil that is spread over all nations is removed, the resurrection has taken place, and the Jewish people is restored in blessing.

It is therefore a lack of spiritual understanding, and is nothing short of disobedience, to desire to restore everything, since for such a work there is not only no command, but Holy Scripture teaches exactly the reverse. It is not obedience to content oneself with Christian parties, because Scripture condemns them; it is not obedience to form a so-called church, and to be a member of it, because Scripture knows only of members of the church, as the body of Christ, but not members of

a church calling itself so-and-so; it is not obedience to elect or appoint elders, because in the New Testament this was never the act of the churches; it is not obedience to institute an office of preachers because Scripture knows nothing of such an office, but speaks only of gifts which God bestowed, with which to serve the whole church. But it is obedience to keep aloof from a Christianity which has the form of godliness but denies the power, because Scripture in 2 Timothy 3 expressly exhorts us to do so; and it is obedience to assemble ourselves with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2), and not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, because Scripture enjoins it, and promises the precious and blessed presence of the Lord to all those who gather in His name.

Certainly a calm consideration of the word of God teaches us that the different churches which call themselves Independents, Baptists, etc., do not answer to the churches at the time of the apostles. For could the apostle send to one of these so-called churches an epistle addressed “To the Church of God at N.”? Which of them would obtain the letter at the post office? If on the other hand I go no further than Holy Scripture allows me, I profess a principle which makes it a sacred duty for me to acknowledge as members of Christ all Christians, whether in the Baptist or Independent communities, or in the state-church. And that I do with all my heart. I am fully convinced that with regard to church questions they do not walk in paths marked out by the word of God, but that they are, notwithstanding, dear to the heart of the Lord; and I hope that in these lines I have said nothing by which the heart of an

upright brother could be wounded. If, however, it should be so, I beg beforehand for forgiveness.

The small compass of these few pages allows of my only briefly adducing, and by passages of Scripture establishing, some elementary principles. It were to be wished that the writer of the article which occasioned this reply had in like manner supported by the word of God the points he has brought in question. It only remains for me to appeal to this word, alone infallible; and I hope that the brethren who heap so many charges upon us will perceive why we cannot recognise their path as the path of obedience. In my judgment, but small measure of intelligence belongs to the pretension of desiring to restore everything as it was at the time of the apostles, to the recognition of anything else than obedience. God has never laid down such a path. He does not improve the old man who has fallen, but introduces the “second Man,” and gives us a portion in His glory. He does not renew the Jews according to the old covenant, but we find, after long patience, grace and help at the end of judgment, then to establish with them the new covenant upon the ground of grace. And with regard to the church we can say: What Christ has built for ever will endure for ever, what is divine and heavenly will be indestructible; but wood, hay, and stubble, with which man has built, must perish in the fire.

3 From the German.

## A Letter On A Pamphlet

By Mr. F. Olivier, Entitled, “The Body Of Christ, And A Misunderstanding On The Subject.”

(From the French)

May 6th, 1870.

Beloved Brother,

The pamphlet you sent me shews me I did not miss my object in the one I had previously published.4 There is progress in the development of the question. I make no reply to the review of the brethren’s course. It is best to go forward. I will only remind Mr. O. that, at one time, he had wanted to join the brethren at Lausanne, and to preach in their room, he having hitherto had a separate meeting of his own at Montbenon, and, the brethren agreeing to his proposal, one fine day they found a pulpit in the room, without their being informed of it, and, at the same time, they learned that Mr. O. purposed having his own separate meeting at Mountbenon permanently. The matter was (dropped) not carried out. What had induced the brethren to accept the proposal of Mr. O. was, the scandal of two meetings, without adequate reasons.

But let us probe the question. I shall bring to light some facts, and then speak of the principles. Mr. O. says: “All I know, is, that some of those who had held with him (Mr. N.) were admitted to the Lord’s supper, at the church called Bethesda. For this the whole assembly of Bethesda were excommunicated.” If Mr. O. only knows this, he knows very little, and would have done better not to speak of it. It appears that Mr. O., while saying all

he can for Mr. N., considers his doctrines such, that the Lord's table must be denied, not only to the one who teaches them, but to those who are drawn away by him. He says that, on his own authority, he declared to a young sister, by letter, dated 21st May, 1867, that she could not break bread with the worship-meeting of the Rue du Lac, although she had said she did not admit the doctrine, which, however, Mr. N. taught in his tracts, which tracts she could not disavow, as she did not think their author could be mistaken in anything. If a poor victim of his influence, who does not admit his doctrine, must be rejected, we surely were right in rejecting the one who wrote the tracts, and boldly maintained blasphemies. Neither is it true that Mr. N. did not want to "weaken propitiation." Mr. N. said the death of Christ was only an incident of the life of Christ. This expression was taken up. To excuse himself, he said he was accustomed to use the word 'incident' in a special sense, and not as others employ it. But he also said that Christ suffered far more before the coming of John the Baptist than after; that, on hearing the gospel from John the Baptist's lips, He passed from being under law to being under grace.

Well, we have broken off with all this, and Mr. N. got a chapel built for himself, where he preached the doctrine which he had, unknown to the brethren, been teaching secretly for six years.

Now this is how the Bethesda meeting got involved in the question. A lady, who liked Mr. N.'s teaching, left the Bath meeting when he was no longer allowed to preach there. She was at once surreptitiously brought into Bethesda. Then seven persons of the chapel and meeting of Mr. N. were received at Bethesda, some of whom

agreed fully with his doctrine. Some pious brethren in Bethesda protested, and entreated Messrs. Muller and Craik, the two pastors, to examine the doctrine, and not to let persons from Mr. N.'s meeting in, without having first subjected them to an examination. They refused, and several meetings were held, and a letter was signed by the ten elders, or labourers, of the assembly, declaring that they would not do it, and that it was a new test of communion to examine them on this point; and Messrs. M. and C. asserted that they must be justified, on that ground, according to the principles of this document (called the letter of the ten), otherwise they would cease to be the pastors of the assembly, and they got the whole meeting to vote, by rising, and sitting, so that the whole meeting, as a meeting, justified the admission of persons whom Mr. O. would exclude. This letter remains in force to this day. Not long ago, Mr. M. refused to withdraw it, on being requested so to do.

Now, why should I separate from the people at Plymouth, and be in fellowship with them at Bristol? But what is of importance to note, is, that the meeting voted that it was not necessary to examine if Christ was thus blasphemed, or not. The fact is that Mr. C. favoured the doctrine, and taught, in great measure, the same errors. It is not a question of excommunicating an assembly. It is individuals that are excommunicated. One separates from an assembly, and this is what was done with regard to Bethesda; but the individuals coming from a meeting which has, as a meeting, received the evil into its bosom, may be guilty of the act, and responsible for what the assembly has done. Thus, when the meeting voted the acceptance of the letter of the ten, and a good number of Christians had separated from it, because, in

reality, they had voted that they would not, and should not, examine whether to accept blasphemy against the Lord, when, to say the least, it was habitually heard—when the members of the assembly had voted that indifference to blasphemy was a good thing, were the individuals not all under responsibility for the action of the assembly? There was no question of whether the individuals held the doctrine, or not. (The young person excluded by Mr. O. did not admit Mr. N.'s doctrine; like Bethesda, she did not disavow his tracts.) The assembly had taken the ground of indifference to blasphemy against Christ, and the persons constituting the assembly (save in the case of real ignorance as to the facts) were defiled with the defilement of the assembly. This is the doctrine of Scripture: "Ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter"; they were not incestuous, but, as long as incest was permitted, the assembly was guilty of it, and was not clear of it, neither were the individuals composing it. So the apostle says: "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." Therefore they were not a new lump, unless they purged out the old leaven. The assembly, and those composing it, were old leaven, unfit to celebrate the feast. But all the assemblies of God are jointly responsible; and, whether God's assembly, or not, an assembly which chooses to accept the principles of fellowship with Bethesda is identified, has identified itself, with Bethesda.

A distance of twenty, or two hundred, leagues does not alter the moral fact in anything; in what is moral, space is of no account. If an assembly, knowingly and wilfully, accepts fellowship with Bethesda, it is defiled, as Bethesda is—it accepts the principle of indifference to

blasphemy against Christ. Some meetings invited Mr. N.; in some neutral gatherings influential persons went to Bethesda for the purpose of testimony; and some have boldly avowed their opinion, and published, with their names attached thereto, tracts, advocating the principle of Mr. B. cited by Air. O., namely, that if an assembly permits fornication, the assembly cannot be denied by it, but only the guilty person. Now, I do not consider blasphemies against the Lord less serious, if less shocking, than moral corruption; yet the principle, that an assembly cannot be defiled, is taught by several tracts on their side. Now, it is all the same, if there are two, or two hundred, meetings consecutively; it is only throwing dust in the eyes. This is the question: Has such and such an assembly identified itself with the impure principle that wishes the evil to be admitted? As I have already said, in America the question was not Bethesda, but non-eternity of punishment. The question which I here state is all the more important, since, in these last days, the principle on which we have to meet, is, separation from evil. The second and third chapters of 2 Timothy are clear on this point.

Now, as regards the principles of gathering of the-children of God in these times, it is well to notice that Mr. O. frankly admits that he does not profess to meet on the principles laid down in Scripture—on pages 31 to 33 he declares it. I only quote two sentences. “The principle asserted is that of the primitive church, but can it be the principle of the dismembered church? “That is the question. Then (page 46) “Mr. D. professes to be able to realise to-day what was the principle of the unity of the church when the church was one; whereas, I consider that this principle is, nowadays, quite

impracticable." He wants a principle in the air, deprived of its substructure. Now it is certain that God's word knows of none other, and has no two principles of gathering. We say, the word must be reverted to, and, whatever our low condition, we must go by the word, where we find what may be applied to the present time. Now, to gather two or three in the name of Jesus belongs to all times. If Mr. O. cannot meet on scriptural principles— and this he admits—then his meeting is merely a human meeting, on human principles; if it is not on the principle of the unity of the church, it is independent churches.

What is not within the unity is, by the very principle of its existence, outside it. Here is what Mr. O. says: "This is the problem to be solved: to find a means of constructing worship-meetings which depart as little as possible from the notion of the unity of the church, and which, at the same time, permit of a connection subsisting with the dismembered church." One cannot act on the recognised primitive and scriptural principle, that is, the principle owned of God, and one must depart as little as possible from it. And who is to be the judge whether the departure is to an allowable degree, or not? And if the gathering is not on the scriptural principle — that is to say, that which alone has God's authority— each one is free to select the principle he chooses to meet on. "The dismemberment rules everything"; that is to say, the effect of man's sin liberates us from the duty of returning to the word and the will of God. Impossible to have a more distinct admission of his having abandoned the principle of God's word, than what is found in the pages I have indicated. When this is once done, God's authority is null and void. A little, more or

less, departure is, comparatively speaking, indifferent. The principle is not a divine one. Let this avowal be well weighed. If it is impossible to meet according to the Word, better not meet at all. We believe God is faithful to His children. The Lord has a flock, and He has given in His word what is appropriate to all times. Here it must be explained. Mr. O. would have us profess to re-establish the primitive unity of all Christians as a whole. But it is not so. I hope there will be much more seen, and I do not think the thing is complete. This ought to be. I doubt whether unity will be re-established in an absolute way. But that is not the question for us. What God will do is not our rule of conduct, but what He wants us to do, what is found in His word. There is a great system where the form of godliness is found, the power of it being denied. I ought to separate from it. I do so. Other Christians are unwilling to do so. I must leave them, and follow the Word. Also, as regards details, I name the name of Christ; I must depart from iniquity, and I do so, wherever it may be. Then, in a great house, there are false teachers; I purge myself from these, and follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

But on what principle am I to meet? Must I depart from scriptural principles? Why is it more difficult to meet on scriptural principles than on others? Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, there is He. As to the ground, the primitive church could have no more; this is a promise made at the brightest time of the apostles, a promise available for us in times of difficulty and dispersion. We cannot control others, but, by grace, we can ourselves, as obedient children, act according to

the Word. Mr. O. wants us to depart as little as possible from the Word. Be it so. But that one must depart from it, and that obedience is impossible, I do not think. He says we should have a centre of attraction to unite everything; we should—I do not deny it—I have often even said so. The whole church should be one, and I accept that we are all responsible for the lack of unity, and that the brethren, as all who meet according to the truth, should be, or should have in their midst, the magnetic pole, which would attract and bow every heart; but if we do not possess it, we are not thereby hindered from yielding obedience to the Word, and from enjoying the blessing attached thereto. We dare not do otherwise. The question is thus definitely laid down. Mr. O. thinks he must—I do not say wishes to, but is forced to—depart from the principle of the Word. We think it should not be departed from at all, that if anyone departs from it, little or much, he has abandoned it; it is no longer obedience; the authority of God is no more the basis of gathering. If the body is separated from the Head, much or little is all the same. If our walk is not obedience, it is man's will. I do not accuse Mr. O. of wilfully departing from Scripture, but he considers himself forced to do so. I think it is want of faith, to say that what he calls the dismemberment of the church has rendered a Christian's following the Word impossible. For months after I discovered the ruin in which everything was found, I knew not what to do. Then I saw that the Word supplied what is needed for these very times, and that one had only to follow it. One might count on the Lord for the difficulties of the road.

If Mr. O. says we have been poor labourers, I have no reply to make. But we have met with blessing, and

certainly the patient grace of the Lord has not failed us. Moreover, I think the firmness of the brethren regarding Bethesda has reacted on those who condemn them. They have not always been so decided in rejecting everything in connection with Mr. N.

I touched slightly on the subject of discipline, but more must be said, and I must justify what I said about the principles enunciated by Mr. B., and cited by Mr. O. “Where will you find,” says Mr. B., “a meeting denied, on account of one only of its members, in such a way, that any member communicates this defilement to every other meeting with which he has communion?” I know of a case, where two persons got into the brethren’s meeting at Vevey. I had not the slightest idea of the Vevey meeting being defiled because these persons had deceived the assembly, and the assembly had received them in good faith; but if a meeting, knowingly and wilfully, accepts the wicked person it is not a new lump, if I am to believe 1 Corinthians 5. If the meeting judges the evil, or even if it has been admitted ignorantly—in such a case it may be that there has not been sufficient vigilance—but the assembly is not defiled, because the conscience has not been engaged in it. But if the evil is there, and brought to light, the assembly must shew itself pure in the matter, otherwise it is not a new lump; it is impure, none of the members call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, unless there is real ignorance of the fact; and this is true ad infinitum, two, or two million, meetings do not alter the matter. In every case the question is: Has the assembly, knowingly and wilfully, admitted what is impure? Has it willingly associated itself with that which is impure? If so, it is itself impure, and so are those forming it.

What Mr. O. wants, is, that if the assembly even is rejected, those coming from it, who are pure, should be admitted. So do I: however, the question is not that, but to know if those coming from it are pure, if they are knowingly associated with impurity. 1 Corinthians 5 settles the question. The word of God, in these last days, requires us to separate from evil— this is the clear, precise, and pointed instruction of 2 Timothy. An assembly such as we speak of will not do it, and we cannot go on together, and persons who are willingly in such a position are not what the apostle insists on, for walking together. It is not a question of re-establishing Christians, as a whole, in unity—a thing much to be desired in itself—but of being faithful to the Word and to the Lord in these last days.

Now, on another point, in connection with discipline, as to the independence of the assemblies, Mr. O. fully confirms what I say about it. Here are his words: “Every act of discipline in an assembly should be respected in the others, as long as one has no ground for considering it unlawful; but when one sees that a meeting has judged unjustly, then its decision is no longer binding on the other meetings.” “For my part, I could never submit to a discipline which I could not judge.” There is complete independence; Mr. O. is right in saying the assemblies should respect each other, but, as a natural and necessary consequence of having abandoned the primitive and only scriptural system, there is no joint responsibility. One respects the other when they are independent; one accepts when one thinks it is right, otherwise the discipline is in no way binding. Good people respect each other; if a man has been driven from the house, the other will reflect before receiving

him, but they are independent, and each one will do in his own house what he thinks proper. It is certain that it was not so at first. The church, being one, whoever was put out at Corinth, was put out of the church on earth. The church was united. It will be said I have already spoken of it; I repeat it, because it is the universal objection. I am bound by a judgment I disapprove of, you will say. Confess, at least, that you are independent, and that you want to judge for yourself, and only accept what you approve of. This is the system of independent churches, in contrast with that of one sole church—the only system found in Scripture. But because the church is one, every member is at liberty to object, and to communicate with those who act, though not claiming competence to judge, refuse, or receive, at will, but, as a member of the whole, acting also according to his gift. Paul and his companions did so here (Corinth), to urge on to discipline when this course was not desired. It may happen —as Mr. O. himself admits—that one rejects the discipline of an assembly; but then one entirely rejects the competency of this assembly to act in the name of the Lord. Mr. O.'s system is, then, the system of independent churches, which respect one another, but not the unity of the church; only he adds to it his own competency to act in his own right, to judge the verdict of the whole church himself, and upon his own authority to reject a person he may consider unsuitable for communion. He has added the clerical principle to the independent church principle; neither of them is found in the word, unless one assumes the rights of an apostle, which should be supported by the power of an apostle. My purpose is only to ascertain the principles.

Mr. O. may have found contradictory expressions in my writings, that the totality of the churches constitutes the church, and that the totality of the churches does not constitute the church. There is a contradiction in the form, but none in the intention of the phrases; I believe both. The one meant that all Christians, and the churches containing them, are not independent bodies, but one whole. The second meant that the churches do not compose this unity as a body corporate, but that individuals, and not local corporations, form the body of Christ. I fully believe both—Mr. O. also, as it appears.

I do not care to make further reply to remarks referring either to my labours or my writings. It is God who justifies and condemns. I know I am very incapable of doing as I would, but I can leave myself in His hands. The important question is: What is the church, and what is the Christian's course to be in the midst of these times of ruin? Must we give up scriptural principles as impracticable, as Mr. O. would have us do? Or must we humbly submit to His word, confident that God will never abandon those who seek to obey Him, and that the word of God, and the grace of the church's Head, suffice, and ever will suffice, at all times for those who are satisfied to walk in littleness, and unappreciated by the world?

There is still one idea I wish to point out. Mr. O. wants to keep himself free to join the dismembered church. I am united to all Christians as a member of one only body, and am happy to be united with them, wherever this would not call me from the path traced out in the Word. Disobedience is not communion, and communion is not to be found in disobedience. Some souls will be more scrupulous than others in this respect; each conscience

must be left free. I do not join the system I have left, and do not build up again what I destroyed, to make myself a transgressor, but I rejoice to meet every child of God in the path of obedience to His will, wherever it be. My reader will find that Mr. O. has added a word as to what makes the link of his churches. In Ms first pamphlet he said: “United by the same worship, by the same faith” — what evidently does not make them one, not recognising the unity of the church at all. Now he adds, “and by the same Spirit”; but this alters nothing; they are still independent churches respecting each other. It is not the one church; they are still separate associations, whether Mr. O. likes the word or not, and each one acts in its own sphere as an independent body, and the case being such, judges of the other’s discipline. The word, “and by the Spirit,” where it now stands, has hardly any sense, except it be an exceedingly vague one.

As for the passage out of Clement,5 Mr. O.’s remark leads me to the belief that he never thoroughly examined the passage, otherwise I should have to accuse him of insincerity, which I have no desire to do. It is impossible for him to have examined the passage, without coming across a word acknowledged by all as difficult, which, in reality, presents no difficulty, and for the sense of which one might even have done without Alexandre non-revised. I did not name the difficult word, and I spoke of another word with quite another object, as everybody can see. But if Mr. O. had looked up the passage, he would have seen it. Now, I suppose that the eleventh edition of Alexandre, and certainly Stephanus, Pape, etc., will give it a sense which is impossible to apply to its use by Clement, and no other, and he will find but little more than I have said of it in my pamphlet,

except that, I think, they quote Aelian also. Let us see if Mr. O. can enlighten us further as to its force. Such may well be. As for me, I have no time to make deeper researches, but I can only think, that, if he had searched the original, he would at least have encountered the difficulty.

To sum up, here is what is stated in the pamphlet that I have examined. By Mr. O.'s admission, the meetings he would like to establish are not set up on scriptural principles. The principle we follow, Mr. O. himself admits is the one recognised by the word, and which governed the path of the church as God established it, but it is impracticable, he says, to act on this principle at present. Having abandoned the principle of the unity of the church, he cannot meet on the principle of this unity. That is impracticable, and he forms independent churches, which respect one another, and mutually accept each other's discipline from each other, provided it be judged expedient, otherwise not. This is not the discipline of the church according to the promised presence of the Lord, but the discipline of a voluntary association, accepted, or not, according to circumstances. An assembly may admit sin or blasphemy, and the assembly not be defiled; the one who committed the sin is guilty; those who accepted him, and remained in fellowship with him, are clear of all defilement. Then the minister may exclude on his own authority. I admit that Mr. B. did not speak of the permission of sin in an assembly; he tries, as all the Bethesdaites, to hide facts under their common formula. "If there is a wicked person in an assembly," then this story of defilement communicated by one assembly to another; but it is only hiding facts; but the point is, when

the matter, being done wittingly—the sin, or blasphemy, knowingly and voluntarily admitted—whether the assembly is defiled, or not. Mr. O.'s system would entail the consequence that I might participate in the exclusion of a wicked person in one meeting, and take the Lord's supper with him in another.

It is also recognised by Mr. O., and this is a point gained, that Mr. N.'s doctrine has not been retracted, and that those who will not reject his tracts should be excluded. Now this is not what Bethesda did, and numbers of the neutrals, or intermediates—if Mr. O. prefers the word—have declared that one ought not to exclude. But I do not know what an intermediate position, between the worship of God and the acceptance or admission of blasphemy against the Lord, can be.

I have only to add, that Mr. O. has confounded the church corporate with the persons composing it. John speaks of the latter, but never of the church. On the other hand, he confuses it with the kingdom, but to discuss all this would lead me too far. It seems to me that all who have spiritual intelligence can discern that John 17 applies to a moral and spiritual union among Christians, and not to the idea of the body of Christ; besides, John always speaks thus—he speaks of individuals, not of corporations.

This is my reply to Mr. O. I have indeed done it in haste, my time being already well filled. You can use it as you may find good.

Yours ever affectionately,

J. N. D.

4 “What is the Unity of the Church?” (“Collected Writings, Vol. 20.)

5 See “Collected Writings,” Vol. 20.

## Is The “One Body” The Ground Of Gathering?

“Is the ‘one body’ of Ephesians 4:4 the divinely constituted ground of gathering? “A small paper with this title has been sent to me, signed C. E., initials with which I am not acquainted. The reply is very simple. It is. A very little attention to the passage itself and others which I shall cite, will prove it to every spiritual mind. It is, Christ being the centre and head, the great principle of gathering which has been the basis of those called Brethren, and has governed at any rate those of them intelligent in God’s ways from the beginning. I add intelligent, because a person may be recently converted, and be sealed and of the body and so have title to be there, though his knowledge be defective. I shall quote a few passages to shew this point very quickly, profiting by the attack made upon the principle, to keep the point before the minds of Christians, which it is always profitable to do. As to making it clear and proving it, it has been done, not only in tracts drawn from Scripture, but in discussions with Christians of various phases, National and Free Church, since it came up, and dissenters of all classes, mostly, but not exclusively so, in Switzerland some thirty years ago or more, but translated most or all of them, into English.

It is clear that the perfection of the body of Christ, united to the Head, will be in glory. This has been contested, however, on the plea that Scripture never speaks but of the body on earth. But it seems to me that the end of Ephesians 1 clearly teaches the supremacy of Christ over all things as Head of the body, as the counsel

of God in this respect. That was one extreme;6 the other is, that the unity of the body is not on earth, but only in heaven.

The tract confounds the kingdom with the church, quoting Matthew 13, as to tares being among the wheat. But this would deny all discipline; both are to grow together till the harvest. Final judgment would be the only putting out. This I may dismiss. It is simple nationalism or popery, no present gathering of saints at all.

It also confounds the house and husbandry of 1 Corinthians 3 with the body, which is not spoken of at all. We have a temple, that is, where God dwells, but in which there is no union with Him who dwells there. Here we have three cases. He who builds with God's materials; he who, himself a saint, builds with bad, and loses his labour; and he who seeks to corrupt and will be destroyed; but no thought of the body. The writer tells us the word church, or assembly, denotes in their collective character those who profess to have obtained salvation, as when Paul addresses his epistle to the church of God which is at Corinth. The example is an unhappy one, because the apostle states what he means by the church, and makes the difference of those who profess, though these are assumed to be genuine unless proved otherwise. The address of the apostle is as follows: "To the church of God, which is at Corinth, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." That is, universal profession and sanctified ones are clearly distinguished, the former looked at as composing the assembly at Corinth, and that by God's calling. And the difference is

maintained in the epistle; it is only in chapter 10 that the apostle comes to speak of the body.

Again we are told that in Acts 20, Paul speaks of grievous wolves entering into the church. Nothing of the kind. The church of God spoken of, is what is purchased with His own blood, I suppose the true church which belongs to Christ for ever, and which He will present to Himself. All we have is, that wolves would not spare the flock, from which true members of Christ might suffer, if they could not be lost. I suppose, feeding God's assembly was on earth, yet it is viewed as purchased by the blood of Christ. Now the church or assembly of God, here, though set up in perfection by God, was, as man, as Israel, as everything God has set up, placed under man's responsibility; and man, as he has already done and that the first thing, has failed. But that failure was not the principle on which it was set up, any more than sin was the principle of man's standing in creation, nor disobedience and idolatry the principle of Israel's standing under Sinai. In each case it was man spoiling what God had set up. Even in Matthew 13 (which I do not refer to as the church) it was an enemy's doing, while men slept. The opposite doctrine is what Jeremiah so sternly denounces: "We are delivered to do all these abominations." What the Lord did is clearly stated, Acts 2:47, "The Lord added daily such as should be saved."

Why does Paul say in the passage on which C. E. relies, "after my decease," but to shew that spiritual energy preserved what God had set up, as long as it was there? C. E. with his independent churches, and others, and I holding the unity of the body, all believe that the church on earth has been corrupted, and that in the last days perilous times would come. That is not the question; but,

is that corruption part of the divine principle of meeting, or a corruption which makes us guilty? Is it a part of the divine intention or man's fault? What I find in Scripture, in the seven churches C. E. refers to, is, that it ends in the terrible judgments of Thyatira, and being spued out of Christ's mouth as nauseous to Him, and the threat of judgment if they did not repent so soon as they left their first works. But what the author cites of Jude teaches us the same truth; certain men had "crept in unawares "; but creeping in unawares was not the principle upon which the saints were gathered, was not accepted as the order of the place. They were spots in their feasts of charity, feasting with those among whom they had crept. Enoch had prophesied of them. Nothing can be clearer than that they had nothing to do—their being there had nothing to do—with the principle of the gathering; they had crept in. Jude writes to them that are sanctified by God the Father. In John they were not in the assembly at all, but antichrists who had been in it, and were to be manifested that they were not of it.

Another objection, which is not new to me, is more plausible, and goes upon a certain borrowed acquaintance with Scripture, namely, that the unity of the body was not known till Paul taught it. Now, there was a time of transition of God's patience with the Jews, and Paul, called specially out to be the minister of the Gentiles, was the instrument in God's hands for unfolding the mystery of the union of Jews and Gentiles on the same footing. But God took care that it should not be a new, separate thing in its nature and essence. After Paul was called he was not allowed to begin the introduction of the Gentiles, and Peter insisted on this in Acts 15. He, not Paul, was the means of introducing

Cornelius, and C. E. confounds the existence of the thing and the development of the doctrine. Paul was the great instrument, both of promulgating the doctrine, and carrying it out in practice; a dispensation was committed to him. But God graciously took care to guard against the mistake of C. E. by employing Peter to begin publicly that work as a fact, and securing its stability by not allowing Paul to make good at Antioch the truth he had received; and the church remained one from the beginning. But what is its essence is much more important. The union of the body subsists from the day of Pentecost. It was established as to Gentiles, before Paul's ministry, at Cæsarea in the bright and godly centurion, and Paul, in God's wisdom, was not allowed to secure it among the Gentiles. That was to be done (where it was important to do it) among the Jews at Jerusalem. No doubt the union of Jew and Gentile was of importance, especially in those days; but it was not the essential principle of the body or its unity. That was union with Christ, the Head, by the Holy Ghost. That was what made the body and unity, and each Christian, so sealed, a member of Christ.

Was there no body of Christ till Paul spoke about the mystery? Yet, if the confusion made by C. E. between the existence of the body, and the knowledge of the mystery be accepted, there could not have been. Thousands have come into communion amongst those whom C. E. attacks, who know nothing but to cry Abba, Father, as sealed with the Spirit, and learn the mystery there. It is much to be desired that they should be intelligent as to it, and that they should know the place they are in. But I never heard of such being a term for communion. I suspect a very large number would have to be put out.

That it is as such the assembly meets, that the truth as to this is found in tracts and writings, is quite true. The writer does not mean to say that we should meet as if there were two churches of God on earth. Meeting on that principle, as an expression in common use, means quite a different thing. We cannot meet as being the one assembly, because a great number of Christians are outside of us, but we meet on the principle of that unity. It is this unity of the whole body on earth which C. E. denies. What a new believer is introduced into, is that unity which unquestionably existed in the beginning, and which we seek to realise as far as we can. Supposing I was to say that we meet on the principle that holiness becomes God's house. C. E. seems hardly to think so, but who would say that could not be the bond of union? Unity with the Head by the Holy Ghost is the only bond of union, but that produces the unity of the body of which we are thus all members. We meet with the conviction that the gathered saints were at the beginning the body of Christ, and members one of another, and as such all one on earth (does C. E. mean to say they were not?), and that we ought to seek to realise it. To be of the assembly as having the Holy Ghost, and to understand and explain it, are two things; to deny it, which is C. E.'s place, is a third. But his statement goes further. God formed the church—for it began down here—on the ground, according to his system, of there being evil in it, tares. They hold the church met on that principle; not that men crept in unawares, but that it is the principle they are united on. Now holiness is not what binds us, nor the principle of unity, yet the assembly meets as composed of those who are sanctified, called saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, on that principle, and as all one (all saints are one body),

and we seek to realise it as far as we can. The principle or ground of gathering is that of all saints being one in Christ, and as such forming the one church of God on earth. Christians had lost this principle, and it has been recovered; hence much, and rightly, put forward.

I shall now shew, that what Scripture presents to us is a body on earth, formed on earth as Christ's body, the Head being in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Let my reader look at I Corinthians 12:12 to the end. It is perfectly impossible for a man in his senses not to recognise a body on earth. The apostle compares it to our natural body: we have body and members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body; the body is not one member, but many. But C. E. will say that this is in heaven. But, unfortunately, it is by one Spirit we are baptised into one body: now this was on earth. "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." They were to tarry at Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon them. It was one of the two great characters of Christ's work. He it is that baptised with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God came down to earth and formed one body before Paul was called. If anything need be added, it is found here, verse 25: and there was to be no schism in the body, the members were all to have the same care one for another; if one member suffered, all the members suffered with it, or one member were honoured, all the members rejoiced with it. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular; and God hath set some in the church, etc…" Will C. E. tell me which of these gifts are to be exercised in heaven? The whole passage is as clear as language can make it, that there is a body on earth formed by the

Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and recognised on earth with these words, “so also is Christ.” Chapter 10:17 does not refer to the connection of the heathen with idols, or Jews with the altar. It is used in reference to this as the basis of the argument. “For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The same principle is recognised as known truth in Romans 12, “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” And all that follows applies to the saints down here exclusively. It is now (Eph. 3:10) that the manifold wisdom is to be made known by the church to principalities and powers in heavenly places, the Gentiles being a joint body. So in chapter 4, the very verse cited by C. E. It is exhortation to us now to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit, and what we are called to is still a hope, as the verse itself says. It will be said, “But the hope of the calling is glory with Christ above.” Undoubtedly, but it will then have ceased to be a hope; it is when we have been called and have it as a hope (for we are saved in hope) that there is one body and one Spirit; there is that, as there is one faith and one baptism. The whole passage plainly shews that it is the present time, the time when the Spirit is personally down here, and faith has its place—hence the apostle speaks of the edifying of the body of Christ, “till we all come,” etc. Hence C. E. cannot speak so; He has given these ministries, not for the edifying of the body, as Scripture speaks, but “the members of His body on earth.” He has lost the great truth, that God has revived in these last days that presence of the Holy Ghost down here. He confounds the kingdom of heaven with the church and the body of Christ, and so will have

tares in it, and tares to remain in it till harvest. In Scripture, “an enemy has done it.”

I find in this same passage, Ephesians 4:15, 16, “Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” A husband is to love his wife as the Lord loves and cherishes the church, for we are members of His body. The only other passages, as far as I am aware, are Colossians 1:18, and 3:15. The former does not help us one way or the other, saying Christ is the head of the body, save as far as shewing, a remark that has its importance, that the apostle does not make the difference C. E. does. The latter passage clearly applies to earth as a present exhortation to peace; it shews clearly, as I said, that as to the unity of the body the apostle makes no distinction between the calling of God in its responsible effectuation now, and its sure divine effectuation when all is complete in result. There is one passage which speaks of it in this result, that is, takes in this view, Ephesians 1:22, 23, but even so—looks at the church as an existing thing. I have not to complain of the spirit in which the leaflet is written, but I am surprised in realising the complete loss of truth by those to whom the writer belongs.

I add a few supplementary words, to shew how this evil system destroys the whole idea of the church of God. First I would remark, that Christ gave Himself to gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad. Now I admit that this is not properly

the body. John never speaks of the body. But it is unity, and it is down here, for those who were scattered will all be one any way up in heaven. Their being scattered abroad down here makes no difference as to that; there is no scattering there; yet whereas they were scattered, they were now to be gathered. This unity is ignored by C. E. The word ‘church,’ says C. E., denotes in their collective character those who profess, whereas in Scripture it is certainly not so at the founding of Christianity. There the Lord added daily7 such as should be saved. Further, who added? The Lord. Did He add mere professors? That such crept in ere many years were past we know. So later, “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” C. E. does not believe in a divine gathering at all at any time. God does not gather professors. And here the language is not quite honest. The writer says: “they (who profess to have obtained salvation) compose the assembly or assemblies.” Which? for they are not the same thing. Hence the assembly is slipped out directly, and we read, “the church of God which is in Corinth,” “the seven churches in Asia.” Hence we read (page 3) that Christ, in His love and care for the members of His body on earth, provides for their edification, through various ministries and gifts of the Holy Ghost. But this does not alter the character of the assembly, whether in Corinth or Ephesus. He then speaks of evangelists as having their service outside the assembly, while gifts of healing were intended to meet the physical needs of men as men. All very well if we do not go to Scripture, but the assembly is wholly lost, save to say that the service of the evangelist is outside it. But where were the gifts, whether their service were in or out of the assembly, or for men as men? Here is the answer of Scripture: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and

members in particular; and God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues," not all in a church, but in the church—the assembly. Nothing can be more clear or definite. Evangelists are not there. The gifts are viewed simply as the power of the Spirit. In Ephesians 4 we find only gifts of edification, and they are attributed to the gift of Christ, in His care for the church, His body. There, there are evangelists: "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"—even the evangelists, for though they served in the world, they did not leave the fruits of their service there; they were brought into the church, never into a church, but into the church. And then pass on to verses 15, 16, "but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love." Can anything be clearer or more definite?

But this passage leads me to the remark that this distinction, of what is here from what is in heaven, is destructive of the whole nature of Christianity, and the holiness that belongs to it. I have clearly shewn from Scripture that the word of God speaks of the body on earth, that its unity is there, its members are Christ's members,8 and members one of another. But I go further, and add that while, as was predicted, the church

on earth has corrupted itself, the blessing that God had established being confided to man in responsibility,9 yet to separate the two in faith is to destroy not only the scriptural idea of a church, but the whole divine principle of holiness, individually and collectively. Our calling is heavenly, our hope is heavenly, our standard of walk only heavenly. Not seeing this was the source of the folly of the perfectionists. There is no goal, no measure of attainment down here. They took the deliverance of Romans 8 for perfection. The Christian has no goal of attainment but Christ in glory. If faithful, he does that one thing, runs to win Christ, and by any means to attain to that first resurrection; that produces the effect, so far as it operates, of walking like Christ down here. The believer's conversation (his living associations) is in heaven; he looks for Christ to change his body and conform it to Christ's glorious body. We say therefore, with Paul to the end, "not as though I had already attained," but we have no other measure of attainment, and he who best knows Christ, best knows how far he is from having attained. Every step of progress enables him to see more clearly what Christ is and how far he is from it. But there is no other goal, no other measure known or given. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.

Now it is the knowledge of this glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost which is the formative power of holiness. This I proceed to shew from Scripture. God chastises us (Heb. 12:10) that we may be partakers of His holiness. Hence, in a very remarkable passage in 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 13, "and the Lord make you to increase and

abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Where is the difference for faith between our responsible state here and our presentation before God our Father there? How far we realise it, is another and important question; but the measure and principle is the same, or rather, blessed be His name, all one. And this is wrought by the revelation of Christ to our souls by the Holy Ghost, and Christ as He is in glory. Hence He says: "For their sakes I sanctify myself [set myself apart as the glorified man in heaven] that they also might be sanctified through the truth." And this is as clearly taught as possible. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John 3. Again, "We, beholding with open [unveiled, alluding to Moses' veil] face the glory of the Lord, are changed from glory to glory, into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord." All this is as clear as possible. There are not two holinesses; we cannot say, any of us, that we have attained, but our conversation is in heaven; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall bear the image of the heavenly. There is no other goal after which we run: our object is to grow up to Him who is the Head in all things, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. And note well here, this is not the question of our acceptance in Christ. There, there is no growth. As to that we say, "As he is so are we in this world."

It will be said, “But this is individual.” I admit it. I quote it to shew the principle on which God deals with us as regards our responsible state in this world. Being made partakers of the divine nature, having the risen and glorified Christ as our life, and the revelation of this glorified Christ by the Holy Ghost, we cannot look at anything as goal of attainment but that glorified Christ; and as He could say being a divine Person “the Son of man who is in heaven” —making, and in Him perfectly, His life, what it was down here—so we (united to Him in glory, sitting in heavenly places in Him, and the Holy Ghost revealing what eye has not seen nor ear heard nor entered into the heart of man to conceive) take the affections, spirit, self-denial, practical realisation of what answers to Him in glory, as the motive and measure of a holy walk here; and thus, he that saith he is in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked. Hence it is said “Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us, a sacrifice and offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” “Hereby know we love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” And in this chapter of the Ephesians referred to, the other essential name of God is taken, Light, and we are declared to be light in the Lord, and are to walk as children of light; and if our poor eyes have drooped in sleep, and we are lying among the dead, we are called to awake from sleep and Christ shall give us light. Our life is hid with Christ in God; we have no other measure than what He is.

There is not one holiness for heaven, and another for this world, as 1 Thessalonians 3:13 so remarkably teaches. We have our treasure in an earthen vessel,

know in part, see through a glass darkly, but the treasure, what we know and what we see, is one and the same. Eternal life is the end, but it is eternal life we have, but that life is Christ, the present Christ. “He that hath the Son, hath life”; then we shall have it as He is, but it is not another. I repeat he who is nearest to Him by faith, in whose heart Christ dwells, knows best how dear he is to Him, but how far he is from Him as an object of attainment. But he has not two Christs, but one. This is the principle of Scripture. We are in Christ as to acceptance, and Christ in us as present life, and the hope of glory before us; our path, as we are yet in the body, is always to bear about there the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

This principle would involve the church on high and below being but one, though here hindered by weakness in a responsible condition as individuals are. There is really no difference, but happily we are not left to draw conclusions on the subject. The word of God is formal and positive on the subject. “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” C. E. may say this means the members. Of course it takes place in the members, though collectively too; but the church that was loved, and that will be presented to Christ without blemish—the assembly that was loved and for which He gave Himself, the church that will be presented without a wrinkle by Christ to Himself—is the church that He has sanctified down here in time by the word. The same

thing is expressly taught in chapter 4 already quoted, except that it is also called His body, Christ being the Head, to whom we are to grow up; verse 16 specifically presenting the present operation in grace, and the increase of the body by the effectual working in the measure of every part; so that it is impossible to separate that body of which Christ is the Head, from that which grows and edifies itself here—and the whole body, and an edified and increasing body. There is but one. Nothing can be more specific, positive, and formal.

Even as to a particular assembly, this as owned of God, is not as C. E. states. As such its members are not viewed as professors, but as to be presented blameless before Christ. In Corinth, blamed in all its ways, so bad that the apostle could not go there, he says, “Ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.” That was their present calling, that their final state, called into His fellowship (kotnonian, to partake of His state) now, and blameless in it there. The beginning of the epistle to the Ephesians largely confirms this principle. In chapter 1, from verses 3 to 8, what time is it that is presented to us? When are we holy and without blame before Him in love? It is evidently the thought of God about us. Is it something else we are to realise now? And is what is here, the spiritual blessings with which God hath blessed us, only for the heavenly places, and our calling different now?

I admit surely the difference of realisation in human responsibility by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the

perfect accomplishment by divine power when Christ shall come and change our body of humiliation, conforming it to His glorious body, when we shall be to the praise of His glory; but there are not two things. It is spoken of in itself: “to the glory of His grace” now, “to the praise of His glory” when all is perfected. And so in what follows as to the church. It is presented as in the purpose of God, with this much accomplished that Christ is set at His right hand in heavenly places, and the result is there stated as part of the same thing; “though we see not as yet all things put under him.” But in what follows He takes care to shew that “we are quickened with him,” according to the same power which raised Him from the dead where He lay for our sins in which we were dead, “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.” Is this present or not? he does not say “with Christ,” but “in Him,” but this is to shew in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Is that of which He speaks, as shewing in coming ages the exceeding riches of His grace, a different thing from that which He has wrought now? But this is identified with “head to the church, his body.” I admit fully it will be accomplished in glory. We have the spirit of adoption now; we wait for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body. But I close.

The word of God is perfectly clear, and the identity of what is revealed and discerned by the Holy Ghost with what will be revealed in us, is seen to be of the very essence of Christianity, as Scripture presents it in its fulness. It is the very meaning of the phrase “we are saved in hope,” and “though now we see Him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the

end of our faith, the salvation of [our] souls." A church of professors denies that it is the church of God. He does not form one of the professors, that is quite clear. The thought is next door to blasphemy. The system denies Christian responsibility, and that the professing church will be judged for its unfaithfulness. It falsifies the nature of holiness, and Christ's present relation to the church. There is no bride to say "Come!" No purity according to what there will be then, as in Thessalonians, or according to what Christ is now as in 1 John 3. No recognition of the predicted corruption of the church, for even now we have to walk with those who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. If it were to be a church of professors, and God would have it so, how many are to be allowed? That such may creep in unawares nobody denies, but the theory is that this is what God owns, His church on earth; that we are not to purify ourselves from vessels to dishonour, or go outside the camp.

For one thing I am thankful to C. E.: he has clearly brought out what has been really at stake in the painful questions which have lately exercised the saints he blames, in London, and which all have felt. It is because this was in question, without my having an unkindly feeling toward a human being, that I took my stand in the matter. The whole testimony of the unity of the body, and even of our heavenly calling was at stake, and in great danger, I admit too. Many of the brethren were much more immediately in the conflict than myself, and I thank God for giving them to be faithful in it; and while, I dare say, all was not perfect wisdom, God sustained them in grace. I speak thus as personally distinct, because I was almost all the time out of the country. But

C. E. by his tract shews what was at stake, the whole special testimony of God as distinct from gospel truths as to pardon. As to this I say no more. If my reader wished to see where man's responsibility is taught, where the church is viewed as the house or temple, he must turn to I Corinthians 3, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon! "

I should never have replied to this tract, but that it offered an opportunity of shewing from Scripture the real character of the church now, and its identity for faith—though placed here under man's responsibility (save God's infallible grace)— with the church and spouse on high; and that Christians were bound to recognise and act on this, and so responsible for the state C. E.'s church of professors is in; and that even present individual holiness cannot be separated in its measure from what it will be in glory. All that is there, is brought down here now, as that which we are in the new creation and by the Holy Ghost, and according to which we are to live, and seek withal the unity of the Spirit.

I recognise that the brethren in question were well nigh in utter failure. I trust, humbled before Him, we may be allowed to maintain better than ever the holy testimony of God. As to the one who gathers, it is a present power here, the Holy Ghost. As to the centre to which they are gathered, it is Christ; but that makes all saints one, and on that principle they meet.

6 There is really only one church spoken of in Scripture, though the state be different in heaven and on earth; but of this further on.

7 I do not add “church,” as the reading is generally rejected. I quote for the character of those gathered, also who were the gathered.

8 I have not cited the latter part of Ephesians 5:30, as probably the words are not genuine. Nor “to the church” (Acts 2:47), for the same reason.

9 So it ever has been since Adam, the first thing man has always done being to fail, while God’s patient goodness has continued till the time of judgment came.

## New Lump

It may be well to state directly from Scripture what the new lump is, as it is now so much spoken of. Such a thing as leaving an assembly to be a new lump is not thought of in Scripture. I may have to leave an assembly on other grounds; but it is not what is spoken of here. The assembly of God is looked at in its true nature as an unleavened body; thus we are called upon to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. And as leaven had got in, they were called on to purge out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump as they were unleavened. The discipline applied to all, the putting out all leaven, that the assembly, as a whole, might be a new lump. Thus, there is no such thing as leaving to be a new lump. The only new lump contemplated, is the whole assembly purified by putting out leaven—the passage is as clear as possible. The great body of the saints is everywhere to be a new lump.

But, as I have referred to the currency of these questions, it is well to notice another element in operation, more moral, and wider in realisation. The discussions at London Bridge had given rise to the most widespread distrust of various brethren; the feeling being—I am in communion with B., as I am of them, and thus in communion with positive evil; and getting away from evil governed the heart, and wide distress existed. Now, here, I fully recognise, was real trial; he who names the name of Christ was to depart from iniquity; yet these brethren were corporately connected with unfaithfulness. I do not identify a person bearing the name of Christ, and individually walking badly, and

ecclesiastical connections with those who do. Actual right is right, and wrong wrong; still, it is very unsatisfactory to the heart and conscience to be in full confessed communion with evil; and as the evil thing judged was allowed to exist by those immediately concerned, their consciences were not at their ease. Many thought of leaving brethren. I had been in the deepest degree exercised by the very question; I agreed with them as to their judgment of the evil. But I did not think desertion was the remedy; it did not remedy the evil—satisfied, perhaps, the individual conscience, but left the saints to their fate. I not only felt the evil was not remedied, but could not be, humanly speaking. But there was another difficulty: the door was closed against the interference of those who might have sought to apply one. Still, I felt the Lord had not given up His people, and it was not my place to flee as an hireling. I was accounted an unfaithful person by those disposed to leave; but, while I sympathise with those disposed to leave, as having personally done with evil, I do not think it was the path of faith. I trusted God for His testimony; I do not find it has been in vain.

There was a third principle of extra excellence which prevailed, under the popular name of Cluffism, which professed this superiority, and does, where it still holds its ground. It took a very high ground, carrying up to the third heaven, and making the Christ who is there, as communicated in all He is there to us, to be divine righteousness, though I always found it filled people with themselves. But the truth is, its origin was a filthy, carnal mysticism, not unfolded to all, but was such, that one of its adepts admitted it could not be propounded in a mixed company, where females were present. I know

this was professed to be given up, but I doubt, from what I have heard, that it is thoroughly. But it is certain that from out of this resulted a pretension of a special remnant, brethren (so called) being Laodicean. This was based, too, on theories, and all sorts of theories, as to Philadelphia. The theories I believe to be all delusion. First, the four last churches all go on to the end, and what is found is a general estimate of the church by Christ, and of its result, with a promise to him who overcame, in the circumstances in which the church was. It is a mistake to think that the churches passed, by a kind of natural sequence, from one into the other.

But having taken up the proposed remedies for a low state of things—my reader may have noticed three—the first, some “silly women” plan of a new lump, clean contrary to the whole sense of the passage; secondly, conscience justly at work, but faith failing as to trusting Christ’s faithfulness in taking care of His, and His testimony; and, thirdly, Cluffism, full of pretension and want of self-knowledge (though I fully admit several dear people got among them, misled by its promises of more spirituality, which suited itself more to their cravings). Still, two of the principal adepts of the system at Edinburgh, and a third at Cork, were put out for immoral conduct. Of that I think worse than I did, for, though wild, I thought it honest, which I do not now, as a system. But having briefly reviewed these, I add the new lump, as given in Scripture, as the great point for believers—that is, the application of the divine principles of truth and holiness, and devoted-ness in testimony to the whole body of testimony-bearers; for that is the very force of the new lump. It might seem premature to speak of the company of testimony-bearers, but I do not

believe it. I believe there are details to be carried out of God, but He does very much of it by the faithful testimony-bearing; but what He looks for now, is, not occupation with evil, but the springing up of testimony in grace—plants of the Lord’s planting by clear shining after rain.

## Christ And Sanctification

Editor's Note10

My Dear Brother,

I fully recognise a deliverance, and have for fifty years, having then got it—a deliverance which the evangelical world denies; and Pearsall Smith admitted in his last tract that all he meant by the “better life,” was passing from Romans 7 into chaps. 6 and 8; which is what I insisted on. My tract on cleansing with water goes into this. It is the passing from being under law, or the reference of acceptance to our state by redemption wrought in Christ, and experimentally known by the sealing of the Spirit, into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; indeed it is one special ministry in which I have been blessed, and on that deliverance I should insist.

Further, it is a subject to be treated delicately, lest any should comfort themselves with the thought that you are content they should stay in the state spoken of in Romans 7, a supposition I should earnestly oppose. I do not think it is a Christian state at all: it is a man born again, but under the law, the state under the first husband. The deliverance is found in chapter 8, or more exactly the state of one delivered. But my objection to the Wesleyan system, is, that it falsifies the whole Christian state as presented in Scripture; and, as to Dr. C, there is scarcely one definition or position right or scriptural, and all so loose and incoherent, that it is difficult to deal with.

Perfection is simply, as used in respect of man, being of full growth, neither more nor less in Greek. It is the word used in Hebrews 5, “them that are of full age,” and referred to in Hebrews 6:1. The question is, what is the perfection held out to us in the New Testament?

All our blessings are in connection with the second Man, not with the first. “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” We are predestinated “to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”; and the effect of this, as to our present state and hopes, is seen in 1 John 3, “Beloved, now are we sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” Hence a thought of perfection down here is foreign to the whole thought and scope of Christianity; lowers its standard, and, note—it is not makes “mistakes in judgment,”11 etc., but “purifieth himself even as he is pure.”

Reference to innocence, or the first Adam as innocent, is a ruinous mistake as to the whole nature of Christianity. That wholly refers to the second Man. Innocence has gone for ever with the entrance of the knowledge of good and evil. Holiness is the character of the new man, likeness to Christ, as He is the object set out before us: and this only, and being with Him, the object we run after. This “one thing I do “j it is that, and that only, goal, that is before us, never fully attained till He has changed our vile body, and fashioned it like His glorious body.

The apostle denies all other object in his race; this “one thing I do”; and mark, this was his calling; first, that he might win Christ, not as life and station— that he had— but Himself; next, that he might attain to the resurrection from among the dead. He pressed towards the hope of his “calling (not “high,” which is vague) above, of God in Christ Jesus”: hence the apostle does not leave the subject without bringing in the changing the vile body. This object, sole object and goal of progress, leaves us always with the only end we aim at unattained here: we are always, not correcting “mistakes,” but” purifying ourselves as he is pure.”

The perfect, or full-grown, Christian is one who in faith is in the place that is ours in the purpose of God, one not merely knowing that Jesus is the Christ, and that his sins are forgiven him, but that he is in Christ before God, dead and risen with Him. Forgiveness refers to the works of the old man, to sins committed: perfection, to the new place into which we are entered in the second Man, to the actual possession of which we press forward, to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us. This is the teaching of Philippians 3. Christ is our life; He has laid hold of us for that, and we are pressing forward towards it: there is no other object before us.

Romans 1 to 5:11 treats of forgiveness and justification as regards our sins and guilt; chapter 5:12 to the end of chap. 8, our new place in Christ; and though it does not speak of our resurrection with Him, makes Christ our life, and we in Him, and He in us. The last is deliverance; the ground in chapter 6; the state in chapter 8; the bearing of the law on a soul renewed, not yet possessing the deliverance, is described in chapter 7. The full-grown Christian, one who has apprehended

his place as such in Christ, has his conversation (all his living associations) in heaven as a new creature, and presses forward for the possession of it, only must wait for the changing of this poor vile body, but can have no other goal.

There is another point which makes all this system false. There is no communication of a new life, which Adam innocent had not, did not need. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Of this Wesleyanism knows nothing; the man is changed by the operation of the Holy Ghost. But what Scripture says is, “He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.” “Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear.” Both these things, the new life, and the only true calling, are left out in the system and in the tract, and change the whole form and system of Christianity. I do not call a person in Romans 7 properly a Christian; he is born of God, under the law, like the prodigal before he met his father.

But I turn to the definitions. All is wrong: conviction and repentance come before faith. Now if the Word had not reached the conscience, how was he convicted, and how did he repent? Nor is even conviction, that (save in the vaguest way) of “his undone condition,” but of his guilt, and so danger of judgment. His state is a distinct thing, and a deeper lesson. One refers to what we have in Romans 1 to chap. 5:11—all the world guilty by their own sins; the other to man’s state by Adam’s disobedience, as to which I discover that in me there is no good thing, and that the flesh cannot be subject to the will of God.

In repentance there is a change of mind, but there is no firm resolve to take any steps at all:12 that is a sign of its being untrue or superficial, though it may follow. Repentance is the self-judgment we pass upon ourselves in view of God's goodness, and refers to what we have done, not to what we shall do. As to his account of faith, 13 it is so muddled, that it is hard to say anything of it. It is not the acceptance of God's mercy in Christ Jesus: it is, "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." It is the word of God brought home to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost: it is then mixed with faith in those that hear it. Whenever what God presents to us in the Word is believed (as when Christ personally present here on earth was believed in as God's revelation of Himself and His mind to the soul), the testimony of God is received, "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God," which works effectually in them that believe. Peter's sermon told the Jews what they had done, and God had done, to Christ, and then, on their being pricked in heart, so that they believed God's testimony as to that, he announced forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit.

The particular subject of faith is not faith itself, nor is it the acceptance of anything, but believing the testimony, and here in a divine way by the word. All the rest is without any authority of the Word, or indeed any sense. "The grace of faith or power of believing! "What is that when nothing is yet believed, for the act of faith comes afterwards? Yet he contradicts even his own distinction, for we are accountable for the faith which He has given to us, and this is so in the case when it is he that believeth not. That man is accountable, as in John 5, on

adequate evidence from God, I fully own; but all this statement is an utter muddle.

Next, right and necessary as repentance is, justification is never referred to it.14 The end of the sentence may have a right use, which I therefore accept; but “his sins” leave it vague whose. The next is all confusion and error. 15 What is his whole spiritual nature before its renovation? “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God,” “is not subject to the law of God,” cannot be; lusts against the Spirit when we have it; requires a thorn, a messenger of Satan, to keep it down, if a man has been in the third heaven. Does what is renewed and revolutionised require buffeting by Satan’s messenger to keep it down?

I must ask, too, was repentance a mere change of mind, and conversion a change of heart, and a distinct thing? Is all this before, what he calls, regeneration—a word he does not explain? Does he really mean a new life, something he had not before, a new man contrasted with the old, something born of the Spirit which is spirit? Is there renovation without being born again? Is this being born again a new spiritual life he had not before, or a mere change? Is the eternal life that Christ is (as come down from heaven, i John i) and gives, a mere change, or a new thing conferred? All turns on this. The eternal life which I receive was with the Father; is that a mere change?

His explanation of adoption16 is not correct, but not such as needs large remark. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body, but we are sons by faith of Jesus Christ, and receive therefore the spirit of adoption. All this comes from their not seeing

that our only place in result is association with Christ in glory, though we here wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

It is worthy of remark, that though the atonement is mentioned in an early part of the series as ground for experience, the blood of Christ, in its efficacy with God, is never mentioned: it is a sinner experiences this and that. Nor is there a hint of our being in Christ, or the righteousness of God in Him; nor indeed of God's love to the sinner when he was in his sins.

All believers are said to be sanctified—sanctification as all the rest of the blessings, being through faith. I do not only recognise, but insist on, the gift of a holy nature (but I do not see hinted at, Christ being our life); a nature which hates sin; and I see progress and growth taught and insisted on in the word of God, but I find no such statement as is here made. Where is "holiness" taught to be "sanctification in perpetuity"? Holiness as a quality is heart purity, not implies it, but it is according to the divine nature: He chastens us that we may be partakers of His holiness.

'Freedom from sin' is an ambiguous term in English, and this ambiguity is used here. A captive is set free: a horse is free from vice, that is, has none. Now in the last sense we are never said to be free from sin: set free, not from sin, but from the law of sin and death, with a real, true deliverance, we are said to be. It will be said: Is it not written, "He that is dead is freed from sin"? Now the word is really "justified from sin" as you may see in the margin.

But I turn directly to the statement: who is freed from sin? He that is dead, no one else: death of the old man

alone frees me. Are we to wait, then, till we are actually dead, that there should be no sin in us? If you mean that there should be death in the nature of the old man— “sin in the flesh”—I say certainly; but to be dead, we must die. But that is not the doctrine here, save quite in the abstract. We are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, as having been crucified with Christ, yet living, but not we, but Christ living in us. Before this, we are captive to the law of sin in our members—not the full, true Christian state: now, as having by faith reckoned ourselves dead to sin, and alive unto God, we are not in Adam, but in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”; not free from sin, so that there is no sin in the flesh, but made free from its law. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”; but it is now no law to us. Romans 8:2 answers, as deliverance from it, to chapter 7:23; the way of it is in chapter 8:4.

I totally deny17 the utterly false definition of sin given in this paragraph. Paul made a great fuss about nothing in Romans 7, if that be what sin is. It certainly was not voluntary, for the point insisted on (is), that he was doing what he would not, and hated. He was not delivered, but to will was present with him, but he could not perform; he was a captive. Besides, it is written, “Until the law sin was in the world,” it became exceedingly sinful by it; and they that have sinned without law, perish without law. All this is false theology, not scripture.

But the new man being denied as a distinct thing, he makes it a mere state of the heart; whereas Scripture speaks of sin in the flesh, a mind which cannot be

subject to the law of God; and the lusts of the flesh, sin working lust in us, flesh lusting against the Spirit, a thing which ceases by death, only actually by actual death, as to its present power, by reckoning ourselves dead, and always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; death working in us, and that, that the fife of Jesus might be manifested in our bodies. Why death working in us, if there was nothing to be kept down? We are not under the law of sin; not only have we a new life in power, but sin in the flesh is condemned (not forgiven) in the cross, and we have died with Christ for faith there; but to make this good, we must carry about the dying; death must work in us.

Further, Christ's grace is sufficient for us. His strength is made perfect in weakness; and God, as to our walk, is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able, so that we have no excuse when we do fail, and can walk, as far as sufficiency of grace goes, in growing joy in God. Further, holiness has nothing to do with freedom from guilt; that is, by the blood of Christ. To have part in this, a man must be born again, but holiness does not efface guilt. The deliverance we get does deliver us from its dominion, but not from the existence of the flesh; hence the standard of holiness is always lowered by those who pretend to it.

I do not deny walking in constant communion with God. I do not believe Romans 7 the true state of a Christian at all; but to say sin is not in the flesh, is not opposed to the Spirit, is wholly anti-scriptural. There is a sealing and anointing with the Holy Ghost, which delivers from the dominion of sin, but does not alter the nature of the flesh. I deny Adam was created in a state of holiness:

Scripture never says so. He was innocent, and had not the knowledge of evil: there was a tendency to sin.

Scripture says, “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light, having no part dark.” The tract says we are liable to false perceptions, etc., because of imperfect physical organisation.18 Does want of a single eye come physically from the body? All this lowers the idea of holiness. They deny that in many things we all offend, and what Christ ascribes to want of a single eye they excuse, and make compatible with the original condition of moral purity in which unfallen man was: growing conformity to Christ in glory, by purifying ourselves as He is pure, doing this one thing, never enters their mind.

It is false to say He will not reign in a divided heart: Christ’s statement is totally different, and indeed contradicts this. He does not reign at all there.19 “The will of God, even your sanctification,” is an abuse of the passage (1Thess. 4:3); the end of it is left out, which totally alters the sense. Peter says, “holy in all manner of conversation.”

The blood of Christ cleansing from all sin is also an abuse of the passage. John is speaking of sins and righteousness in a passage which declares, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” It is a question of our standing before God in the light, while we cannot say we have no sin. I am sanctified and cleansed j though I fully insist on walking by grace up to the place I am in—but not in lowering God’s holiness and my thought of what sin is, by pretending to be as pure as Adam, and talking about physical organisation when I fail. Had Adam any lusts?

I fully recognise the power of the Spirit of God to keep us in peaceful communion with God in love, but will not lower the standard of holiness to excuse what is of the flesh. It is not without meaning that the author quotes only the Old Testament for his promises, where we know the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, and the question of purity is quite different. One has only to consult the passages to see they have nothing to do with it. It is the removal of evil men and wickedness by judgment, in Isaiah 1:25. In Ezekiel 36:25, it is the cleansing of Israel from filthiness and idols when they are restored, and making them walk in His ways, with no word of absolute internal purity of soul. The Lord's allusion to it with Nicodemus is not a state of perfection, but being born again.

If the Spirit be distinctly the sanctifier (p. 10), as distinguished from the blood-cleansing, why did he use before the latter for meaning sanctification? 'Convicted for sanctification,' I find nothing of in Scripture; I deny the very state they speak of (which is a mere ignorant confusion with the deliverance of Romans 8), as being what the Christian is running after. He has Christ glorified for his standard, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, and judges as sin what they excuse.

The whole system naturally takes them out of grace: they must be absorbed by the idea of attainment, and the consecrating act is our own. That we should yield ourselves to God, as those alive to God, is blessedly scriptural, and have fruit unto holiness with the end—not a state of holiness, but everlasting life; but it is the peaceful consciousness of a delivered soul who feels the claim of infinite love, and that it is not its own, but

bought with a price. Here we are ‘to do all we can,’ even when dead in sins, whereas Scripture says, then we are quickened, created in Christ Jesus. We are, when dead, to ‘surrender ourselves to be saved,’ a thing never said in scripture; we are to submit to God’s righteousness. And now mark the phrase, ‘measurably quickened.’ Are they born of God, or not? Have they life, eternal life? ‘There is some life in them.’ Those to whom Paul writes are viewed as having the old man crucified with Christ, and alive in Him; and what they are called to is, not to dream there is no sin in them, when there is, and call lusts no sin unless the will consents, but not to let sin reign in their mortal body, to fulfil it in its lusts. For sin should not have dominion over them, because they were not under law, but under grace, and, as alive and set free withal from the law of sin, given the blessed privilege, as being so, to yield themselves to God. It is a lovely passage, but exactly the contrary of what is stated in the tract. It is a freed man blessedly giving himself to God; not a man wanting to be free, able to do something, as having some life, to get free in another sense, altogether free from sin, a sense not in Scripture at all. It is Christ, not his own faith, nor repentance, nor prayer, that justifies the sinner; albeit the repentance, the faith, the prayer, are all necessary to the bestowment of the pardon. He puts this on wholly wrong ground, but I do not dwell on it.

The whole position of Adamic purity is false, never found again here; and not the object, which is the state of the last Adam, not of the first. But what has, “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,” to do with perfect holiness? The apostle is speaking of an unequal

yoke, and the manifested acceptance of faithful Christians in the position of sons. He talks of self-consecration, of being accepted of God; he does not know what it means, nor the liberty in which a Christian serves. We are Christ's. He tells us, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," is the baptism by the Holy Ghost. Now Christ is careful to tell His own they were already clean by the word, when they had not yet received the Holy Ghost at all, of which He goes on to speak to them as of something to come. The constant abuse of scripture is really deplorable.

Then he tells us that by the baptism of the Holy Ghost the soul is freed from the dominion of sin. Now this I fully admit, but free from dominion of sin, and freed from sin, so as to be pure as Adam, are two different things. "Victory" is anything but the absence of an enemy. The life of a Christian is a life of faith, moment by moment, but his being purged from his sins by Christ's blood is once and for ever, if Scripture be true. He did not sit down on the throne on high till "he had by himself purged our sins," or, as it is said in Hebrews 9, "must he often have suffered"; but, as to the conscience, "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," so that "the worshippers once purged "should, as to imputation, "have no more conscience of sins," but "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Then let the believer, knowing that his old man has been crucified with Christ, seek to grow up to Him who is the Head in all things, and walk as Christ walked, "changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." The evil one cannot touch him, if he walks with Christ in lowliness and diligence of heart, "always bearing about in the body the

dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

I would press his believing in deliverance, if he has not found it, but not excuse evil, and the workings of the flesh within, to maintain a fancied purity and absence of sin, instead of judging himself for not having been enough with Christ to prevent it stirring, and purifying himself, as Scripture tells him to do, as Christ is pure, because he knows he is going to be like Him.

The other tract—though I doubt not the sincerity of either— is more mature, and goes further; but with more light, the root of bitterness still there. I agree with it that the only normal state of Christians is what they call perfection, but this is merely the deliverance of Romans 6 and 8; falsified by calling it perfection, with which it has nothing to do, and thereby most mischievously lowering the estimation of sin. It tries to ground this by distinguishing in the same passage perfected and perfect, and giving the latter a sense it never has in Scripture.20 Paul was doing only one thing, seeking to be perfected, but not being so, nor having yet attained, doing only that; yet he is made to affirm some other perfection, of which there is not one idea or thought in the chapter, which is wholly occupied with the first kind of perfection, ending with changing his body, which he has not apprehended or laid hold of, and which alone occupies him. The winning Christ is not what the author says. Paul was now seeking to win Christ: "do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." The statement falsifies the whole passage. 'Now his one ambition'21 hence is false; it is, "if by any means he might attain to the resurrection from among the dead." No doubt he sought to know Him better here, but it was all one thing,

and Christ had been always everything to him from the beginning (v. 7, 8), and he had been running the same course, and was all through; his conversation was in heaven, and he had been, and was always, looking to win, and be conformed to Christ in glory.

The sense given to “perfect” is not given in the chapter, and is wholly excluded by it. Yet, after all, “perfection “is only spiritual infancy, the foundation of a healthy growth.22 Deliverance, the normal Christian condition, is. But, after all, though we are in moral purity, like Adam before the fall, it is such a state (p. 10) that we ‘could not stand for a moment before God, if tried by the law.’ Was this Adam’s state? And why not? Then we get the abominable doctrine, that ‘temptation is not sin.’ Temptations from without are not sin: Christ went through everything that could try a holy being, but this is not the point. (See James i:2, 14.) They are suggestions, and he talks of supposing our hearts to be impure. Had Adam these impure suggestions? And they are ‘vile suggestions,’ only our ‘will rises up in opposition to them,’ ‘we are in heaviness through them’ (this applies to the other kind of temptations, trials which it is our joy to fall into). Had Christ any of these vile suggestions? Did Satan ever succeed in putting them into His mind? Mr. E. avoids the point; but are lusts not sin? James is quoted to prove it; but James speaks of effects, and Paul tells us that sin produced all manner of lusts—goes to the root, the evil nature. It is the ignoring this which is one grand evil of this system.

Now, if we were humble and faithful, I believe that Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, these evil suggestions, these impure thoughts, would not arise; but in this false perfection they are allowed, instead of the

heart being judged for having them, to keep up the credit of fancied perfection. I asked a perfect person once, and I believe a sincere, good person, whether, if the devil suggested to her to eat a handful of mud, she would do, or desire it. She owned she would not. There was something more than a suggestion, there was the sinful nature—the lust, that met it where it was. There are fiery darts, temptations to blasphemies, yet even these, if Christ dwells in us, if really delivered, do not come; but that is from the evil, sinful nature, and is to be judged, as shewing the sin that dwells in us. Satan has nothing for the life of Christ; if we do not keep the dying of Jesus on the flesh, he has for that. The dangers of it are justly depicted by the author: I have seen plenty of it.

My objection to it is not that, but that it connects a vital Christian truth, the passage from Romans 7 to 8 with false doctrine; denying sin in the flesh, and the communication of a wholly new life—Christ our life (“he that hath the Son, hath life “); denies lust to be sin, consequently, which betrays this nature, and mischievously lowers the standard of Christian hohness, palliating what a true soul knows to be evil, and falsifies the race and object of a Christian. That Mr. E. presses it in a true love of holiness and self-consecration, I do not doubt, and in this I should sympathise wholly with him; and he has got on a good step when he says it is the normal Christian: with that I fully agree, only that he is tied up by his doctrinal system to a false presentation of it all. His separating perfected and perfect is a poor attempt to put it straight, I mean to reconcile his sincere desires and his old doctrine. I have written in haste, being excessively occupied, which has also caused delay.

Ever affectionately yours in the Lord,

J. N. D.

10 A Letter on “Christ and Sanctification,” by Dowgan Clark, M.D. (1879), and “Perfect, but not Perfected; or, Entire Sanctification,” etc., by the Rev. G. O. Eldridge.

11 “Mistakes in judgment will lead to mistakes in practice, even in the most holy person; and thus we conclude that, while it is the privilege and duty of the Christian to expect… a restoration unto man’s original condition, so far as moral purity is concerned; yet, in the present state of being, he must ever be subject to weakness, infirmities, and mistakes.”

12 “Repentance is change of mind, a firm resolve to take the necessary steps for securing salvation.”

13 “Faith is the acceptance of God’s mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. The grace of faith, or the power of believing, is the gift of God; the act of faith, or actual believing, is the exercise of that power. When God presents His truth to us … He holds us accountable for the exercise of the faith He has given us.”

14 “By repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner experiences justification… By the atonement … the guilt of his sins is taken away, their legal penalties remitted, and his indebtedness cancelled.”

15 “He experiences conversion. This implies a change of heart; a renovation and revolution of the whole spiritual nature.”

16 “He experiences adoption—God takes him into His family for Christ’s sake, and he becomes a son.”

17 “The term, sin, is used in the Bible, either in the sense of sin committed—an actual transgression in thought, word, or deed; or sin indwelling—that depravity of heart which leads to all sinful acts… In the one sense, sin is a voluntary violation of the divine law, in the other, it is an involuntary state of the heart! … Now our definition of holiness is intended to apply to sin in both these aspects. It is freedom from the guilt of sin,” etc.

18 “There are, doubtless, differences, which need not detain us, between the perfection of Adam before the fall, and the Christian perfection which is the object of this essay. The differences arise chiefly from the diseased and imperfect physical organisation which now appertains to our race, and which did not appertain to Adam; in consequence of which, the mind, through its connection with such a body, is liable to false perceptions and erroneous judgments.”

19 The new Jerusalem is not down here.

20 “In this verse (Phil. 3:15) he claims perfection for himself and some others; though, in verse 12, he acknowledges that he has not been perfected.”

21 “Now his one ambition was to know Christ more fully, etc., that he might attain in the resurrection complete likeness to his Lord.”

22 “Entire sanctification is a healthy spiritual infancy, which leads on to Christian maturity.”

## On Everlasting Punishment

“The Eternity of Evil.”

“Finding that great misconception prevails with regard to the views propounded in a course of sermons lately preached at Eaton Chapel, I think it well to give the following summary of them.

“1. Scripture declares that the ‘everlasting punishment’ of the wicked will consist of ‘everlasting destruction,’ after the infliction of ‘many ‘or ‘few stripes,’ according to their several deserts. The popular theory teaches that it will consist of everlasting pain.

“2. Scripture declares that God will ‘destroy both body and soul in hell.’ The popular theory teaches that He will destroy neither one nor the other; but preserve both of them alive for ever, in unmitigated agony.

“3. Scripture declares that ‘our God is a consuming fire,’ The popular theory teaches that He is only a scorching fire.

“4. Scripture declares that the c fiery indignation’ will ‘devour the adversaries.’ The popular theory teaches that it will do no such thing, but only torture them.

“5. Scripture declares that the wicked will perish ‘like natural brute beasts.’ The popular theory teaches that there will be no analogy whatever between the two cases.

“6. Scripture declares that whosoever ‘will save his life’ by unfaithfulness to Christ, shall ultimately ‘lose it’ in a far more terrible manner. The popular theory teaches that no man can lose his life more than once, and that

‘the second death’ is no death at all, but eternal life in sin and misery.

“7. Scripture declares that whosoever’ doeth the will of God abideth for ever.’ The popular theory teaches that every man will abide for ever, whether he does the will of God or not.

“8. Scripture declares that if we desire ‘immortality,’ we must seek it ‘by patient continuance in well doing.’ The popular theory teaches that every man possesses inherent indefeasible immortality, and what we have to seek for, is, that it may prove a blessing, and not a curse, to us.

“9. Scripture declares that’ the wages of sin is death.’ The popular theory teaches that it is eternal life in misery; in other words, that God will inflict upon impenitent sinners a punishment infinitely greater than what He has pronounced to be their due.

“10. Scripture declares that ‘the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ The popular theory teaches that eternal life is the common possession of all men, and that the gift of God, through Christ, is the privilege of spending it in holiness and happiness.

“11. Scripture declares that ‘the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.’ The popular theory teaches that they never will be destroyed at all, but that a portion of the universe will be specially set apart for the eternal exhibition of them in their fullest maturity.

“12. Scripture declares that Christ is to ‘reconcile all things to God.’ The popular theory teaches that all things will never be reconciled to God; that discord and

disorder will never cease, but only be confined to one particular locality.

“13. Scripture declares that in Christ ‘all things consist.’ The popular theory teaches that a whole kingdom will ‘consist’ for ever, although not ‘in Him.’

“14. Scripture declares that ‘he that hath the Son, hath life; but he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life’; that ‘if we live after the flesh, we shall die, but if, through the Spirit, we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.’ The advocates of the popular theory, say, that the life of the believers and unbelievers, of natural men and spiritual men, must be of equal duration—that the doctrine of eternal happiness, and the doctrine of eternal misery, must stand or fall together—in other words, that if what scripture asserts be true, what it denies must be also true.

“I take my stand, therefore, on the plain, consistent, emphatic teaching of the whole bible, from beginning to end, as opposed to the ‘traditions of men,’ which have so grievously perverted it, and thereby obscured the glory of Christ, reduced to an unmeaning form the declaration that ‘God is love,’ produced a frightful amount of infidelity, robbed the law of its terrors, by making it threaten sinners with what they are sure will never be executed, incalculably weakened the saving power of the gospel, and damaged the believer’s whole spiritual constitution, by putting an unnatural strain upon it, that God never intended it to bear.

“The three or four passages that are thought to confirm the traditional view have been examined in a volume entitled, ‘The Glory of Christ in the Creation and Reconciliation of all Things ‘(Longmans), and been found

either to entirely fail in lending it even the appearance of support, or to be but as dust in the balance against the overpowering weight of testimony on the other side.

“Samuel Minton, Incumbent of Eaton Chapel, Eaton Square.”

* * * * *

I see, as I have ever seen in like cases, simply Satan and the will of man, in the paper of Mr. M. on “The Eternity of Evil.” The accompanying inquiry,23 is in a different spirit; but it is a mere fallacy. The scripture does not merely teach that the “wages of sin is death,” though this be true; it states that after death comes the judgment—that is, that the whole proper final punishment of sin is after death. It never speaks of everlasting death; it does several times of everlasting punishment or torment. This no one can deny. That is, the facts are quite opposed to what the inquirer states. It does speak of everlasting destruction. But this proves, not that they cease to exist, but that destruction does not mean what they say, as it may last. And those who hold these doctrines admit it does last, and may a long time, for the everlasting destruction is at the coming of the Lord to be glorified in His saints (that is, at the beginning of their punishment, not at the end). That is, “destruction” does not mean their ceasing to exist. Adam was not threatened with never-ending torments! Quite true. Life, incorruptibility, and wrath from heaven (though gathered from a few passages in the Old Testament, and rightly) were not revealed and brought to light but by the gospel. The gospel does speak expressly of everlasting punishment. And everlasting (though accommodated to what lasts as long as the

thing it is attached to—to what only ceases with the existence of the object spoken of) yet properly means eternal, always existing. We read of the “eternal God,” the “eternal Spirit,” and “eternal redemption,” and “eternal inheritance,” and “eternal life.” It means eternal, or everlasting; and eternal life and eternal punishment go together in Matthew 25, as of equivalent import as to the word ‘eternal.’ Any attempt to get rid of the force of this word, proves the will of him who attempts it, and nothing else. Further, the. same words are used as to torment and the existence of God. He lives “for ever and ever,” and they are tormented “for ever and ever,” Rev. 14:11.

1. As to the first statement of the accompanying paper, it is false. Scripture does not speak of everlasting destruction after the infliction of many or few stripes. It is simply false; it speaks of everlasting destruction from His presence, when Christ comes, and it speaks of many or few stripes at the same time—in Luke not after; proving quite the contrary—that destruction does not mean ceasing to exist.

2. Destruction does not mean causing to cease to exist. “The lost sheep of the house of Israel” is the same word. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” “Carest thou not that we perish? “Destruction cannot be everlasting, if it means causing to cease to exist. Indeed, it is not said (which I merely note to shew the carelessness of the writer) that “God will destroy both body and soul in hell,” but that He is able. Man can only kill the body. It is a question of power to be feared.

3. As to the third, it is clap-trap; and when Scripture is consulted, it proves the contrary. In Deuteronomy 4:24,

God is a jealous God, a consuming fire, and Israel are destroyed (that is, perish off the land, and are scattered). They are destroyed, and perish, but do not cease to exist.

4. This, again, proves the idle inattention to Scripture on this weighty subject. If devouring adversaries means ceasing to exist, it is the end of sore punishment, and is the same result as for those who died without mercy. Yet it is “much sorer punishment”; that is, the whole principle of interpretation is careless and false.

5. As to this, the scripture never says anything of the kind. The people are compared to beasts, not the destruction. The word, too, itself is used here for moral corruption, shewing it does not mean mere ceasing to exist. Compare 1 Corinthians 3:17 in Greek.

6. As to this, Scripture says nothing of the kind. This is too bad, because Scripture speaks expressly of the second death, which is the lake of fire; that is, as far as language goes, that he does lose his life more than once. A second death is declared to be the torment of the lake of fire, not its termination; at any rate, a second death is a statement of losing life more, than once. I notice it to shew the extreme carelessness of assertion; for I do not believe that, in the full sense of ceasing to exist, life ceases in either case.

7. In saying he that does the will of God abides for ever, it is wholly in contrast with the fashion of this world, and there is no allusion to the wicked, good or bad; nothing is said about them. Elsewhere it is taught that they survive death, and are punished eternally.

8. It is false; it speaks of incorruptibility, which Scripture distinguishes from immortality; and in the passage, a

state of glory is referred to, not the mortality, nor immortality, of the soul, neither of which is spoken of.

9. Of this I have spoken. It is dishonest, because all admit judgment comes after.

10. Eternal life and immortality are distinct things. Christ is eternal life (see 1 John 1), and God gives it us in giving Christ; nor is it ever said even to be in us, but in His Son; and so we have it. Eternal life is in the Son; and he that has the Son, has life. This the wicked have not. The angels are immortal, but they are never said to have eternal life. There is no such thought as that eternal life is the common possession of all men; there is, that men have immortal, undying souls— a very different thing.

11. It is a gross blunder. The punishment of the wicked is not the work of the devil; he is in the punishment himself.

12. This, again, is quite false. Destruction is a strange reconciliation! But it is not said. It is said, in Colossians, that God will reconcile all things to Himself, in heaven and in earth, by Christ. But in Philippians it is said that all things bow, in heaven and in earth and under the earth (infernal), shewing that there are things forced to bow which are not reconciled.

13. It is another blunder. All things are said to consist in Him now, or subsist by Him; and so, if this argument be of any avail, the devil and wicked men do so now—and may much more reasonably when presented. But it speaks of all as creatures simply being upheld in existence by Him, as they must be by God. There is no kingdom at all.

14. It proves simply nothing. It speaks of spiritual life. “He that hath not the Son, hath not life “; but he is fully alive now in this world; existence has nothing to do with the matter. All this is really trifling with Scripture.

But I have a word to add. The doctrine presented does not say all. I have not, according to it, an immortal soul, now or at all, but a mere animal life, such as a beast has, though superior in degree of intelligence. God, it may be alleged, could give eternal life to a beast. Be it so; but the beast cannot be responsible for sin while he is a beast, nor repent of what he had done; nor can I; nor can any atonement be made for it. Thus, with a pretended doctrine of eternal life and love and mercy, responsibility, repentance, and atonement disappear. This is wholly of Satan. Scripture everywhere teaches these truths; and I cite, as first distinctly establishing it, the case of Cain; Gen. 4:6, 7. The creation of man brings out as distinctly as possible, the difference of man’s position as to his soul; Gen. 1:24. “And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind.” And man is not included. “God saw that it was good.” It was the subject creation; man’s is taken up apart in verse 26, when man is created in God’s image, and after His likeness. And the manner is taught in chapter 2:7. He formed man out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. That is, it was by a direct communication from God Himself that he became a living soul.

Hence we are declared, in Acts 17, to be the offspring of God. And the body is distinctly and expressly said to be mortal, in contrast with the soul, as in 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 4, etc. And where it is said, “Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more

that they can do… Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." The testimony of Scripture is express; "their [not, the] worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." It is not punishment, if there is no one to bear punishment; and the contrast with life leaves no ambiguity as to the force of everlasting.

There is a passage which illustrates this doctrine: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

I can only briefly reply to what is before me. It is much more elaborately taught in other publications. Nor does it in any shape approve itself to a right-feeling mind. A hater of God, if immortal, must be miserable when time has ceased to be. Pure vengeance for a lengthened period on which is to perish is gratuitous misery. I admit fully this is no proof. It merely shews that what men may allege as better to attract may, when rightly viewed, repel as offensive.

The remarks of Mr. M. seem to me singularly weak and careless; but it is these I have to meet here. I know it is spreading; but so is infidelity in other shapes. I have had a good deal to say to the doctrine elsewhere. Responsibility and the atonement are lost, and must be so, wherever it is received. It is simply a work of Satan. It is infidelity even as to what man is; for in this case we are beasts with a bigger brain. The creation of man directly contradicts this.

23 "The bible teaches that 'the wages of sin is death'; its general teaching is not endless pain, but everlasting death and destruction. Adam was not threatened with never-ending torments. Do favour me with your thoughts on this great subject."

## Letter On Immortality And Everlasting Punishment

My dear Brother,

As this question, this evil heresy, is the one by which, most commonly just now, Satan seeks to perplex the minds of the simple, I write a line to you in connection with the tract sent to me. A great many human names are introduced, but Scripture is little inquired into. In this doctrine the great point of consequence to me is that the true character and import of sin, of atonement, of repentance, are overlooked, and the responsibility of man. Atonement is either denied or dropped out. Here it is entirely dropped out. Now it is evident, if temporary punishment is the whole desert of sin, Christ had only to suffer accordingly. Repentance is proportionate. And one of the chief teachers in the United States declared in his book, that the deep distress of conscience and terror about sin committed was a base servile fear and wrong. To one who found he had lost the atonement and the sense of responsibility out of his mind, and who asked him what he made of responsibility, he replied, it was impossible to reconcile it with his system, but he saw it in Scripture, and so did not deny it. They insist that souls of men and beasts are the same, and plead Genesis to this end—all in whom was the breath of life perished in the flood—that beasts have a living soul and so has man. If this be so (that we have more intelligence, but a living soul like a beast's), you cannot charge a beast with sin, nor make Christ die to put away a beast's sins. What did Christ do for us—not as giving life, but in the way of atonement? That is the grave question. Again,

they confound eternal life and immortality, which is not honest.

Save as to the immortality of God, where it declares death, of course, has no part, mortality and immortality as to men, are applied solely to the body and have nothing to do with eternal life. Eternal life is what we have in the Second Adam: the question is the condition of the first. Thus, “when this mortal shall have put on immortality,” “the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh.” The places are these—Romans 6:12, “mortal body”; chap. 8:11, “mortal bodies”; 1 Corinthians 15:53, “this mortal”; verse 54, where it is the resurrection, that is, the body (or change); 2 Corinthians 4:11, “our mortal flesh”; v. 4, “mortality swallowed up of life,” when he speaks of the tabernacle we are groaning in. Mortality is always of the body; immortality is put in contrast with mortality (not mortality of the soul, but of your present mortal condition). 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54, is the change from a mortal state. Otherwise it is used only of God. In 1 Timothy 6:16, He is undying in nature. Mortal is applied to our present state, but is not applied to the soul at all. That God only has immortality does not affect an undying existence conferred; for angels are not mortal, as all admit, and as Luke 20:36 shews. With these and the state of the fallen angels these teachers never trouble themselves. Men must not suffer; their love goes no farther than themselves. Now the everlasting punishment is prepared for the devil and his angels, and there the judged of Matthew 25 are sent; so Revelation 20:10, 15; chap. 21:8.

As to the life we have naturally, beasts were formed by God’s word out of the ground, and there the ordinary creation ended, and then beasts were pronounced good;

Gen. 1:25. And then God proceeds in solemn consultation to form man as His image, as lord of all that had been created, and in His likeness, and first makes him a frame out of the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man by partaking of what came directly from God became a living soul (not at all as the beasts), God's image on the earth. Hence he is called (Acts 17) His offspring. He has a spirit as well as a mere soul, when the distinction needs to be made, which death does not touch. We are not to fear them which kill the body and after that have no more that they can do—that death does not touch what is beside bodily life. I will speak of "destroy" in good time; but death leaves the soul in existence, not merely the souls of saints. When the resurrection was called into question by the Sadducees, it is not said of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob only, that they are alive, nor is this founded on their being saints, though they were such, but it is added, "for all live unto him." Death does not affect the soul, All live, not for man indeed on the earth but, for God.

The case of Lazarus and Dives clearly teaches the same solemn truth; the sinner was as much alive as the saint. They allege that this is a Jewish figure. I admit it fully as to the form; but it is not a figure of a person's not existing. The second death is the lake of fire—is punishment. They allege that it burns man out in time, and that ceasing to exist is the second death; but Scripture says the punishment is itself the second death. Death never means ceasing to exist.

Then as to this word "everlasting." It is incontrovertible that its proper sense is everlasting. It is defined carefully to mean it by Aristotle and Philo (the last a

religious Jewish writer of the apostles' age) and others. Scripture speaks of the eternal God, the eternal Spirit, the eternal inheritance, eternal redemption; and what makes it conclusively evident that the word in itself means it is the statement of the apostle in 2 Corinthians 4: "The things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal," where it is used in express contrast with temporal, without any subject (as they allege) which on other grounds shews what it means. So eternal life and eternal punishment are used in direct contrast—eternal life is in Christ, the gift of God. It is only named twice in the Old Testament, and both refer to the millennium (Dan. 12; Psalm 133); for life and incorruptibility were brought to light by the gospel. In Romans 2:7 it is incorruptibility, not immortality.

None of the quotations following, apply to the subject at all. I have eternal life now; yet I am as mortal as ever. That life is not touched in any way when I die; 2 Cor. 5:6-8. It is in full glory, when I get a glorious body; mortality or immortality it has nothing to do with, nor they with it. It is "life and incorruptibility" which are brought to light by the gospel. There is a resurrection of the unjust as of the just. They subsist meanwhile, or there is no one to raise; their judgment comes after their death. At any rate eternal life does not touch or take away mortality—has nothing to do with it, nor does it give immortahty. It is only the darkness of common doctrine that has given rise to these statements, which have no real foundation at all. "All live unto him." Destroying the body does not touch the soul. "Who only hath immortality "does not apply to created existence.

The angels are not mortal as we are, but they have no existence independent of God any more than we have.

Dr. Whately is wrong altogether24—“of those only,” he says, “who shall,” etc. Now it is not so. Immortality is only used twice, applied only to the body, and when it has ceased to be mortal.

Another thing important to remark here is the abuse of the word “die.” We may be quite right in seeing, as spiritual persons, that men may be dead while they live; and that we may be dead in sin, as towards God, when alive; and that the judgment of death implies estrangement from God, as the gift of life is bringing us, in principle, in blessedness to Him. But dying in its positive sense is never applied to the soul. Thus Ezekiel 18, constantly quoted for this, and used by good people with good intentions, speaks only of death in this world —present judgment here; not for a father’s, but for our own sins.

Quoting such a passage as “He that hath not the Son of God hath not life “proves utter confusion of mind; for if I were a living sinner, I have not life in that sense, yet am alive all the same; and if I never died at all, was not mortal as to the body, I should not have it a bit more. What lost life has the sinner no power to regain? Not the fact of life (namely, conscious existence); he has it as much as ever. It does not touch the question; and I know from Christ’s word that death to which I am sentenced does not affect the soul. Why so diligently confound spiritual life and actual existence? And this is the whole secret of the way they puzzle people— poor work! Death as judgment on man may intimate a great deal more, just as life does. But “thou shalt surely die” was bringing

in mortality; and hence man was not allowed to touch the tree of life lest he should eat and live for ever—live for ever as a sinner in the world. Here, as a matter of fact, God was not precluding him from getting spiritual life; and if when actually alive, as he was, he had eaten of the other tree, he would not have died at all. Immortality in his then state, before or after the fall, would have been immortality as a living man as he then was. The death threatened we have plainly declared to us— “till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Did the spirit God breathed into Adam come out of the dust? It returns to God who gave it; and the body will be raised, and then judgment come, and only then the award of sin by judgment. The corruption of the body is only an intermediate state, common alike to saints and sinners, just as death itself is, save by special intervention of God’s power.

As to union with the Saviour giving life, it is all a blunder. It has no such effect. None but already quickened ones are united, and that by the Holy Ghost. I need not say that all he speaks of the end of all things at a common resurrection is no part of our belief; but it is one of the acts of Satan to take fresh light and use it, where it has not been, to pour in his darkness.

The statement of everlasting punishment to a simple soul is as plain as possible in Scripture: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into everlasting life.” To a simple soul it would be monstrous to say that “everlasting “was not meant to mean the same thing. They are “tormented for ever and ever.” Death gives up all it held, into the lake of fire—that is, for ever and ever; the same word always used in

that book for God's existence. "They are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Now everlasting destruction has no sense if non-existence be meant by destruction. Total destruction I understand; but everlasting destruction in such a sense, is nonsense. And in this case, on their own theory, it is no destruction then at all; for 2 Thessalonians 1 is at the beginning of the millennium, when, according to their own system, and my own full conviction, they are not destroyed at all.

This leads me to the word "destroy." It is, like death, used for the ruin of a present state of things, even moral ruin, not for cessation of existence. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—the same word. "He that loseth [destroyeth] his life for my sake, shall save it." "Carest thou not that we perish? "Zacharias" perished between the temple and the altar." Take an English-Greek Concordance, and you will easily see. So destruction; waste of the ointment; the son of perdition; damnable heresies— heresies which ruin people. Moral ruin is meant, as well as destruction of existence, if that is ever meant. The world of the flood perished—the flood came and destroyed them all; yet they are spirits in prison after that—another proof that death destroys no soul; does not mean it. Abaddon and Apollyon are the Hebrew and Greek for destroyer: are they able to make to cease to exist finally? Take "abad" (Englishman's Hebrew Concordance, p. 8); I do not think "destroy" is ever used for finally ceasing to exist, but totally ruining as to the state anything has been in. When men are everlastingly destroyed from the presence of the Lord, it confessedly is not so; they then

go into punishment; but that is final. And when it is said, “their fire is not quenched,” to assert that it means that they do not exist at all is a miserable come-off, not more. It is a figure no one denies, and refers, as is stated, to Isaiah; but the figure is one of the continuous existence of the objects of punishment. “From one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord; and they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” It is continuing abiding objects of punishment which are now before the eyes of those who come up. It was not a supply of fresh material, etc. All this is false. The opposite is what God is teaching. It is of continued existence; it is the carcases that were indestructible—at any rate undestroyed: an external matter, no doubt, in Isaiah, and used by the Lord as a figure, but a figure of continued shame and misery, and no fresh supply. And what is the meaning of everlastingly supplying hell, where body and soul are, with fresh materials? “Destroyed for ever,” Psalm 92:7, applied to this world; so Psalm 104:35, “consumed out of the earth.” You may take it as a general rule, that in the Old Testament, judgment, destruction, etc., refer to this world, though a future state is referred to in the Psalms.

Again, the passage “seek for glory, honour, and immortality,” immortality is incorruptibility. God is immortal in His present existence—cannot die. Man is looked at, when spoken of as such, as body and soul, and now mortal in that condition; and mortality is used only in respect of his existence in the body, and immortality

too, only in another state. In Romans 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:10, it is incorruptibility; but it is always a state in the body, now mortal, then immortal (i.e., the soul separable from the body or inseparable). It does not touch the question, though habit uses it for it. Ignorance or dishonesty can alone quote the word. Angels are acknowledged to be immortal—and what we have to do is to learn from Scripture what becomes of that which was directly communicated from God when He breathed into man's nostrils, and which, most certainly from Scripture, death does not touch.

I have already said eternal life has nothing to do with it; I am as mortal when I have it as before. Now Scripture is positive that death does not touch the soul. It subsists after death and apart from the body. There could not in their use of it be a second death, if it meant ceasing to exist. Death does not mean for men ceasing to exist; neither does the second death. That is going into the lake of fire, not getting out of it. And this driving out of the presence of the Lord is for ever; punishment is everlasting. When dead, all live for God; when raised, they are cast into the lake of fire, and that is the second death, and the final state spoken of. They shall then have their part in it. This is "for ever and ever"—the term used for the duration of God's own life, and the duration of His glory; Rev. 4:9; ch. 5:13, 14. It is exclusion from the presence and dwelling-place of God: "Without are dogs," etc. The time when God is all in all, and no more death, sorrow, etc., is the time when the evil are cast into the lake of fire. For death is separation of soul and body, which will never take place again. There will be no more dying, but just punishment on the raised wicked,

but no more death; that and hades are over. But that judgment is destruction from the presence of the Lord.

What they specially insist on is that, till we get eternal life, we have, though more intelligent, life like any other animal. Now the falseness of this is evident. So we have seen, we are God's offspring, but I speak of it for another purpose now. I have a conscience; I have a soul that can hate God and did— formed to have to say to Him—that can be rebellious and disobedient, and enter into appeals to my conscience. In a word, I am a moral being. When I am converted, I feel how I have failed as to my previous responsibility; I repent, I feel I am guilty —liable to judgment from God: what has this to do with animal life? If I get eternal life, it makes me look backward on all my previous course as guilt, as subjecting me to divine punishment. When I know myself, I know that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. God claims moral authority over the unconverted man. For these sins Christ, I find, has died. I was dead in sins. With Him I have died to sin. If I am a mere nephesh chayah,25as they speak (and we are that physically), I cannot repent nor think of atonement for what I did as such. The idea of sin is lowered. All there is, is merely a temporary punishment for certain faults which takes place now and also hereafter. For Scripture, it is enmity against God, and the remaining so is infinite misery, when the veil of sense is taken away and final judgment pronounced. The atonement, responsibility, the true sense of sin, repentance, all go when this fatal falsehood and device of Satan gets into the mind. It is a soul as to its nature capable of hatred and love of God. Would you put the cleverest elephant into this place of

responsibility? or could it have a need for its sins to be borne?

If you deal with a simple soul, shew it the plain language of Scripture: “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Conscience will tell what that means, and if they have been dealt with to prove eternal does not mean eternal, shew them what is said in 2 Corinthians 4:18; and simple souls, souls where Satan’s wiles have not polluted them, will bow to the plain word of God. I have nothing to do with popular statements (though better, if essentially sound, than these immoral deceits); but the conscious subsistence of the soul after death, and eternal judgment and punishment of the wicked, are as plainly taught in Scripture as possible. Men have spoken of it (though sound in intentions) in a way designing people can lay hold of, specially from the Lord’s coming not having been seen. But the word of God is clear. It does not detail the misery as it does the blessing, and this is its perfection; but it declares it, and this is right. “I am “is essential existence. No other word is used for the duration of God’s existence which is not used for that of the punishment and torment of the wicked. And while a few persons have been scandalised who seek their own thoughts and take their own feelings, when there is no just sense of what their sins have deserved (for this is the secret of it), how many thousands of thousands have been awakened by the just terror of judgment!

I write thus to you because you will have to say to it. I have not entered into all, nor could in this letter. Save a few misapplied texts, there is no serious investigation of Scripture, as bearing on a responsible soul, the offspring

of God—no sense of what sin is; and that is the evil of the matter.

24 “It is certain that the words, ‘life,’ ‘eternal life,’ ‘immortality,’ etc., are always applied to the condition of those, and of those only, who shall at the last day be approved as ‘good and faithful servants,’ who are to ‘enter into the joy of their Lord.’”—Dr. Whately.

25 Living soul (Hebrew).

## The Deity Of Christ And What Constitutes Christianity;

Being An Answer To The Inquiries Of An Unitarian Student Of Divinity In the first place, there are the direct passages—John 1:1: “The Word was with God, and was God.” This is in every way a striking passage: when every thing began, He was— that is, had no beginning, was God, as indeed it must be, yet was a distinct personality; He was with God, and always such, was so in the beginning, that He created everything. Subsequently we find the Word made flesh. The effort to weaken the force of the word of God here by the absence of the article is perfectly futile; unless in reciprocal propositions the predicate never has the article.

We find in Hebrews i the same truths. He the Messiah, for of Him he speaks, the Son, is God, is worshipped by angels, in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and is “the same” —in Hebrew (Psalm 102), atta Hu, Thou art the existing One, the Being, where the testimony is so much the stronger by comparison with verse 12 of the Psalm, where Christ in humiliation addresses Jehovah.

In John 8 we find, “before Abraham was I AM,” in contrast with His age as man; which the Jews perfectly understood, and would have killed Him for blasphemy.

Colossians 1:16: “All things were created by him and for him,” where it is unquestionable Christ is spoken of, the true force of verse 19 being “all the fulness (pleeroma) was pleased to dwell in Him,” and spoken of Him as man

living upon earth, and accomplished in fact in chapter 2:9," in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

John 10: "I and my Father are one."

His name is called Jesus—Jehoshua, that is, Jehovah the Saviour, for He shall save His people—who, and whose people, in connection with the explanation of such a name? Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Thus John 12, Isaiah saw His glory, and spoke of Him, quoting Isaiah 6. Whose glory was seen there? Jehovah of hosts.

Hebrews 12:24-26: whose voice spoke from heaven (compare chap, 1:1, 2)—whose at Sinai on earth? Hence His name was also Emmanuel, God with us.

So John the Baptist's ministry was preparing the way of Jehovah, Matthew 3:3, quoting Isaiah 40: Malachi 3:1, "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and Jehovah, whom ye seek, shall come." (Compare Mark 1:41.) If the judgment to come on the earth is referred to, difference of interpretation as to this, or the passing on from Christ's first coming to His second, does not affect the question of the Person who comes; He who first came will come again.

The more we compare passages as to this, the more we shall see this identification, and that it is not forcing one or two texts, but the doctrine of Scripture woven into its whole texture. Jehovah is Israel's righteousness, but Christ is made our righteousness. "The Lord (Jehovah) my God shall come, and all his saints with thee" (Zech. 14:5); "and Jehovah said… a goodly price that I was prized at of them, and I took the thirty pieces of silver," etc. "Then shall Jehovah go forth… and his feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives," chaps. 11, 14.

So, as to Redeemer, Jehovah alone is their Redeemer. In Isaiah 63 this Redeemer is clearly Christ. So in Isaiah 50: “Thus saith Jehovah… Wherefore when I came was there no man? “And then He goes on, and asserts His unenfeebled divine power, yet He continues, “Jehovah-Elohim hath given me the tongue of the learned,” and the sufferings of Christ are then spoken of.

In Psalm 2 the kings of the earth are called to trust in the Son—the Christ—yet a curse is pronounced on trusting in man, or in any one but Jehovah. See Revelation 22, He who comes quickly is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last. (I do not quote chapter 1:11, as it is probably not genuine, nor verse 8, because its application to Christ may be questioned, although I have no doubt of it.)

In many of the passages in which God and the Lord Jesus are mentioned, with one article in Greek, it may possibly unite them, only in the subject matter of the sentence. Hence, although I think they prove a great deal as to the identification of God and the Lord Jesus, I do not quote them as simply proving, in an absolute way, the divinity of Christ. But the force of the passage in Titus is apparent, “Waiting for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is unquestionably Christ who appears; as it is now in the face of Jesus Christ that we see the glory of the Lord.

This unity of God and Christ is manifest throughout John’s writings, “I and my Father are one.” “We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” Take, again, such an example —for it is only an example—” And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have

confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Now, who will say to whom this applies—Christ, or God? It is impossible to distinguish them. What characterises all the writings of John, in the language of Christ, is One who has the place and title of perfect equality, yet now being a Man, takes nothing, never glorifies Himself, but receives all from His Father, as in John 17. In them we have God over all, blessed for ever (Rom. 9:5), which, I doubt not, for my part, is the only true sense; and other passages I do not quote, as they are matters of criticism. Indeed, I have only cited such as suggest themselves to my memory. So Thomas—"My Lord and my God."

But there is another class of texts, which to the mind, sensible of what is due to God, evidently shew who He is. Grace coming from Him, as is found everywhere—"Out of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." Christ is all. His love passes knowledge. Christ is to dwell in my heart by faith. If Christ be to me what the scripture says He is to be to me, and be not God, He must exclude God altogether. The very fact that Christ made Himself of no reputation when in the form of God, is again a moral proof of His divine nature. Every creature was bound to keep its first estate; He who was

high and sovereign could, in grace, come down and take another nature.

Everything confirms this. He does not merely work miracles and cast out devils, but sends others out, and gives them authority over all devils. When He says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” who was dwelling in the temple? This kind of proof shines forth in every page of the gospels, and to the mind whose eye is open to see, affords a proof more powerful even than individual texts stating it in the letter, as I speak of the letter.

Let me add the remark, that when it is said the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily, it is not a vague word, as we speak of what is divine. The Greek has a distinct word for these two things; for the vague thought it is theiotees, used in Romans i; and theotees, used in Colossians 2.

Where the leper says, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst, and He says, I will, be thou clean—who can so speak? The proofs that He is a man must not be cited against it. We hold to this as anxiously as any one. His being God is only of special value to us because He is man—a true very man, though a sinless one—God with us, and then we in Him before God— One who took flesh and blood, that He might die, and partook of flesh and blood because the children were partakers of it—a dependent, obedient man, who, though He had life in Himself, lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.

When I am called to believe in Jesus Christ come in flesh, which Christians are, they hold He is a man; but why insist on this? If He was simply a man, how else could man come? Not an angel, for an angel must not

leave its estate, and He did not take up angels—words which have no sense if He had been one, and was taking up the cause of others as such. When He says, “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,” and that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him, the last might be said of a man, perhaps; the former impossible as a mere man, or of any but a divine Person. So, when He says, “None hath ascended up to heaven,” that is, to state what is there— “save he that came down from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven.” And, if all men are to honour the Son even as they honour the Father, it cannot be that He is a mere man, or not have the nature which is to be honoured.

Jehovah has sworn that every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue give an account of himself to God, but it is at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Hence, though the Son quickens whom He will, as the Father, yet the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son as they honour Him. There is no God but Jehovah—I know not any, as says the prophet; but we have seen, by multiplied examples that Christ is Jehovah.

That as Son He has taken a place subject to the Father as man, every Christian believes—receives the glory He once had with the Father before the world was—every one who bows to Scripture joyfully accepts; for He is a man for ever, in that sense a servant, but He who is the servant can say, I and my Father are one, and I am in the Father, and he who has seen Him has seen the Father also.

Compare the description of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 and Revelation 1, and see if the Ancient of Days, who

receives the Son of man in Daniel 7, be not the Son of man in Revelation 1, and in Daniel 7 too; from verse 22 of the chapter the Ancient of Days comes. Hence we have, “the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords” —then, the appearing of Christ; but in Revelation He who comes on the white horse has on His vesture and on His thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords. You see, the more Scripture is gone through, the more comes to light that He is the true God and Eternal Life.

I know not that I need multiply passages, after these I have quoted. What you will remark, is, that it is not a question of expressions as to which criticism may be exercised, but the doctrine and system of Scripture. It is Christianity, as it is given to us in Scripture. I take up Christianity as the truth, and that is Christianity. A religion is what it professes itself to be, and that is what Christianity professes itself to be—the revelation of God, and eternal life in the Person of Christ.

It professes another truth, that is, atonement, or expiation of sin. It does not teach a goodness of God which can bear with any sin, but maintains the perfect holiness of God, and the putting away of sin, but it does it in a way which equally maintains infinite and perfect love. Man instinctively felt the need of expiation. This is publicly known in heathenism; but there it was very much the dread of a god who had passions like ourselves, and men might justly say, tantæne animis cælestibus iræ (can such anger dwell in heavenly minds)? Judaism, as revealed of God, maintained this thought, but it began by a deliverance of the people, and witnessed a God not revealed, but who gave commandments, ordained sacrifices, which kept up the

thought that sin would in nowise be allowed; but it was the “forbearance of God” in view of a work to be accomplished, the way into the holiest not yet having been made manifest, nor peace given to man’s conscience, though it was relieved through sacrifice when occasion called for it; Christ appears in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; was once offered to bear the sins of many, and give a perfect conscience, without diminishing—nay, in maintaining in the highest way—holiness, in the judgment of sin in the conscience, according to the majesty of God; and withal giving the perfect sense of unbounded love, in that God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us—the love that gave Christ. Christ gave Himself in a love that is divine, and passes knowledge.

The foolish question has been asked, What righteousness is there in an innocent being suffering for the guilty? It is a foolish question. There is no righteousness in my paying my friend’s debts. It is kindness, love; but it meets the righteous claim of his creditor. The claims of a holy God are maintained—intolerance of evil; and that is of the last importance for the conscience and heart of man; it gives him the knowledge of what God is in holiness. There is no true love without it. Indifference to good and evil, so that the evil-doer is let pass with his evil, is not love, and the dissociation of right and wrong, by God’s authority—the highest possible evil. Now, good and evil are elevated to the standard of it in God’s nature. We walk in the light, as God is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin. The glory of God is maintained, and the heart of man placed in association

with the perfectness of that nature, and in peace with "the perfect knowledge of His love, and that is the highest blessing, the highest good. Diminish the holiness, diminish the love—I have not God, I have not my soul formed into communion with Him. Take away the character of judgment or righteousness exercised, as regards evil, and you obliterate the authority of God—the creation, place, and responsibility of man.

This part of the truth, again, enters into the whole texture of Scripture, from Abel to the allusions to it in Revelation. I shall merely quote a sufficient number of passages to shew that Christianity must be given up, as taught by Christ and His apostles, if expiation be. I do not quote the Old Testament; expiatory sacrifices are, beyond all question, its doctrine, and prophetic testimony is clear that He was wounded for our transgressions, the chastisement of our peace laid upon Him, and that with His stripes we are healed; that He made His soul a sacrifice for sin, and that He bare our iniquities.

When I turn to the New Testament, I find Christ stating that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). The Lord's supper—the standing institution of Christianity—is the sign of His blood shed for many, for the remission of sins. John the Baptist points Him out as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world; John 1:29. Paul tells us that God hath set Him forth as a propitiation, through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25); Peter, that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18, 19); John, that He is the propitiation for our sins and the whole world (1 John 2:2); Peter, again, that He bare our

sins in His own body on the tree; 1 Pet. 2:24. The Hebrews enlarges on it fully as a doctrine. He must offer for sins (chap. 9). He offers one sacrifice for sins, and then sits down (chap. 10). We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; Eph. 1:7. We are justified by His blood; Rom. 5:9. Without shedding of blood is no remission; Heb. 9:22. He gave Himself for our sins; Gal. 1:4. It is when He had made the purification of our sins that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; Heb. 1:3. Cleansing, justification, forgiveness, peace, redemption, are all attributed to His blood. He bare our sins, gave Himself for our sins, makes propitiation for the world, is delivered for our offences.

As I have said, it is a doctrine interwoven with all Scripture, forms one of the bases of Christianity, is the sole ground of remission—and there is none without shedding blood—and that by which Christ has made peace; Col. 1:20. The thought that He was sealing merely His doctrines by His death is utterly groundless, it is never stated as its force in Scripture, expiation is constantly; and if it was a mere testimony—perfect as He was in it—it does not serve for one, for the testimony would be, that the most faithful of men was forsaken of God. What testimony would that be? Take out expiation, and Scripture becomes impossible to understand: introduce it, and all is plain.

I have not written a treatise, but simply recalled what must present itself to every unprejudiced reader of Scripture, as memory furnished it, and what the soul convinced of sin cannot do without. If Christ be not God, I do not know Him, have not met Him, nor know what He is. No man can by searching find it out. If Christ has

not offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, then I had neither peace of conscience according to the holiness of God—but pass lightly over the guilt of sin, remaining at a distance from God—nor do I know God's love, who so loved as not to spare His own Son. There is no true knowledge of sin without it, no true knowledge of God.

## Letters On The Revised New Testament

My dear——,

I have no pretension, with the leisure or ability I have, to give even a summary view of the Revision of the New Testament, which now occupies every one. But it seems to me, that, while there are many excellent changes in it, it is, for any practical purpose, a failure. It might seem invidious in one who has published a new translation to comment on this; perhaps presumptuous for an individual, when so many learned men have been engaged in it. But I might quote a crowd of passages in which they have adopted as their version what I had also adopted from the Greek, and that in some very important passages, besides a crowd of less important ones. I do not set about to criticise their text, though I should strongly demur to some changes; nor do I pretend to have gone through the whole in detail. But where the word of God is in question, our minds should rise above all considerations but one: Is the mind of God, as given in His word, substantially afforded us in what we possess in the Revision? Two objects may be sought in it, to this end: it may be before us as a public Bible for the country, taking the place of the Authorised Version; or as a book of reference for the student of the word, to have a more sure and certain sound for his own soul. It does not seem to me it can be either. If, indeed, it had, so to speak, a divine stamp upon it as a translation, this might have overcome the nature influences of a long and, in very many excellent qualities, justly cherished translation. But I do not think this is so. We have many

appliances in the version—learning, scholarship, textual criticism, and, I do not a moment doubt, assiduous care. But I do not see the mind of Christ, the spiritual-mindedness which alone can reproduce the word of God; nor do I think there is a fine sense of many Greek usages of words, nor of the finer shades of English ones. The definite article is put in, with no notice that it is not in the Greek, where it makes a very great difference. Thus Kurios (Lord), without the article for Jehovah following the LXX, and the Lord, for what the Lord Jesus became. God hath made Him "both Lord and Christ." You have the two in Psalm no: "Jehovah said unto my Lord." The distributive article, "a," is put in where, without it, the word gives the character of the person or thing spoken of. Thus, "a righteousness of God," so that you might think there were several, whereas, "righteousness of God," is in contrast with righteousness of man. In some cases this only drops the true force. "Paul an apostle," as one of many, instead of, "Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ," simply what he was.

So they have added pronouns, which destroy the whole force of the scriptural statement. Thus they have added "our" to redemption— "in whom we have our redemption"—instead of, "redemption." Now, "our" redemption is our personal deliverance—a great and saving blessing surely—but redemption is the great and stupendous work of the Saviour. I would add, before going further, that I can gather why they have used pronouns with it, namely, to distinguish it from the price of redemption, such as antilutron—ransom price. But this does not in the least authorise the use of the pronoun not in scripture, raising a question as to its limits, and making it solely something about us, which

scripture does not. The thing itself is lost, in its application to us, whoever we are.

They have in no way the force of the preposition en, in Greek. Thus, “hath at the end of these days spoken to us in his Son,” but that is not the force of “in Son”; difficult it may be to translate into English, and the margin is worse—an example of their use of “a.” “In Son” is the character of the speaking, as contrasted with the prophets. The italics of this save the translation here a little; but it is as doing a thing (en pneumati), in Spirit—(en sarki), in flesh. The Greek en has a very varied force, from its abstract nature, especially when used anarthrously; i.e., without the article.

I take up some passages now which are crucial. First, Romans I:17. “Therein is revealed a righteousness of God” — “a righteousness of God “I have already noted, it is as if there were several—but “a righteousness of God by faith unto faith.” Now this changes the whole sense of the passage; the Greek has apokaluptetai ek pisteos, is revealed by faith, if “by” be used, but that is nonsense; so, to use “by,” they have transferred ek pisteos to ‘righteousness,’ separating it from ‘revealing.’ The point is, it is righteousness of God, hence clearly not man’s work—it is revealed already, of course, in existence to be so. Is it revealed on the principle of man’s works fitting him for it, or the means of getting it? Clearly not, or it would not be God’s righteousness. Is it proclaimed on the principle of faith? whoever believes, then, has it, be he Greek or Jew. The whole statement of what made Paul not ashamed of the gospel is lost; the very hinge of all the truth is broken, the foundation-statement of the gospel gone. The righteousness is a

righteousness by faith, something realised in man, not simply “God’s righteousness.”

Verse 23. I object to “for,” but it is of minor importance. Verse 28, “refused” is false. Verse 32, “ordinance of God,” very bad morally; and the verse very weak. So the instructive abstraction of chapter 2:15 is taken away. “Therewith “is not in the sentence, and mars it; and the sense of the closing phrase is lost by inserting “them” — it is not what is said. In chapter 1:17, 18, “righteousness of God,” and “wrath of God,” may be a little bold, but alone give the sense and are in the fair analogy of the English language—not the abstraction of something known, but what can be known in its nature. Colour is so, and so darkness causes fear; light saves from stumbling. Here “of God” gives the character, but the subject is known.

The “you,” in 2 Corinthians 5:20, destroys the whole bearing of the passage; the Authorised Version had the same.

In Colossians 1:16 we have, “in him” (Christ), which has no sense at all. It is ignorance of the force of en. It is not ‘by’ as an instrument (dia), but the power and energy, or character, of that which works—difficult, I admit, to put in English, but they have made nonsense of it. That all things were created by Him is said in John 1; Hebrews 1. En is different; it is the one in, through, whose power a thing is done (Matt. 9:34; Acts 17:31). It is used generally for the character in which a thing is done, or the power. “All creation” (Col. 1:15); though I have much hesitated, I believe the change to be right. “Every creature” makes up the whole creation, but “every creature” takes up each individually; “all creation” takes

it up as such, and sets Christ as Head over it as a whole; “first-born of every creature” sets Christ, no doubt, as first among them, but more, apparently, as one of themselves, and this has been used for mischief; but I notice it, as leaving without excuse their translation of Ephesians 2:21, as the fruit of a doctrinal predilection, of which I will speak more fully further on. It is sad to see verse 19 (Col. 1) retained—a complete change in sense from the Greek, and utterly false. It states that the Father has willed about the whole Godhead, that it should dwell in the Man, Christ: the fact is found in chapter 2:9, the thought of the Godhead, chapter 1:19. To those acquainted with Gnostic follies, and Paul and John’s use of the word, “the fulness,” or “completeness,” of Godhead has a distinct and unquestioned force.

I am aware that 2 Corinthians 5:14 and following is a controverted passage; but I cannot but regret that, where it is so, they should lead people wrong, as I have no doubt they have. The question is, is the true sense, “then had all died,” or, practically, as in the Authorised Version, “then were all dead”? How does the love of Christ constrain him, as One dying for all, because saints have died to sin? But if all had died through Adam, Christ’s descending into death for them all is that by which we know love. The apostle judged that if one died for all, it was because death was the condition of all; and what makes it to me incontrovertibly the sense is, that he speaks of “they that live” as a portion out of them, whereas, if it be the saints dying with Christ, they are the same people. It was not a Messiah of the Jews he now knew, but a Christ who had died for all because of their condition, and was now glorified. The revised passage is, moreover, nonsense— “that one died for all,

therefore all died." How did Christ's dying for all make all die?

I take another example of fancied accuracy—1 John 4:16: "We know, and have believed, the love that God hath in us," which has no sense at all. In the margin, you have sense made of it, but the translation is wrong, nor do I understand why they put the tenses of the verbs as they do. I quite admit the perfect may be sometimes translated by the present. In the case of the Greek "to possess" it is regularly done so: but why one should be present, and the other past, is hard to tell. It is done so, because the Greek perfect is what is clearly done, but which continues to be, and so is, a present; but here both verbs are perfect.

In Galatians 2:17 the force of the passage is greatly lost by not seeing the force of the absence of the article. "While "is all wrong; it should be "if, in seeking to be"—then Christ is a minister of sin. "For I through law have died to law."…

"For if righteousness is through law." So verse 16: "by works of law"; and "save" is very bad, for it would affirm we were, only that it was through faith it was so. So in chapter 3:18: "law," but not "the" law. There is also a grave question as to the tenses; using imperfect for aorist may be right, no doubt, but may be wrong, as it in English implies a denial of the present: thus, Romans 12:3, "the grace that was given"—"has been," or simply "given." Chapter 11:31 maintains the old error, contradicting exactly what he is teaching.

Romans 10:5 is quite false, and justified only by a new reading, but, as a question of criticism, I leave it; but it is a most twisted sentence.

I now take an ordinary passage, where supposed refinement and exactitude has, in my judgment, injured their rendering of the passage, and what needed correction remains as it was, Phil. 1:4—I believe a mistake in the stopping. “Always, in every prayer of mine, making,” etc. So verse 7: “because you have me in your hearts.” Then, “Ye all are partakers with me in the grace,” or “in my grace”; that is, took part in helping the activities of the gospel, as he goes on to say. Grace wrought in Paul in both service and suffering, and they shared with him in them. Verse 12, “have happened.” They are mistaken in fancying they can render the aorist by the English historical imperfect. There are no aorists in English, save as the only two tenses are often such in English. Here the effect remains, which is the Greek perfect. I speak of principle, for there is no verb here in verse 12; “things concerning me”— “what concerns me has resulted … so that my bonds are become (or, abstractedly, should become) manifest.” The truth is, they have not understood what Paul was saying. Verse 22 has very little sense. Verse 26, we have the unhappy phrase—“in Christ Jesus in me”—in which I can see no meaning, it is, “as to me,” “in my case,” or “through.” This leads me to another case I lit upon, 1 John 4:16: “We know, and have believed, the love that God hath in us.”

In chapter 2:25, “the life eternal” is simply wrong; the abstract use of a word has the article in Greek, not in English. So, in Ephesians 3:21: “glory,” not “the” glory; so, verse 7, next chapter. In using, “have ye been saved,” Eph..2:5, the real force of the perfect (present continuance) is greatly lost. “With him … in Christ Jesus” (v. 6) has no true sense. There is no “him “in

Greek. Verse 13: “in “the blood is all wrong. I have no doubt that the “yet” of the Authorised Version, in Hebrews 4:15, is a great mistake.

I need not add any more, for this is no systematic criticism; then there might be often controversy, and the system of manuscripts, and modern judgment of them, would come in question. Nor is it saying there are no improvements, as words have been justly changed, as “lawlessness” put for anomia (“transgression of the law” —Authorised Version); “judge” for “condemn” (John 5), and other changes, which give the sense more clearly. But, as a whole, it will be of no use to give the mind of God to one turning from the Authorised Version to search it, but often merely perplex him. In this respect, which would be its main practical use, it seems to me a total failure.

I do not think their system of tenses clear; their use or disuse of the article is all wrong, so as to surprise me, in men, many of whom, I do not doubt, are better scholars than I am; nor is their estimate of the force of prepositions more than superficial.

But my great objection is, that I do not find the mind of God apprehended, so as to help a simple Christian; nor do I find, though the grace of Almighty God is referred to, any reference to the Spirit of God as Author, or as help in the work. I have not, of course, read it through, and compared it, but taken passages of considerable importance here and there, and noticed different details in running through it; but it has, I confess, surprised me. But the word of God is only apprehended [discerned] by the Spirit of God.

* * * * *

My former letter consists of mere desultory remarks, occasioned by passages which had caught my eye, or were important, so that I looked at them. At present I will write more studiedly.

It is a mistake to think that English tenses are simply grammatical expressions of time, or that they answer to Greek ones. The common use of auxiliary verbs makes them less such; for the auxiliary verb may be one time, the participle another, and give together the metaphysical force which connects both. ‘We saw his star,’ we have seen his star,’ are not different in time, but vary in the force of the expression. One is the simple historical fact, what happened a long while ago; the other—and these are much more striking and important—is the present state of their minds, what rests upon them now, though the fact of seeing be passed. As to this last form, in general it would be taken for the perfect of the Greek, a past thing continuing. But to take it as regularly answering to it is a mistake. ‘He took the city, but lost it the next day.’ ‘Took’ is an aorist. It is a fact that happened, and no more—past, no doubt, when I say so, but true in the past. If I said, ‘He has taken the city,’ it supposes he is in possession of it, because ‘has’ is present, and adds its force to taken—he has taken possession of the city. But to apply this rule as constant would mislead. One says he lives (or is living, the true present) in London. I say, No, he has lived there; that ‘lived’ is a past participle; ‘lived’ is continuing, but ‘has’ here denies the present continuance; the continuance is in the past participle; ‘has’ only affirms as a present conviction of my mind, that once he did so continue to live there; ‘has’ affirms something presently, but the thing affirmed is past—it is a past thing present in its

moral force to my mind. ‘He did live there’ affirms that the fact is past. ‘He has lived’ is no affirmation of time, but of a fact in question, but being a fact must have previously existed, characterising him in that particular respect. If I say ‘he has lived there a long time,’ it supposes he lives there still. If I spoke of time past, I should say, ‘he lived there a long time’—this is an aorist. The other is an affirmation as to a fact characterising him, meeting the question whether he ever did— ‘he has.’ It is a present truth, to my mind. ‘He lived there,’ ‘did five there,’ ‘has lived there,’ in themselves are all, as to the living the same time, but the mental effect quite different. I say ‘in themselves,’ because if I say, ‘he has lived there nine years,’ it goes up to the present time; on the contrary, ‘he lived there nine years’ supposes it was in past times, because ‘lived’ is historical and past; ‘has’ is present, and characterises the person. Thus the preterite—or call it what you please—is a past historical fact, that is all. ‘I ate at his table’—that is an historical fact. ‘I have eaten at his table’ is a characteristic, or, perhaps, questioned fact, an affirmation of intimacy. The difference is not one of time, but of mental or metaphysical force.

Let us take the passive, ‘I am crucified.’ The participle is a thing done, and I affirm I am as a present thing in that accomplished state. ‘I was crucified’ is a past historic fact. ‘I have been crucified’ is no doubt a past fact, but the ‘have’ gives a present moral power to it, which is no question of time: I am not a living man, I have been crucified. ‘I have’ has always a present application, though the thing spoken of be past. Hence, ‘he has taken the city,’ supposes he has it, because ‘taken’ means taking into possession, and ‘has’ affirms that as a

present fact. ‘I have,’ ‘he has,’ is present; it may be only the moral force which is present, but this depends on the force of the participle it is connected with. ‘He wrote, but I never got the letter’; ‘Yes, he has written, but I shall pay no attention to it.’ ‘Has’ involves its present moral value, to my mind.

Now, in the case of the blessed Lord, this difference is of the last importance. “Thou gavest him power over all flesh” is an historical fact in past unknown time, and no more. “Thou hast given” is the eternal counsels of God as to Christ in the power of present fulfilment.

I would now apply these remarks to. the revision. The Revisers have, in their Preface, raised the question as to the use of the auxiliary verb in the case of the aorist, and even referred to John 17 to illustrate their course. After quoting a few passages dependent on this question, I shall do the same. If what I have said above as to the metaphysical or moral force of the expressions in English be just, all their reasoning, which depends merely on the force of the Greek text, falls to the ground.

The Greek and English do not answer to one another. Take Matthew 2:2. They have used the preterite (or imperfect) in English. “We saw his star in the east.” This is a merely historical fact. There is nothing wrong in the translation, but ‘we have seen it’ has quite a different force to the mind. ‘We saw’ is the simple fact for some past time or another. ‘We have seen’ is a present abiding effect in their minds. His star had been revealed to them, and under the present, and then present, influence of that, they were come to worship. “We have seen” expresses the present state of their minds, and

what acted on them; “We saw” is a mere past fact, a bald, naked fact. In Matthew 28:5 they have used what, I suppose, is called the English perfect for the Greek participle; ‘was,’ it seems to me, would be better. The word is characteristic; but ‘has been’ brings time as a present thing in that character, in which the whole point is to shew He was not. “Jesus, the crucified,” might do; but in turning it into a verb the mental link is lost. (The Revisers have changed the reading, or they would have an analogous case in John 12:1. The use of the Greek article, with a participle to characterise a class, is quite common, without any reference to time, sometimes where a reference to it is impossible.)

I shall now give a summary of John’s Gospel, interesting in other ways, to lead us to the position the Lord takes in chapter 17. The first three chapters are introductory, but in some respects chapter 1 stands alone. It gives the Person and work of Christ, but not His relationships as Christ, High Priest, or Head of the church; it begins with His divine nature—the world did not know Him, and the Jews did not receive Him. Those born of God did. Hence the Jews are treated as reprobates in all the Gospel, and the elect recognised. Then His work; setting the world right, fulfilled in the new heavens and new earth; and baptising with the Holy Ghost, by which we know our relationship with God, the Father’s love, and are cognisant of heavenly things. There is yet another point. Nathanael, the godly remnant, owns Jesus, according to Jewish promise, developed in Psalm 2, but a psalm which reveals His rejection by men (so quoted by Peter), and makes way, in Christ’s answer, for larger hopes (Psalm 8), when He is set as Son of man over all the

works of God's hands. This change characterises the Gospel all through.

Chapter 2.—We have the wedding-supper, and judgment which will characterise His return. This completes the earthly hope.

Chapter 3.—We have the great principles which form the basis for us of our part with God, a new birth and the cross. This, too, judges Israel as a nation, though to be restored, and in what was needed for men, opens out heavenly things in a crucified Son of man, Son of God, given in love. But this closed His history as the living Messiah of the Jews. It was the crucified Son of man, and carries the Lord's coming, out and away from the region of promise into the testing of man by the manifestation of God as light—what His testimony was as speaking the words of God, and then that as Son He was loved of the Father, who had given all things into His hand. Entered on this larger sphere, there was one point of contact between man and God, believing on the Son. Jew or Gentile were here nothing. He that believed had eternal life, and he that believed Him not would not see life, the wrath of God abode upon him. The whole of John goes on this ground. The Jews are a rejected people, according to chapter 1. And all is in resurrection, and consequent on death.

Messiahship to the Jews is repudiated, and all the blessing is in resurrection, and through death. What I have to say on the following chapters will be much more brief. The fourth is the transition from Messiahship in Judea, where He was practically rejected, to the worship of God in spirit and in truth. Jerusalem and Samaria both gone. The Father in grace seeking such

worshippers, and here, in one alien in position from the promises, and fallen in her ways. But all now depended on a God who gave, not required, and gave eternal life, in the power of the Spirit, in Christ, and this springing up in its full development on high.

Chapter 5 is the Son of God, who quickens as the Father, and alone judges, as Son of man, with divine authority.

Chapter 6.—It is the humbled Son of man, on whom we feed, and thus live spiritually, and abide in Him. He is viewed as incarnate, and dying. His going up where He was before is just alluded to, but four times over the blessing is said to be in resurrection and the last day.

Chapter 7 introduces the millennium, typified by the feast of tabernacles, the feast of Israel's rest in the land, and of Christ's shewing to the world, which could not be then. Instead of it, Christ's heavenly glory is introduced, and the consequent giving of the Holy Ghost sent down, revealing His glory from heaven.

Chapter 8.—His word is rejected, and that word expressed Himself.

Chapter 9.—His works are rejected.

Chapter 10.—He declares that He takes His sheep out from the fold of Israel—that was the purpose of God, and would not be hindered—gives them eternal life, and never lets them perish. He had sheep not of that fold; these (the Gentile sheep) He would bring, and there would be one flock and one Shepherd. Being thus rejected, though God's purpose was accomplished, God does not allow that rejection without giving the blessed Lord a full testimony, and that in His three characters—Son of God, Son of David, and Son of man. In the

resurrection of Lazarus He is manifested as Son of God; in riding on the ass's colt into Jerusalem, He was declared Son of David. The Greeks then come up, and He says that the hour was come for the Son of man to be glorified; but then He adds, to gather the fruits of that Name, the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; and then He looks at the cross, bows to His Father's glory in it, and sees His new and more glorious place by it. A living Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews, a dying Saviour was the attractive object of all men in the world.

We have, moreover, in the first two, Messiah's titles, or position, on earth—Son of God and King of Israel—but rejected, as given in Psalm 2; in the third, that of Son of man (Psalm 8), to which that led, but which could not be taken in its divine development but through death. Christ could ever, surely, have gone back perfect to His Father, but He would have remained alone. The corn of wheat must die, for Him to take His true place as such. Here, then, the development in John of the place and Person of Christ, as come down here, closes. His heavenly place, and what led to it, now begins, and this is, expressly stated in the beginning of chapter 13. His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father. And we have then the whole scheme of God's thoughts, partly revealed in His Person, and in what had been done through that; and then, in contrast with that, what was to come on His being glorified, and the sending of the Holy Ghost, and the fact of His return in glory, but to give His disciples a heavenly place.

The change is stated in chapter 13. What had taken place, is—after the statement that He went on high to prepare a place, and return, in chapter 14:6-11—the

Father had been revealed in the Son. What follows—the Spirit, giving us knowledge of our place, was to come.

Having given from Scripture the great basis of God's thoughts as to that, as to which chapter 13 brings in the historical moment of accomplishment, I proceed with the chapters to chapter 17, where we shall enter into fuller development.

Chapter 15.—He, not Israel, was on earth the true Vine, and the disciples the branches, already clean through the word ("now," in verse 3, is "already"). He exhorts them to abide in Him—that was future.

Chapter 16 continues with the presence of the Holy Ghost, entirely then future.

Chapter 17 returns to the change, only addressing the Father for its accomplishment. "Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son."26 He states what He had done, and looks to the future for them, and that on to the time of their glory, and being with Himself on high, already held out in principle in chapter 13. The Son of man was personally entering into glory. I now take up a general truth in direct connection with this, the basis really of the development of all the Gospels. It was in the eternal counsels of God that all things should be in the hands of the Son of man. All things even were created by Him, and for Him; Col. 1. As Son He was the appointed Heir (Heb. 1), and, in the purpose of God, it was to be in man's hands, according to Psalm 8, as applied in Hebrews 2, 1 Corinthians 15, and Ephesians 1, already noticed. It was part of this purpose that He should have co-heirs—how rich the blessing for us!—and the creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

At this moment I only occupy myself with the committal of all things to Christ as Son of God and Son of man, though our place in this scheme, as fully associated with the blessed Lord, may be the most precious to us, save His own glory in it. He came as the Heir of promise here on the earth, as Seed of David and Seed of Abraham as to His place, but personally the Revealer of the Father—rejected because He really was so—men not bearing light, though it came in love; John 15:22-24; ch. 3:19. But this gave occasion to the bringing forth the eternal counsels of God in the second Man, through death and redemption, from behind the working of man's responsibility under law and promise, His government of this world. For this, too, the cross must come in, because of man's sin (hatred against God in goodness, as well as breaking the law), because of God's glory (John 13:31, 32), that the promises made to Abraham without condition, might be forfeited—forfeited by man—yet fulfilled hereafter in the second Man, but all lost as to the first man by his rejection of Him in whom they were. The cross closed up the history of the first man, and the world was judged (John 12:31), and then, through redemption and the glorifying God, God's history began in the second Man in a new state, risen from the dead—sin, death, Satan's power, God's judgment, all passed through, and left behind, a place and state beyond them all, God being perfectly glorified; John 13:31, 32.

Now, the fulfilment of the counsels of God as to the glory, always comes after this, and necessarily must. As regards the Person of the Lord, His title and competency were ever complete; but that is not the question, but of the accomplishment of it in His manhood. Thus, if He

created all things, as He did, they were created for Him as well as by Him, but not to take them as man in their corruption.

So, as Son He is Heir of all things; Heb. 1. His given glory is a consequence there, and as to His title as Son of man, though personally glorified, the psalm (as we see in Heb. 2) is not fulfilled; and as to the earthly royal part (Rev. 11:17), we have—as indeed many parables and passages teach us—the testimony that He has not taken it. Psalm no, too, is simple and plain on this point. David's Son was to sit at God's right hand as David's Lord till the time came.

But our inquiry now is not as to personal title and competency, but as to what is said as to the given glory. I should insist upon all being His in personal title from creation on, only that He must be a man, and that the counsels of God as to this were identified with His Person, so that I could always say all was His. There remains the question of any scriptural statements of the fulfilment in fact.

I will now cite the passages of scripture as to this glory belonging to Him. We read in John 3:35, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Here we have the title of His Person (v. 31), and the rejection of His testimony; no man received it, though He spake the words of God coming from heaven. What God was in His nature is stated up to this, here the relationship of Son with the Father. It is the absolute gift of all things by the Father to the Son— as to facts, the cross, and the universal rejection of His testimony, and then the Father's counsels in love to the Son. So, in Hebrews 1, where, again, it is, when He had by Himself

made the purification of sins, that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens as man, as such become more glorious than angels, as He had by inheritance a more excellent name than they; this, was His title; that, the place He took, or what He became as man, consequent on the cross.

So, in Matthew n, it is on His entire rejection, and taking knowledge of it in His heart, that He says, “All things have been27 delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Come unto me … learn of me.” In the following chapter Israel is cast out. The direct teaching is, that the rejection of Christ was the proof of the helpless state of man, but led to the unveiling of the counsels of God, which were behind, in which all things were delivered to the second Man as Son, the full purpose and grace of God; and here again it is the Father. The moral principle of it, then, receiving His word, is at the end of Matthew 12. In chapter 13 the kingdom of heaven is brought in. I may add chapter 16, the church; chapter 17, the kingdom in glory. In chapter 13, at the end of the age the Son of man exercises His power. His place down here is in chapter 20:23. The end of Matthew is His closing controversy with the Jewish people; but in Matthew 28:18, 19, He bases His commission to His disciples on all power being given to Him in heaven and on earth—a commission never fulfilled historically in Scripture, unless alluded to at the very end of Mark. The disciples gave up the gospel to the Gentiles to Paul; Gal. 2:7-9. The change of position is noted in Matthew 26:64, where, for “hereafter,” read, “henceforth.” From that onward they would only see

Him in His heavenly glory at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds. (John 1:51, read also "henceforth," where it is personal title to the service of angels down here; but by many the word is left out here.)

The statement of Matthew 11:27, is found in Luke 10:22, but is the same, and again the Father and the Son. The kingdom of God was come amongst them, proved by the casting out of Satan's power. Yet He could say, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come. (See Luke 12:50.) He must die to let loose (so to speak) the purpose of God in grace. (See chap. 19:12.) He went away to receive the kingdom, and return. The Lord tests them with the perplexing point of David's Son being David's Lord. But we have further light in Scripture on the actual historical time both of the glory and the dominion—the great and glorious work of the cross being the moral ground of it all. "Now," we read—John 13—(when Judas had gone out) "is the Son of man glorified"—in accomplishing, that is, the work of the cross— "and God is glorified in him; and if God be glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and will straightway glorify him"—not wait for His taking the public and manifested glory, but do it now.

The cross, then, as that in which all the moral glory of God was made good, and the Son of man glorified in doing it, was the basis and the point of departure of the given glory. Divine glory had been eternally His with the Father, but now there was a glorifying of the Son of man in connection with His perfectly glorifying God. So it is said, "To him that over-cometh will I give to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." This was the ground and the

epoch (with forty days interval on earth) of the personal glorifying of Christ. He suffered, and entered into His glory. The prophets even spoke of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. The difference between this and exercising dominion is clearly stated in Hebrews. Revelation brings it out in detail. Based on Psalm no, in Hebrews 10, we are told He is sitting at God's right hand, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. So, in Hebrews 2, "we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." There Stephen saw Him, not yet sitting down, His intercession on the cross having suspended judgment, till rejected in glory as He had been in humiliation, but returning then (Acts 3) if they repented. The history of that people, and indeed of man, as responsible, was closed, but the foundation laid in His work, and in eternal righteousness, for sovereign grace to bring the saints into the same glory in which He will appear.

All authority is His now; its development and display are according to the purpose and wisdom of God, who is gathering in grace His joint-heirs, while He sits—proof that His work is finished—at the right hand of God, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. All dominion is His now as Man, Satan's having been annulled by death, though for us that last enemy is not destroyed, only it is become gain to us. What we have seen, then, in Scripture, is the full title of the Person of Christ as Creator, Son of God, and Son of man; and in application — sin and Satan's power having come in, and through man, the ground having been laid in the cross for taking it according to God—a special work going on which

delays its public assumption, namely, the gathering the joint-heirs to be with Him in glory, and for ever with Him; and then (though title was always His—personal position in glory, founded on the cross, now His) He will, as Son of man, openly take and display His power and glory, and us with Him, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, all things in heaven and earth being headed up in one under His authority. This glorifying and giving all power to man in the Person of Christ, is the great central truth and fact of God's counsels.

And now let me recall and define the difference between the preterite, and the participle and the auxiliary verb. The preterite states that a fact has happened long ago, or, more exactly, in a time separated from the present; 'has,' with the participle, clothes the person or at least his position, as a present thing, with the character flowing from the thing spoken of. The subject here spoken of is the counsels of God as to Christ, and 'has given' views Him as clothed with what is given—those counsels of God clothing His Person, first, in the thoughts of God; then, in the accomplished fact, those thoughts realised. Now, the thoughts of God—as is amply revealed in Scripture—were, that the Son as man should inherit all things. On this point Scripture is quite clear. It is equally clear that the possession of this place of glory and dominion was to be after suffering. It is difficult to separate the two, as historically the suffering was necessary to the possession of the glory; still, some passages contemplate distinctly the purpose of God. Thus, in John 3, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." This, though rejection

had been spoken of, speaks of what was in the Father's mind.

In Ephesians 1, in the dispensational arrangements of God, we learn that His purpose was to head up all things in Christ— all things in heaven and on earth. So, in Matthew n—though here rejection comes in—the purpose, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father." So Psalm 8, used by Paul as to Christ in 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, Ephesians: "He hath put all things under his feet." It was not in this character of glory He came. He was to assume it after suffering; this characterised it. He emptied Himself, and took on Him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of man, humbled Himself as man, and was obedient unto death; wherefore also God hath28 highly exalted Him, and given Him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. His obedient descent to death was the ground of His ascent to glory and universal dominion. "Ought not," says the Lord Himself, "Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" So Peter: "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." So, in the passages cited for the general fact, John 3; it was when, though He spoke the words of God, no man received His testimony, that the giving all things into His hand is spoken of. The cross had been brought in, and it was when rejected as presented to man that this new glory of God's purpose was brought in, in the risen and glorified Man. So, in Matthew 11, it was when John and Christ's testimony had been both rejected, and terrible judgment was to

come in consequence, that He says, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” “God,” says Peter (Acts 2:36), “hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The passage referred to in the Ephesians is as plain as can be: “What is the exceeding greatness of his power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church.” So, indeed, in the psalm quoted here; it is when rejected as the Christ, in the second psalm, that He is set as Son of man over all the works of God’s hands. But Ephesians is as plain as possible. It is the Christ raised from the dead that becomes Head over all things. He that ascended is He that descended into the lower parts of the earth, and thus ascended that He might fill all things. It was when Christ was raised that He says, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.” We have thus clearly taught, the Father’s giving all things to the Son to be the mind and counsel of God; that this purpose of the Father was to be fulfilled in Him as man, and that, founded on His sufferings, He glorifying God in them.

Hebrews 2 shews the fulfilment of Psalm 8 in part, after He had come down, and been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, in that He was crowned with glory and honour, but all things not put under Him. And the important point which is fully developed in the first three Gospels, is, that He came according to promise as the Messiah prophesied of, and

this, though far from being all even then, yet was of moment as regards the faithfulness of God. The testimony to who was there was full in word and work, and therein man was finally and fully tested, but therein, not only man's state was shewn, but God's, who said, "It may be they will reverence my Son," and closed the whole history of that people—that is, of man under God's culture, His vineyard and fig-tree—and the Lord pronounced its judgment in cursing the fig-tree. Man under the first covenant should never bear fruit, and the Lord says, "Now is the judgment of this world." The whole dealing with men, not only on the ground of law, but of promise, in the Person of Christ, the Messiah, was over, till He return in glory; and then it will be in grace under the new covenant, when they shall repent. But this rejection of Christ in this character gave occasion to the more glorious and wide-reaching position of Christ as Son of man, He having in death, and as made sin, perfectly glorified God in all that He is, and that, as made sin, obedient unto death.

The Messiahship of promise was closed; and God brought out, through the faithfulness of Christ, these counsels which, existing before the worlds, had been held in abeyance till man was fully tried, and as to sin, God fully glorified. He passed from a rejected Messiahship into the present Heirship of eternal glory, and the accomplishment of eternal redemption; and, being that eternal life to believers which was manifested in Him, not merely to quicken in a divine way, as He had done from Adam on, but to be the present manifestation of that life in a Man down here, and the communicator of it to others, so that they should be sons brought through redemption into His place—"My Father and

your Father, my God and your God”—He Himself taking His place as a Man in glory. But while He entered into the glory He had had with the Father before the world was, He did so as Man, gone to prepare a place for us, entered as our Forerunner, but entered into heavenly glory, according to the counsels of God, as contrasted with an earthly Messiahship and an earthly kingdom.

Christ’s position was wholly changed—a change than which there could be nothing greater morally, or in the manifestation of glory. A rejected Messiah becomes a divine Saviour and Lord of all. Such had ever been God’s counsels, but now the accomplishment of them was come to the birth. It is touching and instructive to see, how fully Christ felt this rejection, while yet His heart goes out in grace, weeping over the now God-deserted city, but then bows in perfect obedience to His Father; and then, how the new universal and heavenly glory, the counsels of God as to Him hidden (so to speak) in His Messiahship before, burst in upon His sight. We have examples of this in Matthew n and John 12.

Now the preterite in English is merely an historical statement of a fact which is viewed as past, and past at a time looked at as apart from the present. ‘He lived in London’; ‘he walked the whole journey’: ‘we saw His star.’ The participle, with the auxiliary, embodies in the person spoken of, as a present thing, the character or thing which is the subject spoken of in the sentence; only, when God’s counsels are spoken of, very constantly the thing spoken of is spoken of as existing, because it exists and is certain in His mind. Its being there is a reality. This is well known in the prophetic writings. Thus, “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;29 … then said I, Lo, I come

to do thy will, O God." These were the counsels of God freely accepted of the Son, written in the volume of the book; but it is said, "A body hast Thou prepared." So Psalm no: so frequently. In time comes the accomplishment, the actual realisation in time, of God's eternal thought. The Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into His hand. This is God's mind and counsel, which we have seen was connected in its accomplishment with the cross—the proof of the total sinfulness of man, the close of the Messiahship of Christ, as a relationship with Israel on the ground of their responsibility, come according to promise. As said in the Hebrews, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." It was a Man despised and rejected of men (so that all connection of God with them was broken on that ground for ever, the fig-tree never to bear fruit), but, through the cross and suffering even to death, entering into the glory purposed of God from everlasting for Christ, and that on high.

Now John 13 and 17 give us the moment of this change. Chapter 13 is not my direct object now, save as presenting the moment in question, and what attached to it. The hour was come that Jesus should depart out of this world unto the Father. The history of the sufferings of Christ is not the subject of John's Gospel, but nothing can be clearer than the passage from the old position of Christ to the new—His position of humiliation, and position of glory, which enabled Peter to say (1 Pet. 3:22), "Who is gone into heaven… angels, and principalities and powers being made subject unto him." In the other Gospels you get allusions to it, as in Matthew n, and what is connected with it, as the change from Matthew 12 to 13, but there more connected with

His Person, but here we find precision as to the time and way in which the change took place. He would not desert His disciples, nor cease to serve them; if He could not be associated with them here, He must fit them to have a part with Him where He was going. Clean they were by the word, as to what they were, but their walk in a defiling world might render them unfit to have a part with Him, for He was going to God, and He girds Himself, and washes their feet—a beautiful and blessed expression of grace, but it must not detain us here—for His hour was come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, and He knew that the Father had delivered all things into His hand, and that He was going to God. That which we have seen doctrinally stated in Ephesians 1, 1 Peter 3, and elsewhere, is now presented as a fact in the consciousness of Jesus,30 a fact in the counsels of God, and now historically realised. His time was come, when He should take the place—His in God's counsels—where everything was delivered into His hands, according to the statement in John 3, Hebrews 1, etc. Here it is connected with His work, and the position based on the righteousness of God; John 13:31, 32.

Henceforth the Son of man was to sit on the right hand of power. In His lifetime, in virtue of the dignity of His Person, and His perfectness, angels came and ministered unto Him; the time was coming when all things would be put under Him, but His present glory was to be immediate. In chapter 17 the connection is with the Father, and Christ's place of Son, but the event is the same. The hour was come for Christ to take His glory, according to the purpose of God. The Son was to be glorified, and this lays the basis of the whole chapter,

which treats of the new place of the saints, up even to the glory, and being where Christ is, and as distinct (though both were the Son's) from what had been while He had been on earth. Now here they have changed the word into the preterite. "As thou gavest him power." This is merely an historical fact at some distant epoch of past time, and may have been merely temporary. It merely recites a past fact at some period distinct and separate from the present. If I read, "As thou hast given him authority over all flesh," etc., it is the counsels of God as to His Son as Son of man (which I have therefore gone through) but withal His being now—for the hour was come to glorify Him—clothed with the purposed glory in which He was to have dominion; the whole chapter stating what had been, and the change now taking place. All this—the counsels as abiding in the mind of God, their accomplishment in clothing the Saviour with glory consequent on the cross, the glorious arrangement by which every attribute of God [had been revealed and glorified], the judgment of man's estate, what had been done already in the Person and service of Christ here below, a service now closed, with the consequent position of the disciples, as developed in the chapter—all is lost to give us a very inadequate translation of a Greek aorist. Some time or other God had given Him this power, effectually exercised, when given is not said. As the present moment of change for the accomplishment of God's counsels, expressed in "Thou hast," all is clear. The Father had been revealed in Him (John 14), could not before the Son came, for in whom was it, or could it be?

God's rule for man had been given in the law. Jehovah's will was made known. He had preserved in faithful

mercy, as the Almighty, the patriarchs He had called. He had warned by prophets, and spoken to Israel of a Saviour to come—had given precious revelations of His ways and goodness, and by grace met the faith of those that trusted in Him; but He was not there, or, if there, professedly hidden behind the veil where it was death to intrude. The law and the prophets were until John, and he came—still, earthly—before the face of Jehovah, to prepare His way before Him. And the clouds broke: and the Sun of Righteousness was there (though not yet in judgment, as in Malachi). The Father Himself revealed in the Son, only in humiliation, that He might in grace be close to man, as He touched the leper, saying, "I will, be thou clean." And the knowledge of the Father thus revealed, and of Him who came down as life from Him, was eternal life. It was not the just and perfect law of God, and obedience to it, required from men; it was He in whom was life come down to manifest it to men, and communicate it in grace to them. (See 1 John 4:9; ch. 1:2; ch. 2:8.) He came also to make propitiation for our sins, but this regarded our being made fit for the presence of God, and though not separated from, yet not in itself life. That was in the Person of the Father, and of the Son revealing Him. And now note, that while it was the eternal purpose of the Father thus to glorify the Son, and that the title over all creation belonged to the Son as Creator, yet this supremacy was to be in the hands of the Son of man. Thus, till the Son was on earth, the Father was not, and could not be, revealed; nor could the Son till He was a man hold it; nor, though personally qualified, could He, in point of fact, take it into possession till He had suffered, and was risen.

Hence the historical vagueness of the preterite is quite out of place. It was the hour of His being glorified in order to His taking it, and the whole matter was confined to His life here, and His glorious position which followed His faithfulness in it; as I have said, at the moment of passing from one to the other, He declares what belonged to each. “Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” First, the Father, in grace infinite, original, and uncaused save by what was in Himself, sent His Son, before which the passage has no application. The Father was known in Him; the Son, in absolute obedient grace, came, at all cost, to do His will, not sparing Himself, that the Father might be glorified, and we, poor sinners, blest. The Sent One had come. He had glorified the Father on the earth, but to this time only it applies, and to the place of the obedient Sent One. “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” The hour is now come that this is closed, but now He can say as to that definite time and place, now presently closed, I have finished the work, and glorified Thee in what Thou sentest Me to do.

Here is a true aorist, no time, but the object of sending. Had it been said, “Thou hast given me to do,” it would be a present unfinished task; and yet, “I glorified thee on the earth, I finished,” etc., is a past historical time. From fancied, not real, accuracy as to Greek, they have constructed what is no grammatical English at all: ‘I finished a work some time ago (namely, a time apart from this), which Thou hast given me to do,’ which has a present sense. The reading they adopt makes no difference. ‘I glorified (past historical) Thee, having finished the work,’ etc. Indeed, reading as they do makes it worse, because the finishing is in the same

historical time, and has the causative sense common to this participle. He ‘glorified His Father’ is past time, ‘having finished the work.’ This destroys the whole force of the passage, that the hour was come.

There are only two states of the Son of man (though many details may be added, as His taking the kingdom, giving it up, etc.); but as to His own state only two: a sent, humbled Christ, obedient unto death; and Man exalted consequently into the glory which, as Son, He had with the Father before the world was. It is of the moment of the change from one to the other He is speaking. He looks to the Father to glorify the Son in the glory which had been His before the worlds, but in a new place and state, as Man; one of these states was then closed, the other just about to begin, and He states what He had done in the state now passing away for ever. But it is not, ‘I glorified Thee on the earth when I was there’ —perhaps a long time ago, at any rate apart from the present—which is the sense of the revision; it is what He had been doing up to the moment of change now come, and could be no other time. He had glorified the Father on earth, seeking that the Father should now glorify Him with Himself, had finished (or, if the reading be preferred, ‘having finished’) the work the Father had given Him to do: and this could only be just then, if Christianity be in question. And now that the work was finished, the Father was to glorify Him—this between Him and the Father. Then, as to the disciples, He had manifested the Father’s name to them, which indeed could only be done then. Now they knew that what the Father had given Him was of the Father to the Son, not of Jehovah to Messiah, for all the words the Father had given to the Son as Man down here He had

communicated to them, and they had believed in His coming out from the Father. Now He prayed for them as left down here, when He was going, for they were the Father's, and He was glorified in them. In verse 12 you have the difference of the preterite (imperfect) and 'have.' "I kept" is historical. "I have kept" up to now, so that none (save Judas) is lost. He has prayed for them as put in immediate relationship with the Father, like His own (v. 9). He then prays for them as set in the place of testimony with the Father's word, as He had been (v. 15), and thus sets them, in both respects, in His own place, they being formed by His now being sanctified in glory. Then, He prays for those who believed through their word, that they may be all one; and finally, gives them the glory given to Him—in everything put in His place, and associated with Him—loved as He was loved; and at last will have them— blessed be His name!— where He is; gives them to enjoy this love meanwhile, when the world does not know it as it will when they are seen in the same glory. It was the present full revelation of the Father's name, for their place with Him and testimony in the world: and lastly, brought where Christ was going. The Father's name is the key to the whole chapter. All depends on its being the present moment of change, as stated in the first verses. It is a chapter of known, of imperfectly known, blessedness, but presents the disciples as loved of the Father as Christ was, and Christ in us, that we may enjoy it; and the whole counsels of God in this, and their accomplishment, are sacrificed, as far as such splendour of grace can be, for a fancied Greek aorist.

A detail in verse 18 here shews the absurdity of it, and how the point of the chapter is lost. "I sent them into the

world”—whereas the only time He sent them out in His lifetime, historically, they were strictly forbidden to go near it, or to any but Israel; so utterly were the Revisers ignorant of the mind of God here. And while, in many passages, the preterite, or participle with ‘has,’ may be a matter of taste, or delicacy of apprehension, yet often it is of all-importance. I might go to other examples, but I have taken one where the fulness of the grace into which we are brought on Christ’s going away is unfolded, that we may see of what moment it is; and that where the foundation is laid in Romans 1, and in crowning the blessing in John 17, the Revisers have wholly missed the mind of God. I do not the least deny they have rightly corrected many sentences—I think they have—but it is not a translation to be trusted, as giving us the mind of God; and this alone has made me write these remarks.

A few special cases have caught my eye in the revision, which I notice. 1 Corinthians 15:49 they have translated “we have borne,” quite rightly, but proving that their rule of adapting the preterite to the aorist cannot be carried out as a general rule. Here, too, also—I doubt not rightly—they have not followed mere diplomatic criticism, and read “let us bear” for “we shall bear.” Even if the Vatican MS. opposed, it is a pity they were not equally bold in Romans 5:1; [where they have put ‘let us have peace’].

In Acts 2:36 we have a passage rightly, I believe, translated, but which shews the fallacy of their rule, the observance of which in John 17 has deprived it of all its force. “God hath made this Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ”— one of the verbs they translate by a preterite, the other by ‘has,’ and the participle. But this

passage proves also clearly an ignorance of Greek, which has destroyed the sense of a passage, which, if not fundamental, is one of the richest parts of the structure of truth—Ephesians 2:21, where they have translated “every building,” not, “all the building.” One would have thought that the whole tenor of the passage which insists on the middle wall of partition being broken down, and both reconciled in one body to God, would have guarded them from such a blunder—for blunder it is, but a blunder affecting the whole doctrine of the church, the absence of unity being ostentatiously put forward in the epistle consecrated to its establishment. Every tyro knows that, as a general thing, pas in Greek, with an article, is ‘the whole’—without it, ‘every,’ but to make it an absolute rule is only ignorance. The received text has it, with very good authorities, as A,C,P, correction of the Sinaiticus, and many others; and if not the original reading, it was added to make plain what the Revisers have set aside. But it is false that it is a universal rule as to pas. Where there is a genitive which determines, the article is left out—for example, “every house of Israel,” is nonsense on the face of it; indeed, where the noun stands as a composite whole in itself, no article is added, as Romans 1:29. Oikodome (building), though one word, is a composite word, and oikos is a practical genitive after dome, and the whole word a composite whole in itself. The doctrine is false. No particular church is the habitation of God through the Spirit; nor can what is said of oikodome here be said of any particular church, that each is growing to a holy temple. Was Thyatira doing so? Was Laodicea doing so? to say nothing of Ephesus and Sardis. And where are all the early Christian churches? The attempt to make it “every

house," in Acts 2:36 (marg.), is a want of common sense, and ignorance of Greek.

I confess I am surprised with men, some of whom (and, I doubt not, others whom I do not know, are so) I sincerely believe to be much better Hellenists than myself, that such evidence of want of scholarship should crop up. They have not attempted it—not even in the margin—in Romans n; it would have been too absurd; and in Ephesians 2 there was doctrinal purpose, for they have, "each several building," and "every building," in the margin. Why, if "every" was a universally binding rule, as to the meaning, not stick to it? But to make it, after the verses 19 and 20, from which it cannot be separated, "each several building" is perversion, not translation. Oikodome is not a classical word, and does not receive an article at all, but in special cases, even where we might expect it, in Greek—only three times in the New Testament, where it is plural, and refers to the various constructions of the temple: Romans 14:19, where it is specified in character by the Greek article following, not used in the abstract, and 2 Corinthians 12:19, where it is also specially determined by the Greek pronoun for your. Taken simply it qualifies the act, and is not a direct specified fact; nor does an article after pas always make it signify 'the whole,' but distinctly the contrary, as with participles, as Romans 2:10; ch. 10:4; ch. 1:16. It characterises pas; so Romans 12:3; but I need not multiply instances. There is another case, where pas is used without an article, not in the sense of 'every': moral ideas, which embrace a number of thoughts or acts composing the idea, as people compose the house of Israel; as "in all goodness and righteousness and truth"; Ephesians 5:9; "all deceit," Acts 13:10; where

there are four other cases; “all wisdom and understanding,” Colossians 1:9, and “all power” verse 11; “all lowliness,” Eph. 4:2; “all fear,” 1 Pet. 2:18; “all honour,” 1 Tim.6:1; “all joy,” James 1:2. Probably others which are not recorded in the books which furnished me with these. ‘Whole,’ in the sense of holos, which is often used, would not do; nor would ‘every’; the thought is composite, and “all “is justly used, but’ every ‘would be false, as in power, lowliness, fear, so in “joy and peace,” in Romans 15:13, where compare “the hope,” in the same verse. To make pas without an article, as necessarily always ‘every,’ is a blunder, and in the Revision it is put in the margin, Acts 2:36, as we have seen, as if this were the case, where it would be simple nonsense. ‘All,’ and in German allerlei, which Luther uses, specially the English, all convey the meaning. I had nearly forgotten one instance of a different character—flesh, used as denoting men, in Matthew 24:22, etc., in English, ‘no flesh’—an article could not be used. It is, again, a word embracing many individuals in one thought, “all flesh,” and then, viewed as a whole, the verb as to it, negatived what is said.

Let me add here, as the subject has been before us in the passage, that we must not confound the “house” (church) built by man, according to 1 Corinthians 3, and the “house of God “built by Christ (Matt. 16), against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. The latter is found in the passage which occupies us (Eph. 2:21), Matthew 16, and 1 Peter 2— I am not aware of any other place. In these it is Christ who builds, or no one else is spoken of; the “living stones” come, or “the house” grows.

The more their use of the word en is examined, the more erroneous it will be found. In 1 Corinthians 8:11 they have been forced to put ‘through’; in chapter 6:11, ‘in,’ as to the Spirit, hardly makes sense; but such passages as Colossians 1:16, 17, as indeed others, are not only wrong, but shew they have not seized the force of en, where not used locally or materially at all. Compare 2 Corinthians 6, where en and dia, and a third reciting form are used, with substantially the same sense; in en and dia, the latter with the genitive is the instrumental means, en the character or power of that in which a thing is done. Either would often do. ‘His graciousness was shewn by his kindness to those who deserved nothing, in his kindness to,’ etc.—either would do; not that they ever mean the same; one was the means of shewing; the other, the character of that ‘in’ (‘by,’ ‘through’) which it was shewn, but the result is the same. They are really changed for style in 2 Corinthians 6; one may suit one word better than the other, but, ‘in much patience,’ or ‘by much patience,’ though not the same idea, if analysed, is the same thing: in verse 7, “through the arms of righteousness,” en would not do so well, and the apostle changes to dia, and then uses it four times, where en would do very well, and where dia has pretty much the sense of en—his mouth was opened. But for this reason— to make en mean simply ‘in’ is a gross mistake. “In spirit”— “in flesh” have a sense difficult to put in English, but which in many cases ‘in’ could not render. I pray “in (en) spirit”; so 2 Corinthians 7:1, “in (en) the fear of God.” Here the English use of ‘in’ answers to en, but it is characteristic of the moral state in which the perfecting was done.

But what is the force of 2 Corinthians 7:7? The Revisers are obliged to say ‘by.’ But the attempt to force the use of ‘in,’ as if that was the literal translation always of en, has falsified different passages. To “baptise into” is not the sense of the preposition eis with baptise; it is that to which you are brought, and with which you are associated. “All baptised into Moses” is flat nonsense, or, “baptised into John’s baptism.” This is simply prejudice. Were I to go through the book, many things might call for remark.

I think Galatians 4:13 a complete mistake; verse 14 makes it plain, I think, comparing, too, other passages; but controversy on particular passages is not my object, but what affects fundamentally the whole character of the translation and that as affecting the foundations of truth. I have just come across another case, which has a peculiar character, but shews their rule to be untenable. John 3: “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen”; and again, “What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony.” Now there is no aorist to the Greek verb horao, “to see” or “take heed,” but the irregular tense, which is found in the conjunctive in Luke 13:28, only there in the New Testament, I believe. In John 3:32 we have “what he has seen and heard”; the first a perfect, the second an aorist. They have translated, “What he hath seen and heard,” to which I have no objection; but their rule is given up—could not be applied. They may take the form of the word as used for the aorist, for the reason above mentioned, but then the rule is doubly given up, as it is in verse 11. The truth is, the preterite is historical of past facts, and when the aorist is so used is all well —“Jesus having entered,” but ‘has’ is much more so,

which states a past fact, present to the mind, but whose object is not time at all.

But in the first passage which struck me in Matthew 2:2, their rule fails, or their translation—it should be, 'was born,' and verse 3, 'was troubled'; and again, if they put 'saw,' they should put 'came.' Now in this case it is not of any consequence, save the force of the language; I use it to shew that their rule is a fallacy, and that they cannot maintain it. And this affects the whole translation, and in John 17 deprives us of the true force of one of the most blessed portions of scripture. There is a use of the aorist which is a conditional future in English, as where hina (that) is used (John 3:20,21), but it is a delicacy of language difficult to reproduce, though often of moment; it is not that the thing may take place, but that it may have taken place. (See Matt. 3:13, 14.) It is found in exhortation, not as the desire that they become so, but so have acted as that the subject of the exhortation may be already true of them: there, with hina, John 3:17; Matthew 5:18—here a future perfect might do.

I may cite some passages to shew a false licence in translating, which wholly spoils and destroys the sense. Thus, Ephesians 2:6, they have added 'him,' which is not in the Greek at all, and makes nonsense of the passage, "made us to sit with him [Christ] in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The passage means that the Jew by nature is a child of wrath, like the Gentile, being quickened with Christ, is raised with (the Gentile), a state in which there is no difference—both are sitting in heavenly places 'in' Him; 'with' Him, neither are. Then, in Romans 5:1, I have not the smallest doubt that "we have" should never have been changed into "let us have"—indeed the

Fathers, who quote it thus, cannot give a simple sense to it, and I affirm that it has none. ‘Let us have peace.’ What does that mean? I am exhorted to have peace with God. How? And in what state is the Christian, or any one, when he is exhorted? Grace was at once forgotten after the apostles were gone—often before, as Galatians shews— and all made to depend on man; but He has made peace by the blood of His cross. They have not ventured to accept the reading, “we should bear,” 1 Corinthians 15:49 (which would have made nonsense); yet, though they have the Vatican MSS. (corrected) for “let us have” in Romans 5:1, not for “we should bear,” they have the Sinaiticus and others for the latter. I am glad they have not accepted it, but the reasons were not the manuscripts, but the spiritual absurdity of our being called to bear the glorious image of Christ here. But Tischendorf, 8th edition (not 7th), and Tregelles give us “we should bear” they go by manuscripts; spiritual apprehension would have taken “we have” in Romans 5 too; Tischendorf, till the Sinaiticus MSS. influenced him, had this.

I add, in passing, we have the usual perversion of the text, ‘We have had our access,’ of which not a word in the Greek: so, in our tribulations—I suppose ignorance of the abstract use of the article. I notice this passage because of such importance to souls. In Luke 2:49 they translate “I must be in my Father’s house,” putting the evident sense “about my Father’s business,” in the margin; indeed, often the margin is only proper to lead the reader to uncertainty where there is none. “Extort no more” (Luke 3:13) is nonsense. Luke 1:35 is, I have no doubt, false. Chapter 3: and “he shall thoroughly cleanse” should at least be in the margin. Chapter 2:14:

There is no possible ground for translating, “in whom he is well pleased,” even if—which I do not believe—we should read, as the Revisers have. I am satisfied it is a corruption, as all theirs are, to exalt man. I do not accept their critical text; it is the vulgar acceptance of the Sinaiticus and the Vatican—valuable manuscripts if used with discrimination, and testing them by others and versions, but which it is now the fashion to swallow down undigested. We have no manuscripts which have not been tampered with by the clergy, and that when the church was thoroughly corrupt; for our Puseyite friends know—if they were honest enough to own it—that the church was, and had long been, thoroughly and utterly corrupt in doctrine and in practice; doctrines which denied the foundations of Christianity read in the churches, and practices and habits not fit to be left in English on the drawing-room table. But I do not enter into the criticism of the text, it is too wide a subject, on the one hand, and I have learnt that I am not competent to form a clear and decided judgment, but know enough to judge those who pretend to do so.

I do not doubt the value of the Sinaitic and the Vatican manuscripts, but I do not accept their authority as conclusive; I confine myself therefore to the translation, and I must say, that I judge it to be a bad book, and that those who trust to it will lose in their knowledge of divine truth. I do not see the Spirit of God owned, nor the effect of owning it produced, nor the acquaintance with the mind of God drawn from Scripture, which qualifies for the performance of it, and the discovery of the force of particular passages. It is private interpretation, and very often only such. Much is lost by needless changes in the language, but this is a trifle

comparatively. I will instance, “Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature.” Authorised Version, “increased”; the sense is the same; but, besides the prestige of the old, the change is for the worse. I take this merely as an example. I believe that a person who takes it up for his daily use will injure his own soul. I have no doubt that Ephesians 5:13 is wrong. Whatever “is made manifest is light” is not merely not true, but it is not the object of the passage—it is speaking of being made manifest by the light. I admit the passage is difficult, but I believe the sense to be, “what makes everything manifest is light”; or, “it is the light which makes everything manifest”: the form of the Greek word is found only here, and would be a middle with an active sense. There is no article with pan (everything); the sense would be different, and out of place—it would be the universe. Philippians 2:4 is, I believe, a mistake. What he seeks is, owning the good and gifts in others. Verse 10: ‘At’ is the sense—‘in’ has none. What is “bowing in his name”? They violate their rule of the preterite twice over: Acts 2:36; Romans 6:7. “United with him by the likeness” (v. 5) gives no sense. What does ‘unite by a likeness’ mean? No one who knew what being livingly united by the Holy Ghost to Christ is, could have penned such a sentence. “Be in bondage to sin” is not what is said; verse 6. In verse 10, “The death that he died” is not what is said; the margin, or old translation, is alone right. Verse 16: “Present yourselves” is very bad; ‘yield,’ or ‘give up,’ or ‘deliver up.’ Verse 4: “through the glory” is also bad—better, as in the Authorised Version, “by.” Verse 17: “Ye have been instructed,” the commonest use of the Greek word with Paul. Chapter 7:3, 4: “joined “better left out. Verse 13: “by” not in Greek—better left out. Chapter 8:4: “ordinance” very bad; in walking after the Spirit the

righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled. Verse 5, and elsewhere—Spirit with a small s misleads and confuses; their rule for it is badly imagined. “They that walk after the spirit, mind the things of the spirit,” Romans 8:5; and then “the Spirit of God”; and even there “in the spirit” (v. 9) with a small s. Romans 8:26, 27: “how” is wrong, and the big S here makes the little one totally wrong elsewhere, and seriously so.

In 2 Timothy 2:26—a confessedly difficult passage, they have introduced words, without any warrant at all, most unwarrantably. The margin, with their words in the text, makes it worse. The “Lord’s servant “; margin, or “the devil.” The Greek word in 1 Corinthians 5:1 does not mean ‘actually,’ but’ commonly.’ I merely give all these as leading to an estimate of the character of the work.

There is another point, not unimportant, I would notice: “the Lord added those that were being saved,” Acts 2:47. It is not correct. We have a different translation of the same words in Luke 13:23: “Are they few that be saved?” The article, with the present participle, has constantly the same character, without reference to time. With the past participle it is so in English; ‘the saved’ and ‘the lost.’ In 2 Corinthians 2:15, “are being saved.” Both this and Luke 13 cannot be right—in truth neither are. Revelation 21:24, they leave out, “of the saved”; if they are in the right, the common text shews the use of the word—it always means those who have this character, as also “those perishing,” in 2 Corinthians 2:15; so “him that was to come,” Rom. 5:14; “who is to come,” Rev. 1:4, i.e., ‘the coming One,’ of Christ. See 1 Thess. 5:7; ch. 3:5; Matt. 10:20 for other examples. Instances without number may be found. As to the particular word, it refers to the spared remnant

among the Jews, the number of whom was much discussed amongst the Jews. (See Lightfoot and Schoettgen.) In Ephesians 1:11, they have translated “we were made a heritage.” Besides the false preterite already sufficiently spoken of, the Authorised Version is alone right, and the revision a false rendering. The Greek means, ‘we have been placed by lot in possession of,’ ‘have obtained a lot, or inheritance,’ and the point is of importance. We are joint-heirs with Christ.

On the whole, then, I accuse the Revisers of having mischievously erred as to the use of prepositions, particularly en, to have been entirely ignorant of the force of the definite article, and to have made a complete mess of the Greek aorist, blundering as to Greek and English.

26 Chapter 13 gives the ground in God’s righteousness, and the wider general place given of the Father. In chapter 17 it is the Son’s title, and the place of sons with Him, and first of all the disciples, and that on to their glory.

27 This is an aorist passive, where the Revised Version puts ‘have been’ quite rightly. But if it is right here, it is right elsewhere. On their system it should have been ‘were.’

28 Here we may see the force of the difference of the preterite and ‘has.’ ‘God highly exalted Him’ is a past historical fact; ‘has exalted Him’—He is in the glory.

29 So translated in LXX, and quoted in Hebrews. It is not, ‘Hast thou opened,’ but ‘Thou hast dug ears for me’; that is, put me in the place of a servant—that was in taking a body. (See Phil. 2.)

30 We have an example here (John 13:3) that it is impossible to render the aorist by the preterite. The Revisers have changed the T.R. perfect into the aorist, but it was impossible to use the preterite, and they have properly translated it, “had given,” as in T.R.; but then their grammatical rule is gone. In edoka and dedoka the readings are perpetually interchanged: Tischendorf says Luke constantly prefers the perfect.

# Letter On The Parables Of The Thirteenth Of Matthew

Editor's Note31

I Think, dear brother, that there are already explanations of the thirteenth of Matthew published, but as it appears that several brothers have not read them, in reply to the request of your correspondent, I shall give a short explanation of this chapter.

The end of chapter 12 had terminated Christ’s relations with the Jews, and even with man according to the flesh; seven spirits, worse than the one which had gone out of this people, would re-enter with him into the empty, swept, and garnished house, abandoned, alas! to the enemy, but not for ever. Jesus no longer owned the ties which were of the flesh. Those who did His Father’s will were His brother, and sister, and mother. With regard to His teaching the people, as being Himself the Prophet that should come, all was ended. He leaves the house, and seated Himself in a ship on the sea. He no longer thinks of gathering fruit from His vine. He sows, He brings with Him that which, being received into the heart, will bear fruit, but He no longer seeks it in His vine, as He had done; still less does He look for fruit in the world.

Now let us come to the parables of the chapter. We find seven; the first is not a similitude of the kingdom, but. it treats of the effect produced on the individual by the word. Then follow three parables, similitudes of the kingdom, proclaimed in the presence of the multitude. At last, when Jesus had gone again into the house, He

gives the disciples alone an explanation of the first of these parables; then He adds three others, declaring on this subject, that He spoke in parables, because it was no longer given to the people to hear the kingdom announced as being still for them; this was only given to those who had received the testimony of Jesus, and Jesus Himself as the Christ (v. 11).

The first parable is, indeed, the word of the kingdom, though not a similitude of the kingdom. The point in question is the reception of this word in the heart, not the establishment of the kingdom in this world. There are four classes: the careless hearer; here, just as the birds pick up the seed sown by the wayside, so the devil takes away the word sown in careless hearts, for the word coming from God's heart is adapted to man's heart. Next comes a heart receiving the word with joy. The glad tidings of the kingdom, and of divine blessing, rejoice the heart, but the conscience is untouched; there is not consequently any root, and when persecution and tribulation arise on account of the word, as the careless one had only received it for the joy it brought him, he renounces it on account of the tribulation that ensues. There is no fruit. A third case appeared to give hope of the seed germinating, but the briers and thorns choke it; cares, the love of riches, do not allow the word to bring fruit to maturity. Finally, the seed falls into good ground, there is spiritual intelligence; the heart understands the word, it receives it; then it produces more or less fruit in each one. The cases are not presented as declaring the doctrine of grace and of the operation of the Spirit, nor the contrary, but the actual result that is manifested as the effect of the sowing of the word. Still, these various

cases are placed by the Lord before the conscience. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Then come the parables of the kingdom. The first three present the external appearance of the kingdom, what it becomes to the world's view. The first of these three adds the separation of the wicked from among the righteous; it ends by the order being given to the reapers to gather the good seed into the granary. Save the fact announced by the Lord, that the wheat was, according to His orders, to be gathered into the garner, we have in these parables only the public effect in the world of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven; that is to say, of the kingdom of God while the King remains hidden in heaven, and has not yet either taken Hir great power, or acted as King, so that the kingdom without a recognised or manifested king, progresses, takes certain forms which testify of the King's absence, and makes its way as though He was not occupied with it, although He, in reality, does act, in His grace, to call His own, and make them grow. (Compare Mark 4:26-29.)

The Son of man sows good seed (the word of God). While men sleep, Satan comes, and sows tares where the good seed had been sown. It is not the natural condition of a heathen or unbelieving heart; it is what Satan has introduced among real Christians, to spoil the crop on earth. He cannot injure the good seed, nor prevent its being gathered into the garner, but in this world the crop is spoiled. This must last till the time of harvest. Then the Son of man will again personally occupy Himself with it. In the meantime His servants are not to be occupied with the tares in the world, with the purpose of purifying the crop in the world. Their business is not with the tares; the crop, once spoiled,

remains spoiled to the end. But this refers to the state of the crop in the world, that is, to Christianity. We have nothing to do here with the church, the assembly of God. Here the good seed is not united into an assembly. At the time of harvest all will be put in order. In rooting up the tares of the field (the world), one might also pluck up the good seed; it is just what occurred when Rome wanted to destroy the heretics.

The second parable presents the kingdom as a great power in the earth. (See Daniel 4.) This is what a great tree is always a figure of in Scripture, as Assyria, Egypt. The seed of the word, in appearance insignificant at the beginning, has in fact become a great, and even the greatest, power on earth.

The third of our parables—that of the leaven—shews not an individual and real effect, as was the case in that of the sower, where the effect disappears when the word does not take root in the conscience; but it is a question of a general influence, which completely fills a limited sphere. Moreover a term (leaven) is used, which everywhere else has the sense of corruption. This is Christianity again.

After this the Lord sends the multitudes away, re-enters the house, and there speaks only to His disciples. He explains the parable of the tares, then adds three others. We have some remarks to make on the Lord’s explanation of the parable of the tares and the field. (Verses 36-43; compare v. 24-30.)

The judgment of God manifests publicly what is only spiritually known before the judgment. Thus every explanation of parables and prophecies introduces elements which are not to be found in the parable or

prophecy itself. Here the tares, already bound into bundles (in masses associated together and remaining on the field), are cast into the fire. Christ, by an earthly judgment, takes out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. The earthly part of the kingdom is purified. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. This is the heavenly part; then the kingdom of heaven will present two distinct parts—the kingdom of the Father above, and that of the Son of man below.

The three parables which follow (v. 44-50) shew the intention of Christ, and divine intelligence, in these things. The field is purchased to obtain the treasure. Christ has bought (not redeemed) the world to possess His own. His power over those who refuse His rights will be manifested in judgment, but this is not the subject of the parable.

Next (v. 45, 46), the moral beauty of the church engages His affections. He seeks what is lovely. There He finds it. In these two cases He renounces all His rights as Messiah Son of God on the earth, to the promises as Son of David, and come in the flesh. He went so far as to empty Himself of everything, to have the fruit of His humiliation in the glory of His own, the fruit of the travail of His soul.

Finally (v. 47-50), the kingdom takes at the end the character of a net thrown into the sea, and which gathers every kind of fish, good and bad. The subject is Christianity, which does not embrace all the people of the world, but a limited number, although composed of all sorts of men. Here the fishermen are employed in separating, and again the divine purpose is found that

would have good fish, whereas the fishermen's labours have collected all sorts; however, they separate the good. This is what they sought, and they leave the others there. Then the explanation goes outside (the parable) to judgment. The angels separate, not the good from the bad, but the evil from among the good; then the bad are thrown into the furnace of fire. The act of the fishers is one of spiritual intelligence, when Christianity is formed as it is at present.

Thus you have in a few words, dear brother, the true sense, I believe, of these parables, full of instruction for us. The scribe, instructed in the things of the kingdom, possesses, indeed, that which the prophets announced; and he adds to it explanations which are the fruit of the coming and of the rejection of Christ—facts which give the kingdom a form which is presented to us in these parables.

31 From the French.

# A Note On The Parables Of The Treasure And The Net

To the Editor of an American periodical.

Will you allow me to call in question some details of your explanation of the parables of Matthew 13? No matter of faith is in question, or indeed of doctrine, in any way, for I suppose on this we are quite agreed, but merely the interpretation of certain passages; but we lose by any mistake in this, and Scripture is too precious to allow of it, when in a form that acts on souls, for we are sanctified by the truth.

I suppose that the kingdom of heaven, in the six parables in which it is here spoken of, means the same thing. It is the subject of comparison. It may be, and is, viewed in various aspects, but the thing compared is the same. Your interpretation of the last makes of it an entirely new dispensation, when Christ has taken to Him His great power, and is reigning and judging; or, at least, you mix these two together as one. I am not aware that, though “the heavens rule,” the term “kingdom of heaven,” is applied to the earthly dominion of the Son of man. The Son of man gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

It has been long ago noticed that the first three of these parables present the outward apparent effects of the gospel in the world, the last three the thoughts of God in it; one, the result in man’s responsibility; the other, the intention of God. We get the manifested effect on earth

in the first three. The crop spoiled in the world, and to be left so till the harvest; the spread of a common doctrine in place of individual conversion, and that doctrine corrupt; a great power in the earth. Hence, in the parable, the tares are only gathered together in bundles on the earth, and the wheat gathered into the garner. The scene has ceased on earth, save that the tares are gathered in bundles for judgment. The wheat has disappeared there. Then God's actual judgment in power explains what now is known only spiritually. Hence the explanation of symbolical prophecy and parables always goes further than the parable or prophecy, because these give the facts in their enigmatic form, which the spiritual mind alone can explain. In actual judgment all is manifest. In the explanation, the tares are cast into the fire, which they were not in the parable, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The parable closes with the closing of the public state of things in the world—the closing of the present state of things. The explanation (not the parable) gives the judgment of God on the wicked, and the shining forth in glory of the saints. The Son of man in judgment gathers out of His kingdom all things that offend.

In the last three parables we have the mind of the Lord in what took place; and first, it seems to me, in contrast with Judaism. Judaism, and Israel itself, was no hidden treasure, no mystery of the kingdom. The Lord gave up nothing to have it. They were His known people and inheritance in the world. He came to His own, though His own received Him not. When He comes again, He will take them to have the world, not the world to have

them. In no case has the Lord, it seems to me, taken the world to have the Jews.

To come more directly to what drew my attention to these statements, or (to speak more exactly) to which my attention was drawn, the net cast into the sea. I cannot receive the thought, that it refers to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, after the church is gone. As to the facts of that day, and that the preaching will take place, we are agreed. It is to the parable and its explanation that I refer. In the tares you have the position of the kingdom in the world. It is not the work of Christ and the Spirit for His own objects. Simply the facts, and the result, till the close of all here. They are found as such in the world, and dealt with. In the parable of the net, the net is cast into the masses of population, the sea, and gathers out, the object being good fishes, though the net enclosed all; but they are taken out of the sea, and brought to be handled by the fishermen who drew the net. In the parable of the tares there is no gathering a company into one net-full, with which the fishermen are occupied. The whole, in the case of the net, is their work. In the tares it is the Lord’s, and Satan’s, who spoils it in its effects on earth, though he cannot injure the wheat, or hinder its being put into the garner. It is the effect in the world till harvest, with the fact that the wheat is hid in the garner.

Further, in the gospel of the kingdom, when the church is gone, there is no gathering a net-full of good and bad. All is individual; and in the judgment, all the world is brought together, without exception; not a net-full gathered, and the separation made between those only who are in it, the mass of fishes being left in the sea. The kingdom of heaven, the subject of all these

parables, never embraces all the world, but is a partial thing—save buying the field to have the treasure hidden in it, which makes the special object more distinct, but the operation of the Lord is partial. The field is the world, but the operation is sowing, and tares, and a treasure which is there; but in the parable of the sheep and goats it is expressly all the Gentiles who are gathered, and no partial collective operation at all. Nor am I, indeed, aware that the throne of judgment set up on earth is ever called the kingdom. The parable of Matthew 25:31 seems to me to make a clear distinction.

Besides this, the comparison of the use made of the sea does not seem to me to seize the true use of these figures. In Isaiah the wicked are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. This is a special action of the surf, and the wicked are viewed in this character, and compared to it. That is another idea from the vast sea of nations, out of which a net-full of fishes is taken, good as well as bad. The sea and the fishes of the sea are distinct things; and it is a different thing to bring up all the nations—everybody—for judgment, and to gather every kind and leave the mass of the rest where they were. There is no bringing to shore in the judgment of the nations, before the judgment, but a gathering of all together. The fish are brought out of the sea into a net: that is the fishing work. I do not enter on the analogies of the days of creation, as not necessary to my object; but I think in the remark, that this subject occupies thirteen out of twenty-two chapters of Revelation, there is confusion between the beast and the Gentiles outside.

I have only one more remark to make, already alluded to as a principle. The statement of the parable is overlooked, and confounded with the explanation. In the

parable of the net, as in the tares and wheat, the explanation is, and is meant to be, different from the parable. In the parable it is carefully stated that the persons who separate are the persons who have drawn the net: “which when they had drawn to shore, they sat down, and put the good into vessels.” They are occupied with the good, and simply reject the bad. In the explanation, the angels—certainly not the fishermen—separate the wicked from among the just—another kind of act—and cast them into the fire. In the parable we have the fishermen’s work carried out to the end of the fishermen’s part in it. The two previous parables give the thought and purpose of God in the kingdom of heaven; this, the part His servants take in it. In the tares, further, you have no action of men, but of Christ, and Satan, and then judgment in this world, providential and actual, the wheat being gone out of the way into the garner. The gathering into the net, and out of it into vessels, is a distinct part of the parabolic action, and done by the fishermen. In the parable of the tares and wheat, the servants are forbidden to meddle with what is to be done, and the work of judgment, which is all, save the Lord’s and Satan’s, committed to others.

J. N. D.

# On The Gospel Of John

## Introduction

The Gospel of John has a special character, which has struck the minds of all those who have given it a little attention, even though they have not always clearly understood what it was that produced this effect: it not only strikes the mind, but attracts the heart in a way not to be found in the other parts of the holy book. The reason of this is, that the Gospel of John presents the Person of the Son of God—the Son of God come down so low, that He can say, “Give me to drink.” This attracts the heart, if the heart be not altogether hardened. If Paul teaches us how a man can be presented before God, John presents God before man. His subject is God, and eternal life in a man, the apostle following out the subject in the Epistle, shewing us this life reproduced in those who possess it in possessing Christ. I speak only of the leading features which characterise these books; for many other truths besides those which I have just noticed are to be found in them, it is needless to say. Indeed it is John’s Gospel which gives us the doctrine of the sending of the Spirit of God, that other Comforter, who is to abide with us for ever.

The Gospel of John is very clearly distinguished from the other three synoptical gospels, and we shall do well to pause for a moment to consider the character of these last, especially as this concerns the difference between them and the Gospel of John. The three synoptical gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, afford the most precious details of the life of the Saviour down here, of His patience and His grace: He was the perfect

expression of good in the midst of evil; His miracles (with the exception of the cursing of the fig-tree, which expressed the truth as to the state of Israel, that is, of man in possession of all the privileges which man could enjoy from God) were not only a confirmation of His testimony, but were all miracles of goodness—the expression of divine power manifested in goodness. Here we find good; God Himself, who is love, acting, although, in a certain sense, still hidden, according to the grace which was soon to be plainly revealed. Thus was the blessed Saviour presented to man, to be recognized and received: He was unknown and rejected. It has often been noticed that each of the three evangelists presents the Saviour in a different aspect: Matthew brings before us Emmanuel in the midst of the Jews; Mark, the Servant Prophet; Luke (after the first two chapters, which present to us the most interesting picture of a remnant with whom God was, in the midst of a hypocritical and rebellious people) gives us the Son of man, more in relation with that which exists at present; that is, heavenly grace; but all three, in the main, present the Saviour in His patient ways of grace in this world, that man may receive Him; and man rejected Him! Mark s Gospel, relating the service of Jesus, has no genealogy. Matthew, in relation with the Jews and earthly dispensations, traces the Saviour from Abraham and David, and also shews the three things, which take the place of Judaism; that is, the kingdom as it exists in the present time (chap. 13), the church (chap. 16), and the kingdom in glory (chap. 17). Luke, which presents to us grace in the Son of man, follows His genealogy up to Adam. These three Gospels always speak of Christ as a Man down here, presented to men historically, and they follow up their account until He is positively rejected,

announcing then His entering into the new position which He has taken by resurrection. The ascension, which is the foundation of our present place, is only given in Luke directly; allusion to it is made in the last supplementary verses in Mark.

The Gospel of John regards the Lord in quite another manner: it presents to us a divine Person come down here, God manifested in this world; a marvellous fact, upon which all in man's history depends. It is no longer a question here of genealogy; it is no longer the second Man responsible toward God (though that be ever true), and perfect before God, and all His delight, while we see upon every page that it is no longer Messiah according to prophecy; it is no longer Emmanuel, Jesus, who saves His people; it is no longer the messenger who goes before His face: in John it is God Himself, as God, who in a Man shews Himself to men,32 to the Jews— for God had promised Him—but first of all to put them entirely aside (chap. 1:10, 11), shewing at the same time that nothing in man could even comprehend who was there present with him. Then, at the end of the Gospel, we find the doctrine of the presence of the Holy Spirit, who should replace Jesus here below, in revealing His glory on high, and in giving us the consciousness of our relationships with the Father and with Him. It is also to be remarked that all John's writings, and amongst them his Gospel, look upon the Christian as an individual, and do not recognise the church, either as the body or as the house. Further, the Gospel of John treats of eternal life; he does not speak of forgiveness of sins, except as a present administration confided to the apostles; and, as far as Christ is concerned, he treats essentially the subject of the manifestation of God down here, and of

the coming of eternal life in the Person of the Son of God; consequently he hardly speaks at all of our heavenly portion, three or four allusions excepted. But it is time to leave these general reflections, to consider what the Gospel itself teaches us.

First of all, then, let us look at its structure. The first three chapters are preliminary: John had not yet been put in prison, and Jesus, although He taught and performed miracles, had not yet begun His public ministry. The two first of these three chapters, up to chapter 2:22, form a whole. Chapter 3 gives us the basis of the divine work in us and for us—that is, the new birth and the cross, this latter introducing heavenly tilings as to us, and as to Jesus Himself. In chapter 4, Jesus passes from Judea into Galilee, leaving the Jews who did not receive Him, and takes the place of Saviour of the world in grace. In chapter 5 He gives life as Son of God; in chapter 6, He becomes, as Son of man, the sustenance of the life, in His incarnation and in His death. Chapter 7 shews us that the Holy Spirit should replace Him—the feast of tabernacles, the re-establishment of Israel, to take place later on. In chapter 8, His word is definitely rejected; in chapter 9, His works: but he who has received sight follows Him. Thus, in chapter 10, He will have His sheep, and keep them for better things to come. In chapters 11 and 12, God bears witness to Him, as Son of God, by the resurrection of Lazarus; as Son of David, by His entry into Jerusalem; as Son of man, by the coming of the Greeks; but this title of Son of man, brought in with it death, a subject which is then treated of. Bethany is a scene by itself; Mary seized in her heart the position of Jesus; He who gave life must Himself die. His title of Son of man closes the history of

Jesus down here, introducing Him by death and by redemption into a far wider sphere of glory. But then (chap. 13) the question arose naturally, Was Jesus going to leave His disciples? No; being glorified on high, He would wash their feet. But whither He went the disciples could not follow Him now. In chapter 14 we find the resources of comfort during the time of the Lord's absence: the Father had been revealed in Him already during His life down here; when He should have gone back on high, He would send another Comforter; by His means, the disciples would know that He was in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them. Chapter 15 shews us the relationship of the disciples with Him upon earth, taking the place of the Jews; the place of the disciples before the world, that of the Jews in rejecting Him, and then the Comforter. Chapter 16 tells us what the Holy Spirit would do when come; what His presence would be the proof of in the world, and what He would teach the disciples, putting them at the same time into immediate relationship with the Father. In chapter 17 the Lord, taking His stand upon the accomplishment of His work, and the revelation of the Father's name, places His own in His own position before the Father and before the world; the world is judged, in that it has rejected the Lord, and His own are left here in His place. In chapters 18 and 19 we have the history of the Lord's condemnation and crucifixion; in chapter 20, His resurrection and manifestation of Himself to His disciples, as well as their mission. Chapter 21 gives us His interview with His own in Galilee, Peter's restoration, and the prophecy of Jesus as to the latter, and as to John.

After this short sketch of the Gospel as a whole, we will enter now upon the detail of the chapters.

## Chapter 1

The first chapter presents to us the Person of the Lord in all its positive aspects—what He is in Himself. Not in His relative characters; He is not here the Christ, nor Head of the church, nor High Priest—that is to say, what He was, or what He is, in relationship with men down here, whether Jews or Christians. But it is Christ personally who is presented to us as well as His work.

The chapter begins with the divine and eternal existence of the Person of Jesus, the Son of God, with that which He is in the essence of His nature, so to speak. Genesis begins with the creation, and the Old Testament gives us the history of responsible man upon the earth, the sphere of that responsibility; John begins with that which preceded creation; he begins all anew here, in the Person of Him who became the second Man, the last Adam.

It is not, “In the beginning God created”; but, “In the beginning was the Word.” All is founded upon the uncreated existence of Him who created everything: at the beginning of all things He was there, without any beginning. “In the beginning was the Word,” is the formal expression that the Word had no beginning. But there is more in this remarkable passage: the Word was personally distinct, “the Word was with God”; but He was not distinct in nature, “the Word was God.” Thus we have the eternal existence, the distinct personality, the identity of nature, of the Word; and all this existed in eternity. The distinct personality of the Word was not, as people have wished to make it, a thing which had a

beginning. “In the beginning the Word was with God,” v. 2. His personality is eternal as His nature. This is the great and glorious basis of the doctrine of the gospel and of our eternal joy, what the Saviour is in Himself, His nature, and His Person.

Now comes what He is in His attributes, being such. First of all, He has created all things, and here we come to the beginning of Genesis. We have to do with Him in that which He is; the world is but that which He has made. All things were made by Him, and there is nothing created of which He was not the Creator. All that subsists, subsists by Him. He was (eeri); all that began to exist (egeneto) began “by him.” He was the Creator of all beings. (Compare Heb. 1:2, 10.)

The second quality found in Him is, that “in him was life,” v. 4. This cannot be said of any creature; many have life, but they have it not in themselves. Christ becomes our life, but it is He who is it in us. “God hath given 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 is a very momentous truth, as regards Himself, as regards us, and as regards the life that we possess as Christians.

But more; this life is “the light of men,” a word of immense value for us. God Himself is light, and it is the divine light as life which expresses itself to men in the Word. It is not the light of angels, though God be light for all, for He is it in Himself, but, as it is relative, adapted to other beings, it is not to angels; His delights were in the sons of men; Prov. 8. The proposition is one which is called reciprocal; that is, the two parts of the proposition have an equal value. I could say just as well,

the light of men is the life which is in the Word. It is the perfect expression of the nature, counsels, and glory of God when all shall be consummated. It is in man that God will make Himself to be seen and known. “God was manifest in flesh… seen of angels.” The angels are the highest expression of God’s power in creation; but it is in man that God has shewn Himself, and that, morally, in holiness and love. We ought to walk as Christ walked, to be imitators of God as His dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us; and also, “we are light in the Lord,” for He is our life. If we know love, it is in that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. If God chastises us, it is to make us participators of His holiness. We walk in the light, as He is in the light. He has chosen us in Christ, to be “holy and irreproachable before him in love,” which is the character of God Himself, a character perfectly realised in Christ. We purify ourselves, even as He is pure, knowing that we shall be like Him—being transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord—being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who hath created us. And this is not a rule, although there be in it a rule (for we ought to walk as He walked), but a life which is the perfect expression of it, the expression of the life of God in man. Ineffable privilege! Wonderful nearness to Jesus! “Both he who sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one.”

Redemption develops and manifests all the moral qualities of God Himself, and above His qualities, His nature—love and light, and that in man, and in connection with men. We are, as being in Christ, and Christ in us, the fruit and expression of all that God is in

the fulness and revelation of Himself. He will shew, in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. But then, in order that all this should be brought out, love and even light, an occasion must present itself; and that, not in an object amiable and intelligent in good (for then man could love), but there, where all the opposite of this nature shewed itself; it was necessary also that good should be proved superior to evil, in letting evil have its free course. “The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” Not only was man not light, not only was he darkness, without any glimmering of the nature of God, but there was no power in him of receiving this light; there was opposition of nature. They saw no beauty in Him to desire Him. In that which was nothing else than the exhibition of the divine nature in itself, it was impossible to go further. In natural things, if there is light, there is no more darkness; but in the moral world it is not so; the light, that which is pure in itself, and manifests everything, is there, and it is not perceived who is there. “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” “If thou knewest who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink.” “If this man were a prophet”—it is a definite judgment, pronouncing Him not to be a prophet, when God is there, and shews Himself as such. For since that which God is in this world reveals that which is above, the mind that reigns there does not associate itself with a single principle which governs the heart and the habits of men. There is in that heart no knowledge of sin, no knowledge of God, no knowledge of the state into which sin has plunged us; sin itself is estimated according to the evil which it has done to ourselves, not according to its opposition to God’s nature, although I admit that a conscience has been acquired by the fall;

egotism has become the starting-point for everything. Then, when the light comes, which, on the contrary, shews what sin is, where this has placed man morally before God, everything is judged of according to egotism as a starting-point; and the manifestation of God finds no entry into the heart. This is an unknown field for man: it is the truth, and man is in a state of falsehood, as he is without God, and he understands nothing here. God is light; and when He is manifested such as He is, but adapted to man, man's state is such that nothing responds to this manifestation. If the conscience, which is from God, is reached, the hatred of the will is awakened. (See the end of Acts 7 and John 3:19.)

We have, then, in an abstract way, in these first five verses that which the Lord is, divinely, in Himself; and together with this, at the end, the effect of His manifestation in the midst of men, such as they were, still in an abstract way. Thus it is as light that He is here presented; it is not love which is revealed. Come down here as love, He has been active, both towards the world, and efficaciously towards His own, which implies the cross, that is to say, the light rejected. But here it is what the Lord is which is presented to us, not that which He does in divine activity. Verses 16-19 of chapter 3 give us the summary of what He is in these two particulars. God is love; but Christ was the activity of this love, according to the nature and settled purpose of God. (Compare verse 17 of the chapter we are examining.) The law demanded of man that which man ought to be; in Christ something "is come" from God—light and love; but this subject will occupy us more fully in a moment. I only repeat, that what is given us, up to the present, is what the Lord is in Himself, but in the character which

puts man to the test, which shews what man is; and the passage terminates with the effect of the manifestation of what He is, without His being named. This Light can manifest itself there, where there is nothing that answers to it: it is not comprehended. It is moral incapacity, not hatred; the latter is opposed to love.

We may remark, that, in being made partakers of the divine nature, we become light; Eph. 5:8. It is never said that we are love. God is sovereign in His love; without doubt it is His nature, in communion, and in goodness, and in mercy, but free. We are made partakers of this nature, and we walk in love, as the love has been manifested in Jesus, because He is our life; but* it is in obedience that we walk thus, it is a duty, a joyful duty—easy, if we walk with joy, and stronger than the evil, but not free, having its source in ourselves. We cannot say that we are supreme love, a source from which love springs; but the new man is holy in himself; it is that which he is, although this be, in our case, in relation with an object.

In the sixth and following verses we begin the history: Christ should appear. It is not now what He is abstractedly; now we find a forerunner—John the Baptist. God, in His goodness, was not satisfied with giving the light: He announces it by another, so as to draw men’s attention. John the Baptist bears witness to the Light, but here it is that all may believe, and not for Israel only: John the Baptist was not the Light, but he came to bear witness to Him who was. Now the true true Light is He who, coming into the world, is light for every man, Pharisee or sinner, Jew or Gentile. He is the Light, who, come from on high, is such for every one, whether He be rejected or received: for a Simon or a

Herod, for Nathanael or for Caiaphas. He is the expression of God, and of the mind of God for every man, whatever state he may be in. The subject here is not that of receiving the light into the heart. In that case it is a question of the state of him who receives; here, of the fact of the appearing of the Light in this world. It was in the world in the Person of the Saviour; the world was made by Him; but when He was in the world, the world did not know Him; He came to His own, the Jews, He who was their Jehovah and their Messiah, and His own received Him not (v. 9-11).

This is the result of the manifestation of the Light in the midst of men, historically—incapacity to understand it, and rejection when it was directly addressed to those who had already been in relation to it by promises and prophecies, and who had received the law from it, the rule of human life— though always remaining Light. Some, however, received it; and to those He gave the right to take the place of children of God,, not that there were some of a better quality, or of a will less perverse than the others; no, they were born again, born of God; “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” The exterior revelation of the light in the Word was accompanied by a quickening power of God, which gave it a vital reality in the soul, in forming the incorruptible seed of God. As life, Christ was there. The man was born of God.

This terminates the exposition of the Word as light in itself, and as revealed in the world and in the midst of His own; presented abstractedly in verses 1-5, and in verses 7-13 historically, but still in its nature as light, and not as a man; then, after all, if it were received, in what the difference consisted.

At verse 14, historical Christianity begins. Up to that, it is what Christ was, as well as what was the state of the sphere in which He was manifested. Now we have that which He became— “The Word became flesh.” It was not an appearance, as in the Old Testament, but He took a tabernacle to dwell amongst us, even though it were but for a time. It was a Man in the midst of men (He will keep the tabernacle for ever); but He has lived down here full of grace and truth, love and light, adapted to the state of man down here; then we, believers, have received of His fulness and grace upon grace; in short, as the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed the Father. The Word made flesh has been among us, revealing the glory of an only-begotten Son with His Father, full of grace and truth: we have all received of His fulness: then He has revealed the Father. He was the Son in manifestation, Man in the midst of men, the Word, which was God, made flesh. In Him grace and truth came into the world; He is a full source of grace for us, from which we have all received abundance of grace, and He has also revealed the Father.33 This is the second part of our chapter, the history of the Person of the Christ. To this also John bears witness: he was not the Christ, but His forerunner, the voice that cries in the wilderness, and who, in calling to repentance, prepares the way of the Lord.

This introduces a third point. Whilst announcing His Person, he who presents Him hides himself; he is neither the Christ, nor the prophet promised by Moses, nor Elias, promised by Malachi, but only according to Isaiah’s word, the voice to announce another, whom the Pharisees did not know, He who was coming after him, but who was preferred before him, the latchet of whose

shoe he was not worthy to unloose. This is turned into personal testimony when Jesus appears before John the next day. (Verse 29, and following.) John designates Him here, not as the Messiah, but in connection with His work, of which there are two parts: He takes away sin, and He baptises with the Holy Ghost.

Jesus is “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” Sin must be taken away from before God. The time will come when there will be no more sin before the eyes of God, nor before ours, a time of eternal repose for God and for our hearts. What a true rest, and how blessed for the heart! There has been a paradise of innocence, which depended upon the creature’s faithfulness, a state of innocence uncertain, and at once lost: there has been a world of sin, where nevertheless God has been acting in grace: there will be a world of new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell, a state of things which cannot be shaken, morally immutable, for the value of Christ’s work remains always the same. This will not be a state of innocence where all depended upon obedience put to the test, and in which man failed, but a happiness where obedience was perfectly tested, and accomplished. Righteousness ensures the stability of this state of things, for God cannot slight the perfection of the work of Christ, for His glory. Also there will be nothing there but holiness. All there will glorify God in all that He is; nothing will be contrary to His nature. Sin will be taken away from before God in the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus is the One who takes it away: the work is done, the result is not yet produced. The passage does not say, “The Lamb of God who hath taken away,” nor, “who will take away”—it presents the character of Him who was

there before the eyes of John the Baptist, He who was doing the thing. The passage does not treat of the guilt in which we are (a most important subject in its place), that is evident, but of a state of things before God. John takes things habitually thus in their great principles. It is God who has appeared, and all is judged according to the light of His presence. His holiness demands— yea, His majesty, inasmuch as He is holy—that sin be taken away from before His eyes. He who accomplished the work, who was doing it, was now there, present upon the earth. He was "the Lamb of God," the Lamb who suited perfectly the glory of God, the Lamb that God alone could have provided for Himself, who was able to establish His glory, His highest glory, there where sin was found; the Lamb who could give Himself freely for this glory, and to accomplish thus a work which should be the moral foundation (its value being immutable, and subsisting without the possibility of change, for the work was always itself) of an eternal blessing, according to God, and before Him.

The cross is the basis of this blessing. All the moral elements of good and evil have been clearly brought to light, and have been shewn each in its proper place, and Christ is at God's right hand, as Man, in the divine glory, in virtue of having resolved every question that was thus raised. There could have been seen, man in his absolute hatred of good, of God Himself manifested in goodness, and that for him, "they have both seen and hated both me and my Father"—all Satan's power, "the prince of this world cometh"; "it is your hour, and the power of darkness" —man in his absolute perfection in Christ; "but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath commanded me, so I do"; and that

when both had been tested in the most absolute manner —then God, in His righteousness against sin, as nowhere else: sin in us, but God in His infinite love to the sinner. Thus man, in the Person of the Son of God, has entered into quite a new position, in the glory, beyond the reach of sin, death, the power of Satan, and the judgment of God after having passed through it—man, according to the counsels of God, putting the most positive seal upon the responsibility of man as a creature, meeting the consequences of this responsibility, and glorifying God in such a way as to obtain for man, from the love and the righteousness of God, a place which should be the eternal glorifying of God in His sovereign counsels and in His glory, the glorifying of Him who introduced man there to be the vessel of it, whilst, at the same time, the order of creation should subsist in result before God in a state where He would find the respose of His nature, and where Christ, the glorified Man, should be the centre of all God's ways in their blessed result.

The Saviour was to do yet another thing; that is, to baptise with the Holy Ghost. This is introduced by one of the most interesting and touching facts: Jesus receives the Holy Ghost as Man, and the scripture employs the same words as to Him as when it speaks of us: "Jesus of Nazareth … whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit, and with power"; and the Lord Himself said, "Him hath God the Father sealed." Jesus has been sealed as Son, Man down here, in virtue of His own perfection, and His own relationship with the Father as Son; we are sealed, being sons by faith in Him (Gal. 3:26; ch. 4:6), in virtue of the redemption that He has accomplished. We, consequently, could not be sealed before He had taken His place as Man on high—witnesses at the same time of

the efficacy of redemption, and of that which redemption has acquired for us. “Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.” Thus we read (John 7:39), “The Spirit was not yet [that is, not yet on earth in believers], because Jesus was not yet glorified.” It was the witness that He was the Son personally. Now that redemption is accomplished, and that Jesus is glorified, after its accomplishment, the Holy Ghost is given to us who believe in Jesus.

Thus also, although the result of the sacrifice of Christ, taking away the sin of the world, be not yet brought out, we know that that which forms the basis of this blessed result is accomplished, and we enjoy its efficacy in the perfect purification of our conscience, and in the glorious hope of being with Christ, like Him in heaven, the Holy Ghost assuring us of one of these things, in being the earnest of the other. Christ baptises (or rather now we say has baptised) His own with the Holy Ghost, giving us the consciousness of being sons in full liberty before the Father, who hath sealed Him as being personally the Son of God, perfect in everything. It was this sign given to John the Baptist, that opened his mouth to bear witness that Jesus was the Son of God. John saw clearly that Jesus was a glorious Person, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose, and he felt that it was not his place to baptise this Person. But the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus is the clear, heavenly testimony, shewing who Jesus was, as to His Person, as Son of God: John saw and bore witness that He was the Son of God Himself in this world. It is very precious for us (although in our case it is no question of our persons, but of sovereign grace) to think that, if ascended into

glory He has baptised us with the Holy Ghost (the witness that we are sons and giving us the consciousness of it), He the eternal Son received Himself first of all as Man down here this same testimony, the seal and unction of the Spirit, which enables us to cry, “Abba, Father!” It is the foretaste of that truth, that He which sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; Heb. 2:11.

But if down here, a divine testimony has been given that Jesus was the Son of God, His title as Lamb of God is that which characterises Him. John the Baptist’s heart recognised Him already as such, for the witness he bears here is not a testimony borne in his preaching. He saw Jesus walking before him, and his heart, full of the deep truth, exclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God! “He had already announced Him in that character, and no one had followed Jesus; but now that which came from his heart in grace attracted hearts; two of John’s disciples hear him, and follow the Lord. Thus Jesus begins to gather His disciples. He accepts the position of the centre of gathering. The two disciples had received the word of God from the mouth of John the Baptist; but neither John, nor any one of the prophets, had ever taken the place of being a centre, around which those who received God’s word assembled; now there was One in the world around whom they could thus gather; it was “the Lamb of God.” Jesus, seeing the two disciples following Him, said to them, “Whom seek ye?” They said to Him, “Rabbi, where dwellest thou?” He answered, “Come and see.”

This is an important principle and fact; there was not only upon earth a testimony but a Person who was a gathering-point for those who received God’s word, and

this from God Himself. This was the fruit of John the Baptist's testimony. Andrew, one of John's two disciples, finds Simon, his own brother, and announces to him that they had found, not the Lamb of God, but the Christ. The testimony which we receive, always attaches itself to that which is already in the heart; it does not go beyond that which adapts itself to what is there. If all God's love in Christ is preached, if work is done in the soul, this will produce a conviction of sin, perhaps even to make us nearly despair of salvation. "The Lamb of God" goes infinitely further than "the Messiah"; but these sincere souls that we see here, and who had received the word of God in their heart, had found "the Messiah," v. 42. Andrew brings Simon to Jesus, who calls him Cephas, otherwise Peter. The right of giving names is the expression of sovereignty, as we constantly find in the word; only Christ gives the names with a divine knowledge of the persons. He appropriated to Himself supreme authority, but with the competency of a divine Person. Never would John the Baptist have given names to his disciples in this way.

But although Jesus was the centre that gathered those who received the testimony of God, He was come to bear witness to the truth, and in carrying out this work He had nowhere to lay His head. He begins this active service in verse 43: He would go into Galilee, where His testimony was to be borne amongst the poor of the flock, and He finds Philip Himself. This is the second character of testimony. The first was John, and that which followed; here it is Christ, and it is a question of following Him, Him who was a pilgrim and stranger in this world. Christ thus appears also in another character; up to this time we have seen Him as centre,

He received believers, and surrounded Himself with them there, where He dwelt; here they must follow Him, where He was a pilgrim— a second testimony of all-importance.

As the object of John the Baptist's testimony, Jesus was the centre, and He is always; but, in fact in His own testimony down here, He was a stranger, and had nowhere to lay His head; He began at the manger, and ended at the cross. All His life was the life of One who was a stranger down here, who walked in the world to bear witness in it to God in grace, but in following a path which no vulture's eye hath seen. The two characters of testimony bring out into bold relief, the state of the world, on the one hand; and on the other, that which Jesus was doing there. Why have in this world a centre of gathering, on the part of God, if it be not that the world, and even God's people according to the flesh, had entirely got away from God, and that it needed some one to draw souls out of this state by the revelation of God in the midst of this world? And now, again, the principle is the same, only the blessed Centre is in heaven: He gave Himself for our sins, to take us out of this present evil age. Then, why follow Jesus, to be a pilgrim as Jesus always was down here? Adam was not a pilgrim in paradise; we shall not be pilgrims in heaven: there was no need of a road in the one, and we shall find none in the other, as if we wished to get out of it. It was the sabbath of God below; it is the eternal rest of God on high; one will not go out of it; there was no need, and there will be no need, in the one, or in the other, of a path where some one is to be followed. Here it is not so; neither the rest of God, nor the rest of man, is to be found upon the earth, and what we want is a path across

the desert. There is only one which is sure, and One alone could trace it; and faith alone discerns it; it is Jesus who says, “Follow me.” We need a path, and the path is found. Philip also was of Galilee. God’s work was not built upon Jerusalem, the old centre according to the flesh; but the basis, the path, and the centre, is the Son of God, the revelation of God Himself in the world, Himself the First of all, the despised and rejected of men, but the image of the invisible God.

Philip finds Nathanael, an Israelite, full of prejudices, but a guileless heart, for the Lord found under the fig-tree even, men of this stamp, attached to Judaism—a remnant whose heart was opened to the truth, faithful men, who waited for the redemption of Israel. Nathanael did not think that anything good could come out of Nazareth, that place which, far from being the Jerusalem of promise, was one of the most despised and disreputable places. But it was to Jesus that one must come, it was to His Person that souls were invited to come: “Come and see”! The Lord shews His perfect knowledge of what was passing in Nathanael, declaring him to be without guile, and shewing this knowledge in a way to penetrate his heart. Nathanael recognises Him, according to Psalm 2, as King of Israel and Son of God. In His answer, the Lord recognises Nathanael’s faith, founded upon what He had told him of himself, and He announces to him His own glory, according to Psalm 8, the glory which belonged to a rejected Messiah; for in Psalm 2 the Messiah is rejected, in a passage quoted by Peter to this effect, the psalm announcing that God would establish His anointed King over Israel, notwithstanding His rejection. But after the prophetic recital of the sufferings of the remnant in Psalms 3-7,

Psalm 8 announces God's counsels as to man in the Person of the Son of man. This guileless man, who is here presented to us under the fig-tree, becomes thus the occasion of the revelation of the Messiah in His connection with Israel, then of the revelation of His glory as the Son of man, whom all the highest creatures should serve, and who should be their object as the means of established relationship between the heavens and the earth.

We should notice that it is here, as we have observed, the second day of testimony; the first being found in verse 35, the second in verse 43. It is not the history of the Gospel, but the testimony borne to Jesus by John the Baptist first of all, and then the testimony borne by Himself. In the first case He takes John the Baptist's place; in the second, it is the manifestation of Himself, a testimony which goes on from His service on earth until the accomplishment of Psalm 8. Looked at already as rejected of the Jews, and unknown to the world (chap. 1:10, 11), He takes, from this time, the title of Son of man, the title by which He constantly calls Himself, although He could not take the position itself until He had passed through death. These are the two days of testimony borne to Christ as having come into this world, which are developed in the supremacy which He possesses over all things, presented here in its nature only. For the rest, the heavenly position of the Lord is hardly the subject of the teaching of John's Gospel: allusion is made to it, indeed, but that is all.

## Chapter 2

That which follows, in chapter 2, reveals in principle what will happen when the Lord takes His place of

authority over the Jews; the wine of gladness of the wedding will take the place of the water of purification, and Christ will purify His Father's house by judgment. But it will be a risen Christ who will accomplish these things. It is the resurrection that is presented to us, the fact of having left all His relationships with the world, and with His people down here according to the flesh, and of having placed man in quite a new position, the position which bears witness to His rights to execute the judgment of God. But notice, He was already the true temple. Jehovah was no longer really in the temple at Jerusalem, although that temple was owned as an outward thing by the Lord Himself until judgment was executed: only, at the time of His death, He no longer calls it His Father's house, but their house. God, in fact, was in Him; His body was the true temple.

These words of the Lord terminate this presentation of His Person, and of the position that He took in this world until the end, shewing us at the same time that it was in resurrection that His glory should be accomplished. He declares also here that He would raise Himself up; He had, therefore, perfect right to judge the corrupt and defiled temple.

What follows speaks of the relationship of the Lord with others; the subject begins from verse 22. It is a question of man's state, and of the work that God was doing in him, and for him. The great principle that all blessing belongs to the resurrection-state, or is based upon it, man in his natural state being left completely behind, recurs constantly in John, as one may see in chapters 5, 6, and indeed all through the Gospel. We have then, here, the two great foundations of Christianity, as far as our state is concerned; that is, the new birth and the

cross, both being absolutely necessary for our salvation; but the second going further than that which was necessary, according to the nature even of God, and introducing us into heavenly things.

To have a part in the kingdom, one must have an entirely new life. Even faith in Jesus, as founded upon a demonstration which could be addressed to human intelligence, was worth nothing. Men might be truly convinced (there were such at that time, and there are still such), whether by education, or by the exercise of their mind, but in order to be in relationship with God, there must be a new nature—a nature which can know Him, and which answers to His own. Many believed in Jesus when they saw the miracles that He did (v. 23); they concluded, like Nicodemus, that a man could not do what Jesus was doing, if He were not what He pretended to be. The conclusion was perfectly right. Passions to be overcome, prejudices to be laid aside, or interests hard to sacrifice were not concerned in the question. Man's reason judged rightly enough of the proofs given, the rest of his nature was not aroused. But the Lord knew man; He knew, with divine intelligence, what was in him. There was no lack of sincerity, perhaps, but what there was with these men was but a conclusion, a human conviction, which had no power over man's will, nor against his passions, nor against the wiles of the prince of this world. "Jesus did not trust himself to them." There must be a divine work, and a divine nature, to enjoy divine communion, and to walk in the divine path across the world. That which follows is very distinct.

## Chapter 3

Nicodemus comes to Jesus with the declaration of the same principle which had produced the conviction of those in whom Jesus had no confidence—the miracles were to him a demonstration that Jesus was a teacher sent from God. I even think that the others went further than Nicodemus; it is said they believed in His name (chap. 2:23). As to Nicodemus, he was convinced that Christ's teaching must have God for its source, thus he was disposed to listen. The belief of the former did not produce any need in their souls; in this case conviction may go as far as you like, without the soul's being troubled, or any effect whatever being produced: it costs nothing—we often see this.

But in Nicodemus's case there was more, and it was a proof of the action of God; there was with him a need. The Holy Spirit of God always acts thus, even in the Christian. This feeling of need which He begets produces activity in the soul; this is what had happened to Nicodemus. More, when the Spirit of God acts in a soul, the word of God asserts its authority over it, and creates the desire to hear that word; this never fails. There are so many unsatisfied desires in the soul, that when it is awakened, the need to know what God has said is produced in it. The soul has the consciousness of having to do with Him, and the need of knowing what He has said becomes the spring of its activity, and characterises it. It is not the reception of a system of doctrine, or of dogmas about a divine Person; it is the soul that hungers and thirstibr what God has said; ignorant of everything but its need, it wishes to receive. It is a good thing for the soul to trust in God's word, in the source of truth (this is already implicit faith),

without the truth being, as yet, communicated in fact; for it listens with confidence. Nicodemus was in this state; the Samaritan woman also, but, in her case the conscience was more in question; so also with the twelve; when several of His disciples abandoned Jesus, they would not leave Him, for He had the words of eternal life. When God acts, the link between God and the conscience and soul is not broken; I am not speaking of union, but of a moral work in the heart. But notice, as soon as ever the need is produced in Nicodemus's heart, he feels instinctively that the world, and the religious authorities—the worst part of the world—will be against him. There is fear; Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night.. Poor human nature! If a soul puts itself in relationship with God, in recognising His word, the world will not stand it. We know this. But Nicodemus's faith did not go farther than to recognise the authority of the Saviour's word as a word which came from God, grace having produced in his heart the need of these communications from God.

It is a great thing to have a real need, feeble though it be morally; for here, in Nicodemus's case, there was little need in the conscience, and no knowledge of himself. He was cleaving to religious hopes, to doctrines, and a revelation given from God; he was seeking instruction from Jesus, but he had his part in the general conviction that the miracles of Jesus produced—a conviction strengthened by uprightness, and by personal need; Jesus was a teacher sent from God. But Jesus stops Nicodemus short; the resurrection and kingdom were not come, but in order to receive the revelation which had been given of it, there must be a divine operation, a new nature; it was necessary to partake of

an entirely new life. The kingdom was not coming in a way to attract attention, but the King, with all the perfection that belonged to Him, was there present, and consequently the kingdom itself, presented in His Person; only this kingdom, not being revealed in power, the rejection of the King caused by the very perfection of His Person, as well as the work accomplished in His rejection, introduced a heavenly inheritance. Further this work, and this rejection, brought those who should be identified with a rejected Christ into those courts above where God displayed His glory, and this is far higher than the glory of the Messiah, if it had been then accomplished. It was already the dawn of the accomplishment of the counsels of God not yet revealed.

Two things are presented to us in the first half of the chapter before us: first of all, the kingdom, and what is needed to have part in it, and, in measure, the earthly things, and what is necessary to enjoy them with God, but also the kingdom, as it was then presented in its moral character. Then, secondly, heaven, eternal life; that which is essential to our most real and intimate relationships with God, namely, the possession of eternal life before Him, in contrast with the thought of perishing. Here it is no question of the kingdom, it is eternal life, such as Jesus, come from heaven, could reveal it to us. But this supposes the cross: it is no question of Messiah, but of the Son of man, and of the love which God has had for the world, not of His intentions with regard to the kingdom, and the promises connected with this kingdom, but of plans far more vast and exalted, heavenly in their character, in which God reveals what He is; and Jesus, rejected as Messiah, dies, and enters into glory as the Son of man who has

suffered. No doubt this new birth is in any case necessary, subjectively, even that we may see the kingdom, and enjoy it, much more, that we may enjoy heavenly things in the presence of God. But as the passage speaks of the new birth, it does not treat of the heavenly glory; for this the cross must be brought in also. However it is well to remark that this whole passage, in its two parts, supposes the new order of things, where grace was acting, and that not limited to the Jews. It was an entirely new thing that was being brought in; the kingdom was not established in glory, but founded and received in the Person of the King, demanding a new nature to see it, and extending itself to every one whom grace could reach. It was morally and subjectively, the new thing; only in the first part, we have neither heavenly things, nor eternal life; in the second, we have not the kingdom.

The first thing the Lord does in stopping Nicodemus short— who only spoke of being instructed in the state in which he was, he, a child of the kingdom according to the flesh—is to tell him that it was not a question of that, but that he must be born entirely anew. We will look into the details in a moment; it is, however, important, first of all, to seize, that the Lord speaks of the two characters of blessing, that is, of the heavenly glory, and of the kingdom according to promise, but that He speaks of them according to the aspects they presented at that very time. We may say that He presents them, with regard to His Person in their spiritual character; on the one hand, the King despised, and that which was heavenly meeting with the cross in His Person; but, on the other hand, the new birth and life-giving power, the Son of man, the love of God, and consequently what

concerned the world and man, not only dispensations and the Jews. For, faithful though God be to His promises, He cannot, when He reveals Himself, confine Himself to the Jews.

First of all then, the kingdom was being revealed in a way which did not attract attention, not by a power that should rule over the world, nor by its outward glory; a new nature was needed to perceive it. The King was there, and He gave proofs of a divine mission and of the presence of Him who was to come, but in humiliation; to the natural eye He was the carpenter's son. Nicodemus reasoned well in saying, in verse 2, "We know … for no one can do the miracles which thou doest, unless God be with him"; but God had His, "Except a man be born again"—born entirely anew. This life is a beginning again of life, of a new source, and of a new nature— a life that came from God. But Nicodemus still remained within the bounds and limits of the flesh, of the natural man. They are the limits of what man is, of his intelligence. Man cannot be more than he is; he cannot get beyond his nature. But the class of infidels who boast of having made this immense discovery, shew, on the one hand, the limit of the human understanding, so that they can discern nothing beyond what man is; and, on the other hand, the absence of solid reasoning in themselves; for, from what they have discovered, there is no proof that a more powerful Being cannot introduce something new. Their wisdom is a self-evident fact; man by himself cannot see beyond that which is in himself; their conclusion is absolutely without force. By their principle they can conclude nothing beyond the limits of humanity; but the limits of active power are not necessarily those of receptivity. Let us return to our

chapter, and seek to listen to and understand the Saviour's words better than Nicodemus.

Nicodemus, as we have said, confines himself to the experience of what happens in man; Christ revealed that which was being accomplished on God's part—the key of all the Lord's history. He had spoken of that which was necessary to see, to discern the kingdom: one must be born of water and of the Spirit. It is the kingdom of God, in whatever state it may be, and one must be made meet for this kingdom, must have a nature fit to take part in it. Two things are found here, water and the Spirit—a nature thus characterised, morally and in its source. Water as a figure, is always the word applied by the Spirit; it brings the thoughts of God heavenly, divine, but adapted to man; it judges what is found in him, but it brings in these divine thoughts, and so purifies the heart. For water purifies what exists; but also it is the new man who drinks it, and this is not separated from that which is entirely new. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," partakes of the nature of that of which it is born; this is, in truth, the new nature. The practical purification of our thoughts and hearts, of which we have spoken, is indeed the effect of that which this nature receives, of things for which the flesh has no desire. We could not say, "That which is born of water, is water." Water purifies that which exists; but we receive a new life, which is really Christ Himself in power of life in us, that which Adam innocent had not. We partake of the divine nature, as Peter expresses it; and where this expression is found, in the Second Epistle of Peter, it is connected with birth by water; we escape the corruption that is in the world by lust.

It is thus only that we enter the kingdom. The kingdom of God is more than a paradise for man, it is what is fitting for God, and it is necessary that we should have a nature that answers to it. Adam, in his state of innocence, had not this, his level was man, as God had created him. For the kingdom of God, he who finds himself there, must have that which—in man however—is suitable to God Himself. Notice, that the Lord goes outside all questions of dispensations, He has in view the moral nature, that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, has that nature; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, that is to say, corresponds to the divine nature, which is its source. But then it could not be a question only of the Jews; if any one had this nature, he was fit for the kingdom. It was not a question of a people already chosen of God, but of a nature suitable to God.

Two things are brought to light when these principles have been laid down; first of all, the necessity of this new birth, in order to enjoy the promises made to the Jews for the earth; and secondly, that this work was of God, who communicated this new nature. God could communicate it by His Spirit to whom He would, and this opened the door to the Gentiles. Nicodemus, Jesus told him, ought not to have been astonished at the Saviour saying that the Jews must be born again; the prophets had announced this (see Ezek. 36:24-28), and Nicodemus, as a master or teacher in Israel, ought to have known it. The wind, too, blew where it listed (v. 8); so was the operation of the Spirit. It was a work of God, and thus could be accomplished in any one.

There were still the heavenly things. Now if Nicodemus did not understand these earthly things of Israel’s blessing, how would he understand if the Lord spoke to

him of heavenly things? Now no one had ascended to heaven, so as to be able to bring word of what was there, and of what was necessary to be able to enjoy it, save He who had descended thence, who spoke of what He knew, and bore witness to what He had seen; not the Messiah—that had to do with the earth—but the Son of man, who, as to His divine nature, was in heaven.

Thus we have a revelation of heavenly things brought directly from heaven by Christ, and in His Person. He revealed them in all their freshness, a freshness which was found in Him, and which He, who was ever in heaven, enjoyed; He revealed them in the perfection of the Person of Him, who made the glory of heaven, whose nature is the atmosphere which all those who are found there breathe, and by which they live; He, the object of the affections which animate this holy place, from the Father Himself down to the last of the angels who fill heaven's courts with their praises, He the centre of all the glory. Such is the Son of man, He who came down to reveal the Father—truth and grace—but who divinely remained in heaven in the essence of His divine nature, in His Person inseparable from the humanity with which He was clothed! The deity which filled this humanity was inseparable in His Person from all the divine perfection, but He never ceased to be man, really and truly man before God.

But we have another truth here: the Son of man was to re-enter heaven as Man, to be Head over all things. As Son of God He has been appointed Heir (Heb. 1); He is such as Creator (Col. 1), but also as Man and Son of man, according to God's counsels. (Psalm 8, quoted in Ephesians 1, in 1 Corinthians 15, in Hebrews 2—passages which develop clearly His place in this

respect.) Proverbs 8 teaches us that He who was Jehovah's delight before the foundation of the world, rejoiced then in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were in the sons of men. The angels (Luke 2) recall this truth, or rather the proofs which His incarnation gave of the thoughts of God in this respect; they speak of this incarnation as the manifestation of God's good pleasure in men. As then He has been the manifestation of God upon earth, He enters as Man into the glory of God on high. He will reign over the earth as Head of the creation, gathering together all things under His authority34 (Col. 1); but here we speak of heavenly things. The Son of man takes His place on high to be Head over all things (1 Peter 3:22; John 13:3; ch. 16:15). Man, in His Person, has entered heaven, into the presence of God Himself, without a veil, and all things are to be subjected under His feet. But will they be so, such as they are, and men who are to be His joint-heirs, will they be so, such as they are in sin, enemies of God by their wicked works? It is impossible. Another fundamental thing is necessary, redemption. Man, with a thousand times more sin than that which caused him to be driven irrevocably from the earthly paradise—man, who had gone so far as to have accumulated upon his head, the rejection of God, of grace, and of the Son of God—could not, such as he was, enter the heavenly paradise: it was impossible. If, then, Christ should as Man possess the glory which in the counsels of God was the portion of man, and if He was to have joint-heirs, and introduce them into His Father's house, He must redeem them and purify them according to the glory of God. He must also redeem creation from the yoke under which sin had placed it, and from Satan's dominion. Here it is a question only of the state of the heirs, and of

their deliverance from death and condemnation. Now, when the Son of man is presented to us, His sufferings and death are constantly introduced. As Messiah He was rejected upon earth by His people; but the only result of this was His passing into the wider sphere of Son of man, Head of the entire creation, and Head, in a special way, of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. But for this, redemption was needed; we learn this in Matthew 16:20, 21, and more definitely in Mark 8:29-31, and Luke 9:20-22, with the consequences which result from it for us. In John's Gospel too, before He leaves the world, the Father would have a testimony borne to the titles of glory of Jesus. As Son of God, He was glorified by the resurrection of Lazarus; as Son of David, by His entry into Jerusalem on the ass's colt; finally, the Greeks, who had come up to worship at Jerusalem, having sought the disciples in their desire to see Jesus, and the disciples having communicated this to Him, the Lord says, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," John 12:23, 24.

Thus, in all the Gospels, we find the Messiah giving place to the Son of man, but in each case the Son of man passing through death, in order to enter into His new and universal position of glory. He might have had twelve legions of angels, but then God's counsels, as revealed in the Scriptures, would not have been accomplished; Christ would have been without joint-heirs.

We have already remarked, and we recall the reader's attention to it, that in this chapter, the presentation

whether it be of life, or of the work which procures it for us, is given in connection with its present and personal application; it is a presentation of what these two things are in their nature, not as to the extent of their result, but in their application to us as a means of having part whether in the kingdom, or in heavenly things. The lifting-up of the Son of man on the cross corresponds down here, both on the side of our need, and that of God, to the revelation of the heavenly things which the Son brought down—to that which is found in heaven. It is a question of being before God when He is fully revealed, not only when the Messiah promised to the Jews had been rejected (so that the right to the accomplishment of the promises was lost for those who possessed this right, after that the law had been broken), but when man's hatred against God—against a God revealed in goodness—had been clearly manifested. It was no longer merely sins, and the violation of the law, it was the rejection of grace, when sins and the violation of the law were already there. Man would not have God at any price (see John 15:22-24); how could he have part with Christ in God's presence, a part in heavenly glory? Still, the sin of man has not brought the grace of God to nought. But if, as Son of man, Christ had undertaken man's cause, He must undergo the consequences of this, since He had become responsible for it before God; Heb. 2:10. In order that we might have part in the heavenly things, it was necessary that the Son of man should be lifted up,35 and that according to God's glory, in connection with that which had so much dishonoured Him; now it is, as made sin, Christ accomplished this, Himself also bearing our sins. Far from God, we must have perished in our sins; He came forward for us, receiving all, as Man, from the hand of

His Father, and obeying Him ever; He took the form of a servant in a nature which He will never leave, and in this nature He has become, by right, according to the righteousness and according to the counsels of God, Lord of all things; He whom no one knows but the Father only, but who reveals the Father to us, He who came down close to us—who has touched us, so to speak—who took our nature, though He could say, “Before Abraham was, I am.” He of whom our tongues and intelligence can speak but imperfectly is the Creator of everything; but His place as Man is at the head of the creation. He it is who came to reveal heavenly things to us, and to shew their effect in His Person as Man, while living in the midst of heavenly things all the time; so that, being Man down here, He should reveal them in all their freshness, adapted at the same time to man, so that he should live by them, and enter in spirit with Him there, where that was which He revealed, and later on should enter there glorified and like Him.

The Son of man is then the One who, as Man, is to be Head over all things in heaven and earth, according to God’s counsels. Already Messiah and Son of God when He was upon earth, and rejected as such (see Psalm 2), He must take the more extended position of Son of man, set over the works of God, all things being put under His feet; Psalm 8. We find Him also in Daniel 7, brought to the Ancient of days to receive the kingdom. The fact that He had created all things is given us in the Colossians as the motive for (in taking His place in the result of the counsels of God in His creation) being there as Firstborn, first, to bear the sorrow of it before God, to be the propitiation for our sins, and to blot them out for ever, so that we should not perish. There it was that, in

an absolute manner, He who had not known sin was made sin before God, it was there that absolute obedience was perfect; “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath commanded me, even so I do.” He must be lifted up, the necessity for it was weighing upon us; righteousness—the very nature of God—demanded that our sin should be put away. But the sinner could not put away his own sin; burdened as he was already with this sin, what could he do to put it away? But the Son of man, rejected by men, has been lifted up before God, to be sin, without any other thing or person—alone before God. It was no longer any question here of Jew or of promise, but of satisfying God’s glory in this place; it was the last Adam, not disobedient, when he was enjoying all the blessings of God, but obedient, there, even where He was enduring—He who had dwelt eternally in the Father’s love, and in holiness itself—not only the suffering of death, but that of the curse and the forsaking of God. No one could fathom such a thing; nevertheless, we can even by this recognise that the suffering was infinite, but necessary on account of what we were, if God’s glory was to be guarded, and if we were to be saved. The more we see who He was, the more we feel the depth of the abyss into which He descended; but in that very thing He could say, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again,” John 10:17. The glory of God has been manifested as it never was, and never could have been known.

The Son of man had to be lifted up. In taking this place (which He took for us also in grace), He was free. “Then said I, Lo, I come.” His sufferings were necessary for us. Oh, solemn word! But God having been there perfectly

glorified, the work in all its value being perfectly accomplished, whosoever believes shall not perish, but has everlasting life. Our lot was to perish; to have eternal life, to be with Christ, and like Christ in glory, is the effect of the sufferings, of the work of the Saviour for all who believe. This is one side of the truth: as Son of man Jesus went to meet the judgment which was about to fall upon us. The Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believes does not perish; but, much more, he possesses eternal life, now as life, soon as heavenly glory with Christ. Lifted up from the earth, Jesus draws all men unto Him. A living Messiah was for the lost sheep of the house of Israel; in the Son of man lifted up upon the cross, it is no longer a question of the promises, but of an accomplished work, available in God's sight for all those that believe. For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son; this is the source of all. Here the end is the same; "that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." These are two aspects of the same Person; Son of man down here, but at the same time Son of God. God hath not spared His own Son. But it is a principle, a fact of all importance. The must of verses 14, 15, although it flows from God's very nature, and from man's state, bears the character of a requirement on God's part: it clothes God in our mind with the character of a judge. There is, doubtless, much more: God's holiness, His glory, that which becomes Him (Heb. 2:10), are to be found here too; but the thought of a judge is in effect connected with culpability. Now all this gives still a very imperfect idea of the truth. The work bears this character; it is a propitiation; without it we should perish, shut out from God's presence; one would perish

necessarily, if this work were not accomplished, on man's side, by man. But where could be found one who could accomplish it? It must: Jesus could say this, for He came from heaven. God is not named in the passage, for Jesus speaks of the necessity in which man was, if he would enter into heaven. But God is sovereign, and God is love. Divine love is sovereign; it is above evil, although it rejects it by the necessity of its nature, and judges it with the authority of its righteousness. God is love; this is the sovereign liberty of His nature. This is why, according to Ephesians 5, we ought to walk in love; but we are not love, we are light. God is love and light. Well, then, it is in this sovereign liberty that God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son (He who, in consequence, became the Son of man), so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (v. 16).

It is of all importance to understand this well, otherwise God must always bear for the heart the character of judge—a satisfied judge, it may be—and He who is love is not known; God is not known. As to that which relates to us, we have made Him a Judge in falling into sin; but in His supreme nature, God has risen above everything, and the result for us is a blessing answering to this supreme nature, a blessing infinitely higher than the blessing which we should enjoy as perfect creatures, a blessing given to us in His Son Jesus, as only-begotten Son of the Father. It is not, the Father so loved the world; it is, God as God, and we know Him as Father as a consequence of this grace. But He has revealed Himself, in this grace towards us.

What immense grace to be able to say, I know God; and again, I am known of Him: I know Him, Himself; not

only, I am saved, however precious it may be to be able to say that, but, I know the One who has saved me! The thought of this salvation comes from Him; it is the revelation of what He is, even for the angels. His love is the source of it; His nature, the depth of His heart, is revealed in it; His glory and His own nature are revealed in it. Son of God, Son of man, Jesus meets man's need, and reveals what God is. He who hath seen Him, hath seen the Father. Blessed be God! we know Him.

The purpose and consequences of His coming are then established. God has not sent His Son into the world to judge the world—He will come back in glory to do this—but that the world might be saved through Him (v. 17). The world has rejected the Son of God, but such a manifestation of God in the Word made flesh, and such an accomplishment of the work which glorifies God, bear their consequences, and bear them necessarily. He who believeth in Him is not judged. All that concerned God's glory as to man's sin has been accomplished; the righteousness of God, His love, His holiness. His majesty—all that He is, has been clearly brought out, and that in the judgment which fell upon Christ, made sin for us, and bearing our sins in His body upon the tree. Thus the whole question of responsibility and the glory of God as to the believer is resolved and settled; there can be now no judgment for him, otherwise all would not be settled; it would be a denial of the efficacy of Christ's work. The soul would be placed upon another ground; a ground necessarily false if that of Christ be true, for nothing and no one can be what He has been.

He, then, that believes in Him shall not be judged, as it is said also in chapter 5 of this same Gospel. He who believes has everlasting life, and he shall not come into

judgment. But he that believes not in Him is judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. The presentation of the Son of God, of the Word of God, made flesh, had already put man to the test; the question of his state had been resolved, he rejected God in the Person of His only-begotten Son, the full Light; and God is light, as He is love. It is not here sovereign love, but conscience and responsibility. The light has been in the world, and has shone clearly; the light of men, adapted to men. They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. Conscience feels the light, but that does not change the will; and if the will remains perverse, conscience makes divine light insupportable. The state of the will, as to God manifested down here, when conscience recognises the light, is that which forms the basis of an existing judgment, present, but final, there where Christ has been thus presented.

The end of the chapter determines the relative position of John the Baptist and of Christ. John's proper mission was an earthly one; he spoke of the Messiah to Israel, of the kingdom in connection with this people; as the immediate precursor of the Christ, the nearest of all those who, vessels of the testimony of God, had preceded him, he was, by this fact, greater than all the prophets: but he did not come up to the manifestation of that which is heavenly. Those who have believed since Christ's ascension enjoy this; the least even in the kingdom of God is greater than John. In the Person of the Christ, the Baptist glimpsed the glory which belonged to Him, and which, by grace, belongs to His own also; but the veil was not rent, and there was not a man in heaven. Personally, Jesus had brought that which

was heavenly; He revealed the Father, He spoke the words of God; but the grain of wheat remained alone, redemption was not accomplished, although He who came from above was there, and spoke that which He had seen and heard in words which were the words of God. No one received His testimony.

Verse 29 is rather a figure, and the bride he speaks of is not a particular bride. If one wished to apply it, it would indicate the earthly bride.

This difference between the prophetic testimony, which, although divine, is an earthly testimony, and the revelation of heavenly things, of God Himself, and the portion we have in the glory, is of all importance; it corresponds to the essential difference between Christianity and all that preceded it. Man glorified in heaven, the veil rent, the Holy Ghost come down here, and dwelling in us, to put us in living and actual relationship with heavenly things—all this differs entirely from the promises, and even from the prophecies of the coming of Messiah upon earth. That which relates to the personal history of the Christ, up to His session at the right hand of God, is found as prophecy in the Old Testament; but all that the accomplishment of these things reveals to us morally of man and of God, all that is the consequence of the Holy Ghost's presence in believers down here, could not exist before Christ, as Mediator, had accomplished His work and had gone up on high. John the Baptist was evidently, of all the prophets, the nearest to these things, having seen the Saviour; still, the work was not yet accomplished, and John could not enter into the heavenly things, although he knew, as an inspired

witness, that Christ had come down from heaven, and as such was above all.

Let us see how John presents the difference of which I speak. He could not do it as possessing these things, for they were not yet; but his testimony as to the rights of the Person of Christ, goes a long way in this passage, where he is speaking to his disciples. His joy was to have seen the Bridegroom, and that in the character of a friend: this is the first difference. He to whom all belonged by right was there: He had the bride, perhaps here the earthly bride, I have already spoken of it, but He was the Bridegroom. John's joy was to see Him. It was a great thing even to compare himself to Him who was come from heaven, although he accepted the disappearing of his own importance with unfeigned piety and joy, because He who eclipsed the brightness of John's testimony, by the presence of the object itself of that testimony was there. John's piety shines out in its clearest light as he thus goes into the shade, in order to exalt the One who, although unknown, was the true divine light, and who made His forerunner disappear by His divine brightness. Truth in the inner man manifested itself by the effect which the truth he announced should produce; his soul was at the height of the testimony he bore. This is much to say of a man; but this was the fair fruit of grace in this honoured witness of the Saviour.

The divine, heavenly Person of the Saviour is then put in contrast with the testimony of John, inspired as he was; his testimony was only a testimony, and a prophetic and earthly testimony: Christ came from heaven, and spoke of what He Himself had seen and heard, not as a prophet, whether, of future things, recalling the law of Moses, the servant of God, or of a Messiah to come, and

even upon the earth; no, Jesus spoke of the actual things which existed there whence He had come. No one received His testimony, for these were heavenly things, things which existed in God's presence, of which He spoke: man did not understand them, and did not want them. But the nature of the testimony was nevertheless divine; it was no longer the Spirit "by measure," a "Thus saith the Lord," where the prophet, having finished, all was said—perfect truth, but truth limited to that which was expressed—and again, it was of earthly things, the veil not being rent. The truth itself was there, the Spirit without measure (up to that time upon Him alone), filling Him with the things that were found there whence He was. He whom God had sent always spoke the words of God Himself in all that He said, and that in a man, and by a man, but who was the Son of God, and by the Spirit without measure.

It is very possible that the last two verses of the chapter are by the evangelist, and not by John the Baptist, as it has been thought; but I see no peremptory reason why they should not be by the latter. Up to the end of verse 34, it seems clear to me that they are the words of John the Baptist; and John mingles his testimony with the things he relates, the whole being of God. The last verse might make one think that the words are those of the evangeUst, as they contain a testimony so often repeated in his writings. There is also in the testimony a change analogous to what we have seen in verses 16-18 of chapter 1, as to the use of the name of God, and of that of Father. We must here notice carefully this fact, that the thing in question is not to know whether the testimony of the two verses is of God, but that it is only for our instruction, and as an interesting subject for our

hearts, that we may take into account the person who was the vessel of this testimony. The Spirit of God committed the word to John the Baptist; the same Spirit directed the evangelist, whether in bringing to our memory that which John the Baptist said, or in the words which he himself pronounces. The last two verses, however, seem rather the expression of a reality that the evangelist knew and possessed by the Holy Ghost, as a present and actual thing, than a prophetic testimony, however high it might be.

The difference between the names of God and of Father is always distinctly maintained in John's Gospel. When it is a question of the nature, and of the acting of God according to that nature, as the origin of redemption, and of the responsibility of man, the word God is employed; when it is a question of the grace which acts in Christianity, and by Christ in us, it is the name of Father. Thus "God so loved the world"; and in chapter 4, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth"; but, in grace, "the Father seeketh such to worship him"; and here, "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." (Compare chapter 13:3.) The Father has been revealed in the Son, and we have received the Spirit of adoption; the little children in Christ have known the Father. "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him"; and on the other side, "No one hath seen God at any time." Thus the Person of the Son come into the world, and for us, the exaltation of Jesus, after He had accomplished the work which the Father had given Him to do, then the descent of the Holy Ghost, in a word, the grace which operates in the Person, and for us, by means of the work of Jesus—there

is where we find the Father revealed. Jesus revealed this name to His disciples, although they had understood nothing of it (John 17:26); and now that the work which purifies us and justifies us has been accomplished, we have received the Spirit, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” The name of Father is a name of relationship, revealed by the presence of Christ, and which one knows and enjoys individually by the Holy Ghost. This is what characterises Christianity, and we may say, Christ Himself. God is what God is in His nature and His authority, the name of a Being, not of a relationship, except in the rights of absolute authority that belong to Him; but of a Being who, being supreme, enters into relationship with us, in grace. We see the importance of this distinction in the words of Christ Himself. During the whole of His life He does not say, “my God,” but, “my Father,” even in Gethsemane; and the enjoyment of this relationship is perfect. “I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” He says again, “Father,” when He explains what it is for Him to drink the cup. On the cross He said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? “Made sin for us, He felt what it was to be it before God, God being what He is. After His resurrection He employs the two names of God and of Father, when He introduces His disciples into the position into which He entered, from that time forth, as Man, according to the righteousness of God. “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, unto my God, and your God.” His own were, by grace, as Himself, in their relationship with God as Father; they were, by His work, before God such as He is in His nature, and that in righteousness, according to the value of the work that He had accomplished, and according to their acceptance in His Person, well pleasing in the Beloved. But what a wonderful privilege

to know what the Father's affections are set upon, and to know Him who is the object of them, and who is worthy of them—who suffices for these affections! What happiness to know the Lord, for the Father wills that there where He finds His delight we should find ours. What perfect, infinite happiness!

Finally, all things are given to Him, and set under His feet; it is to Him they will be subjected, although they are not yet, as far as the accomplishment of God's ways are concerned (Heb. 2); but He has all power in heaven and on earth.

It is well to remark here, that it is always the Word made flesh,36 He who emptied Himself, and took the form of a servant, as a man down here, who is before the eyes of John. Consequently, although the divinity, or rather the deity, of the Saviour appears on every page of the Gospel, Christ is presented to us in it as receiving everything from His Father. He is God, He is one with the Father; men should honour Him as they honour the Father; He can say, "Before Abraham was, I am"; but He never goes out of the place He has taken, and while speaking to the Father as to an equal, everything, glory, and all things, are given to Him. No one knows the Son, but it is very beautiful to see the perfect faithfulness of Jesus, in that He does not glorify Himself, but remains, without effort, in the place He has taken. Blessed be God, it is always a Man!

We have already said that this third chapter lays the foundations, and does not develop the results. We find there the possession of that which enables us to enjoy these results, that is, the new birth and the cross. This is the subjective side of the thing for us. And so we find

again here at the end, whosoever believes in the Son, whom the Father loves, has eternal life. (Compare 1John 5:11, 12.) He who does not believe on Him, who does not receive the witness He bears (compare chap. 5:21), shall never see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him (v. 36). The Son of God, Jesus, in His Person, is the touchstone of every soul, precious to those who believe; He is it as the manifestation of God Himself, adapting Himself to man in grace. We can see here also how the change of the name of Father to that of God is found again, when the Holy Ghost passes from grace to responsibility. When the Father is brought in, it is always grace acting by the Son, and in the Son who reveals Him.

Let us notice here, that in these first three chapters we have a preface to the Gospel, before the public ministry of the Saviour. The fact is established in chapter 3:24, compared with Matthew 4:12, 17, and Mark 1:14, 15. John 4 confirms this appreciation of the facts. No doubt Jesus had already taught and performed miracles, but He had not yet publicly presented Himself, so as to say, “The time is fulfilled.” He announces Himself thus in Luke 4:18 and following verses, although His preaching then in the synagogue at Nazareth was not His first, as verses 15 and 23 testify. But this preface of the first three chapters is really an introduction to the whole of Christianity, at least in its great and divine roots. It begins with what Christ was in His essential nature, and what man, alas! was also. It is not yet a question of God’s acting in grace. It was the light; man was darkness; it was necessary to be born of God in order to receive Him who was it. Then we find that which He became; the Word was made flesh, and the only-

begotten Son revealed God, being Himself in the bosom of the Father; it is grace in His Person. Then we have His work in all the extent of its effect, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, so that we may enjoy it now. And then the work of gathering, but this latter carried on on the side of the ways of God more upon earth, but in general according to the rights of the Person of Christ, the Jews, except the remnant, being set aside. Christ, recognised by this remnant according to Psalm 2, passes on, and presents His place, according to Psalm 8, as far as that regards His Person; after which the espousals and their joy, as well as the judgment, are brought in. But it is by resurrection, in raising Himself from the dead, in raising His own body, God's true temple, that the demonstration of His title and power will be given. That which is subjective in us, and the work for us, follows; His reception, according to human conviction, founded upon miracles, was worth nothing; it was what was in man; whilst, to see the kingdom, and to enter into it in its earthly and Jewish form, one must be born entirely anew. But there were also the heavenly things which Jesus revealed. He came from heaven, He was there—He alone could announce the heavenly things. And the natural man, too, was not fit to enter in; it needed that He who had undertaken his cause, whether for the glory of God, or for man's guilt (for the new birth does not purify the conscience), it needed that the Son of man, unless He should remain alone, should be lifted up. But then it was not merely entrance into the kingdom, and the enjoyment of the promises, which were thus found, but eternal life, that which is in Christ Himself. The blessed source of all is given to us after that; God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, that we might live eternally. Thus we find, first of all, the righteous

necessity, that which the nature and rights of God over man demanded, accomplished by the Son of man, then God's infinite love revealed. The Son of God had become Son of man, but the Son of man could take this place, because He was Son of God. At the end of chapter 3 we find the testimony of John the Baptist carried to its highest point, a witness of the deep and perfect personal piety of him who bore it. Still, he was of the earth—more than a prophet, yet always earthly; of dust, and speaking as being of the earth, belonging to that which was outside the veil, not yet rent. Christ came from within the veil, and His flesh was this veil. He spoke of that which He knew thus, and no one received His testimony. John had the joy of hearing the voice of the Bridegroom; he was not that; that which he said was given of God as testimony, but the testimony being borne, all on his part was accomplished. Christ was Himself the subject of the testimony, and, more than this, the words He spoke were God's words, for God did not give the Spirit by measure. All His words were God's words; He was above all. Finally, we find still one thing remaining to complete this revelation of Christ, and of God Himself, in the great elements which were in connection with Christ's Person and our state: the Father and the Son are presented to us. This is the crowning point of all in grace; He was the satisfying object of all the Father's divine affections, He in whom the infinite and perfect love of the Father found its delight: also to Him He had given all. As Son, come down here, Jesus receives all from the Father. But the Father and the Son do not remain alone in the plenitude of their perfection; we are brought into it to enjoy it, although, in a certain sense, they remain necessarily alone in their perfection. But he who believes in the Son has eternal life already, although down here in

weakness; he possesses subjectively that which, later on, will be his glory with Christ. (Compare the first verses of chapter 1) Now this revelation of the Father in the Son became the definitive test of man: he who did not receive this testimony, who did not submit to Him by faith, should never see life, but the wrath of God abode upon him. That which refers to the Holy Ghost, whom those only who had believed in Jesus should receive, is already found in verses 32-34 of chapter 1. The development of the subject is found in the Saviour's last discourses; the history of His presence is to be found in the Acts and the Epistles, and in the consciousness of His presence which believers possess.

Having completed the review of the three introductory chapters, it may be well perhaps to give a kind of index of the chapters of the whole Gospel; for there is much order and system in John's writings.

The rejection of the Messiah by the Jews is already stated in chapter 1; the judgment of the people, which results from this, shews itself clearly in the course of the Gospel, and in many of the chapters. The doctrine of each chapter is often in contrast with Jewish things, this contrast furnishing the occasion and basis of the doctrine. Another characteristic feature flows from it; the judgment bears on all the world (chap. 1) that had not known Him, and upon His own, the Jews, who had not received Him; it opens the way for the establishing and development of sovereign grace which alone produces the divine life in us. This implies the admission of the Gentiles into the enjoyment of the blessings of grace, and then the important fact that these blessings would be found in a world, and also in a state, altogether new, into which one enters by the resurrection. In the

synoptical Gospels Christ is presented in His three characters of Jesus Emmanuel, the Messiah; of Prophet; and of Son of man; His history being traced in these three points of view, with the account of His rejection and death. In John, who shews us God manifest in flesh, His rejection is established at the beginning; for, being light, the darkness did not receive Him. The result is, that, unlike the three other Gospels, where Christ is presented historically to be received, and where His rejection is recounted to us, but in connection with man's responsibility, John though he affirms this responsibility as doctrine, presents to us the sovereign grace which, we have already seen, sought His sheep among Jews and among Gentiles, for life eternal. Finally, we must not let pass without notice, the feature, that in John all is individual; he never speaks of the church.

## Chapter 4

After the introductory chapters, the Gospel of John begins by shewing us Jesus leaving Judea, and quitting the Jewish capital, the centre of the throne of God on the earth, the ancient seat of Him who, now come down in grace, could not find where to lay His head in an adverse world. The jealousy of the Pharisees gave occasion to the departure of Jesus. But here already we can perceive that the Lord, having the consciousness of an origin and of a purpose which went beyond all the thoughts even of those who had received Him, does not act to gather together those who received His word, according to the thoughts of the disciples who surrounded Him with affection: Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples. The Word made flesh, Son of God, Saviour of the world, Redeemer, Son of man, He could

not baptise in order to attach them to Himself as Messiah, although He was the Messiah; for He knew too well His rejection, and, as Peter expresses it, the sufferings which were to be the portion of Christ, and the glories that should follow. As to what was outside His position, Jesus could but allow His disciples to baptise thus; for them it was the truth, even the whole truth, although they had learned to add “living” to His title of Son of God. But if He Himself had baptised, He would have been entirely below the consciousness which He had of the object of His coming, and of that which was going to happen: it was not the truth for Him; although He was truly the Messiah, He came not to take this place then, but to give His life a ransom for many. That which drove Him away from Jerusalem, hindered Him also from baptising. The city where formerly He had been seated between the cherubim, and whose children He had often desired to gather together, drove Him from its neighbourhood; He went away, the despised and rejected of men, without having where to lay His head, to carry the testimony of God’s love elsewhere, and to display it in His Person. This supposed that He was rejected as Messiah; but more, God manifested in grace, and coming, according to the promises made to the Jewish people, He was the last test of the human heart, which was thus found to be enmity against God, and against God come in grace. It was a question, then, of God’s sovereign grace when man would not have Him; it was necessary then that He should be found quite apart, that He should have nothing down here—He who, coming amongst men to bring them love, a love which answered to all their necessities, was at the same time light for their consciences, put Himself within the reach of all, used

their very necessities to gain them in love, but called them to the enjoyment of heavenly things, which He, and He alone, was able to reveal to them.

We shall see that the fourth chapter answers perfectly to this position. But what a precious and deep truth to see the Son of God, God manifest in flesh, rejected; He who had come according to the promises, giving up everything down here, made nothing of, and abased, and shewing in this very thing the fulness of the Godhead in love and light—always hidden in lowliness, so as to be near all, and taking nothing of that which was His own, so as to be Himself alone everywhere, as God must be, and always manifested, if any one had eyes to see—all the more manifested because He was hidden, that the love might come nigh unto all, this infinite love of God manifested in His humiliation, in order to reach those who lay low, in alienation and hatred—infinite love, love which was above everything, in its exercise towards those who hated it—Master of Himself, in order to be the Servant of all, from His Father down to the most wretched of sinners, and that even unto death! Shall we not love Him? We cannot fathom these things; but that which He has been manifestly, can take possession of our whole heart, and form, or rather create, its affections by the object presented to them. He has sanctified Himself for us, that we might be sanctified by the truth. Looked at in this way, this chapter has an immense bearing; but we will follow out the facts historically as they are presented to us.

In going from Judea into Galilee, the Lord, unless He made a circuitous journey, must pass through Samaria. Now Samaria, whilst seeking to appropriate the promises, was outside the circle of them: they belonged

to the Jews. But the pretensions of the Samaritan to have part in them excessively irritated the Jews. Indeed, though mixed, the population of Samaria was, in great part, of heathen origin. “Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil,” said the Jews to Jesus. The Samaritans were in fact outside the promises and people of God. The Lord recognised these promises and that people, but He introduced that which was above both, and set them aside (v. 21-24, and already v. 5, 6). If Jacob’s well was there, the Son of man was there too, the Son of man, weary with His journey, thirsty, and without water, in the heat of the day, with no resting-place but the side of the well where He might sit, and dependent for a little water and to quench His thirst, upon any one who might come —upon a poor Samaritan woman, abandoned, and the offscouring of the world. This woman, tired of life, comes to draw water. Isolated in fact, isolated in her heart, she did not come at the time when women draw water. She had followed after pleasure in doing her own will; she had had five husbands, to whom, probably, she had been devoted, and the one she had was not her husband. She was weary of life; her will and her sin had left her heart void; she was isolated and abandoned by the world: her sin had isolated her; respectable people did not want her; nor was this astonishing. But there was One who was more isolated than she, who was alone in this world, whom no one understood, not even His disciples! What man, in the midst of this perverse world, understood the heart of Him who brought the thoughts of God into a world of sin, His love into a world of selfishness, His light into a world of darkness, heavenly things into the midst of a world which grovelled in material interests? This was good in the midst of evil, perfect good there where there was none.

There was a point of contact between these two, love on the one hand, and need on the other: but grace was necessary to produce the consciousness of the need.

The manner of Jesus had attracted the woman's attention: a Jew speaking kindly to a Samaritan woman, content to be beholden to her! The Lord begins from on high, by divine grace, joined to the perfect humihation and lowliness which set the goodness of God within the reach of man, grace which shews itself, which is measured, in going down so far as to meet with sin, and the misery to which sin has reduced us. The Lord indicates the two things. "If thou knewest the gift of God." In Jesus, God does not demand anything. He produces every kind of good, but He makes no demand. There was here no right to anything, no promise; there was no morality, no link with God existed; but grace existed in God for those who were in this state. The woman's attention was arrested; she saw something extraordinary, without rising above the circumstances in which her spirit moved. But the Lord goes to the source of all, or rather He came from it in His spirit. Two things are seen here, as I have just said; God giving in grace, and the perfect humiliation of Him who was speaking. Next, what this gift of God was is revealed, that is, the present enjoyment, by the power of the Holy Ghost, of eternal life in heaven.

How many new things these few words contained! God was giving, in grace and in goodness; He was making no demands, He was not turning back to man's responsibility, which is the basis of eternal judgment, but was acting in the freedom and power of His holy grace. Then, He who had created the water was there, weary and dependent, in order to be able to drink of it

from such a woman, who did not know what she was. He does not say, “If thou knewest me,” but, “If thou knewest who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink,” who He is who has come down so low, surmounting all the barriers which kept Him from thee, “thou wouldest have asked of him.” Confidence would have been established: as to goodness and as to power, He could, and would, give that which brought into relationship with God. There was the answer: “He would have given thee living water”; words clear enough, it would seem; but the poor woman cannot get further than the circumstances of her daily labour. It is not now with her, astonishment in seeing Him who spoke with her, passing over religious barriers, but the impossibility, as He was, of having water; for she goes no further than her daily toil, though seeing plainly that she has to do with an extraordinary Person; the Lord was leading her on, she knew not yet where. Was He, then, who spoke to her greater than Jacob, the stock of Israel, who had given them the well? The Lord now expresses more clearly what was in question: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”

But to arrest the attention of a soul, however useful this may be, is not to convert it: the moral communication between the soul and God is not yet established by the knowledge of oneself and of Him; the eyes are not yet opened. Thus the heart remains in its natural surroundings, absorbed, or at least governed, by the circle in which it lives. The poor woman, attracted by the Lord’s manner, which had gained ascendency over

her, asks Him to give her of this water, so that she need no longer come there to draw laboriously. All true intelligence was wanting to her: she was absorbed by her weariness and labour, and the circle of her thoughts went no further than her waterpot, that is to say, than herself, but herself possessed by her circumstances. This is human Life, and people judge of revealed things by their relation to these circumstances; sometimes we find moral truth, as here; sometimes open unbelief. How can an entrance be found into the heart of man? This is easy for God, and for man this entrance is found when God is there, and reveals Himself, and man's conscience is touched. "Adam, where art thou? "He hid himself, because he was naked. All was out. The fig-leaves that could set him at ease in hiding him from himself were simply nothing when God was there. The first manifestation of this new faculty in man, conscience, this sad but useful companion that always goes with him now through his career, as a part of his being is, for God, the only door of entrance to the heart, and for man, of intelligence. Only here it is love, never weary, that acts. God and the sinner are found each in his true place; man, responsible entirely known of God, but feeling that all is known, and that He who knows him is there.

I dwell a little on this point, because it is the opposite of the entrance of paradise; it is not paradise regained, or even that which is much better, but the soul receiving subjectively truth and grace in the Person of Jesus, who gives it the capacity for this. In either case its state of sin is revealed to the soul; but in paradise it was to judge, and begin a world where God was not, but where Satan reigned; here sin also is manifested, but God is manifested in this same world in love; formerly, light and

judgment; now, light and grace. All understanding as to the gift of God, of the Person of Christ, of eternal life, was wanting, and had no place in the woman's heart. "There is none that hath understanding." But whilst, formerly, God had driven out man, here love remains perseveringly near the sinner; when it is God, love is persevering and patient. Only all must be real: "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." "I have no husband," replies the woman. It is shame which, though speaking the truth, hides the evil; not an upright conscience before God. But patient love still carries on its work; it pursues it there, where entrance is found into the understanding—or rather into the soul of man, which is thoroughly wanting in understanding as to divine things—conscience. "Go, call thy husband." Then, upon her answer, the Lord tells the woman enough of her history to make her know that she has to do with Him before whom all is naked and laid bare.

The work was going on in this soul; her attention, we have said, had been arrested. The effect deserves to be well considered; the woman neither excuses herself, nor is astonished, nor asks, How dost thou know this? The word of God is for her the word of God. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She does not only say, That which thou sayest is true; no, the authority and source of the word of Jesus were for her divine. All He says comes from God, who reveals Himself by this means among men. This is a deep change in the soul's condition. God has spoken to her, and she has recognised that it is He; but more, that His word, as a whole, as a source, is of Him. What she thought was, not only that Jesus, in this particular case, spoke the truth, although that was the means by which her conscience

was reached, but God was speaking to her conscience, and that always produces the effect we see here: He who was speaking was a true and sure source of divine communications. It was faith in the word of God, the soul brought into communication with Him: all that He said had for her a divine authority. Divine intelligence was there with regard to the things in which God was drawing near to man.

Nevertheless the woman was still pre-occupied with that which filled her mind: Ought we to worship at Jerusalem, or on Mount Gerizim? It was the external aspect of what existed, and her mind had been exercised about these things: Where was God to be found?—but in a way which did not go beyond what was in man. God takes the opportunity of revealing the true, the new worship, the worship of the Father, of God, in spirit and in truth. This change characterises the whole of the chapter, that is, the introduction of heavenly relationships in the place of the earthly Jewish system, a change which depended upon the revelation of the Father in the Son, a change but little known as yet, but which was necessarily connected with His Person, and of which consequently, He could say, “the hour now is” (v. 23).

Two things, based upon the revelation which was being made, characterised this worship; the nature of God, and the Father’s grace. The worship of the true God must be a worship “in spirit and in truth.” God’s nature required this; God is a Spirit; and the worship would not be according to what God is, if it were not “in truth,” for what is false is not according to what He is, and the revelation of that which He is has come in Christ, who is Himself the truth, for “grace and truth came by Jesus

Christ.” The law given by Moses told what man ought not to do, and the Lord knew well how to find in this law that which man ought to feel; to love God and his neighbour. But the law does not reveal what God is, it reveals what man ought to be. Now here was God fully revealed in the world, who, rejected as Messiah, object of promise, leaves His special connection with the Jewish people, although it had been (outside that which was earthly and legal) established by Himself, and comes to reveal Himself in the Person of the Son, substituting God amongst men, in grace, for all the forms in the midst of which, hidden behind the veil, He forbade all men to come near Him—to reveal Himself I say, to all this ignorance, which worshipped she knew not what, and where there was no answer whatever to the needs of the heart. It was the Father seeking true worshippers in spirit and in truth, according to His own nature fully revealed; for “God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” But grace precedes; the initiative is with God; He comes Himself to seek such worshippers. We have seen that it was the gift of God; but God is Light, and He reveals Himself. It is, we have also seen, God revealed in goodness, but the conscience reached by the light, and God giving that which springs up unto everlasting life.

Thus it is the grace of the Father which seeks, the light of God that acts on the conscience, grace which gives divine life, according to the presence in power of the Holy Ghost, and all the truth which unfolds itself in this: this is what produces true worship in spirit and in truth. All that belongs to Jerusalem and Samaria is necessarily left behind by the presence of God Himself, the Son revealing the Father, and communicating eternal life in

connection with heavenly things; the Messiah being rejected, and the Father's heart being the source of all, which places us necessarily in connection with heaven, by Him who can reveal these things, Himself the Son of the Father.

We may remark here that our Gospel speaks of the revelation of the Father in the Son; of what God is, who is the object of worship; of that which reaches the conscience; of eternal life; but not of that which purifies the conscience. This last subject is not that which John treats of in his Gospel, but John speaks of the revelation of God the Father in the Son; of this revelation for judgment, as to its result, and according to grace, as to its object; it is the Son in the world, to reveal His God and Father, and as eternal life. At the end of the Gospel, the Holy Ghost is introduced in place of the Son, that we may know Him as Man in heaven at the right hand of God.

We find an example of the isolation of the Lord in the total want of intelligence in the disciples, when the Lord opens His heart, in the joy that the prospect of the conversion of sinners gave Him—of the fruit of His ministry. Except communion with His Father, which He always enjoyed, the Lord had no joy upon earth but in the exercise of His love in the good that He did: that was worthy of God. Perfect whilst being truly Man in His communion on high, and exercising His love down here, He went about doing good. Such was His whole life, except the sufferings He endured at the hands of men, He, a Man of sorrows, and knowing well what languor was. Not that He was without human affection: He loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus; He loved him whose Gospel we are reading; but this does not appear till His

hour had come. He defers all expression of it until then, explicitly as to His mother, and, as we see in the history, as to what concerns John and the family at Bethany. In His ministry He was wholly for His Father, and for the sinners of the world; His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work (v. 34).

The result for the woman, who received a flood of fresh light in her soul, and who, even while being enlightened, had suddenly too much light to see distinctly, is, that she refers it to Christ. God had brought it about by a real work in her conscience. She thought that if only she had the Christ (for Him she believed in, and knew He was to come), He would tell her all clearly, and make her know all things. It is there that the woman was brought; and Christ was there before her. It is always thus. Many questions arise in an awakened and sincere soul, but when Christ is found, all comes out clearly, there is a full answer to all the soul's needs: all is found. But who was He who had acted upon the heart and conscience of this poor woman, and who had been good to her, when He knew all that she had done? When the word of God reaches the conscience, it is not the flesh that acts, it is the Saviour God, who has been there all along.

There is another interesting little circumstance to be remarked here. We have seen the isolated woman bowed down under the burden of life, whose ill-requited labour was represented by the pitcher: she was absorbed by it, her heart could not throw it off: now (and it is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost presents to us these little touches) the pitcher is entirely forgotten. The woman does not seek isolation any longer; she goes to announce to everyone what she has found; this Man was surely the Christ (v. 28, 29). No doubt she had to draw water again,

but the burden that weighed upon her soul was taken off, the energy of a new life was there. What she said touched very nearly on her shame; but Jesus filled her heart, and she can talk of these things, in finding Christ there—Christ who preoccupied her by the light of His grace: “Come, see a man who hath told me all things that ever I did; is not he the Christ?” When she got home, she could think of the gift of God, and of Him who had said to her, “Give me to drink”; but all her further life is lost in the splendour of the revelation of God in Christ.

We may remark that the reapers gathered fruit unto life eternal, and also received their hire. The prophets had laboured (the woman was expecting the Christ), also John the Baptist. The disciples were only reaping, but the fields were white unto harvest. In the very worst times, when judgment even is close at hand, God has His good part, and faith sees it, and is consoled by it.

Notice, too, that the Samaritans call Jesus “the Saviour.” They knew very well, at bottom, that their Gerizim was nothing, but under the influence of grace, that opened their hearts to a wider conception of the Saviour’s work. No Jew would have said, “the Saviour of the world.”

As His field of work, Jesus does not take again the road to Jerusalem—He goes away into Galilee. His own country had rejected the Prophet, and lost the Saviour. This expression, which embraces all the extent of the scene of His redeeming work as Saviour,. closes this account, where His departure from Judea to introduce it into the sphere of sovereign grace is given to us, while presenting the principles of eternal life, and of the worship to be rendered to the Father.

The following episode, in which the illness of the courtier's son is related to us, begins, I think, to unfold to us the great elements of the revelation of God in the Person of the Son, first of all in healing that which remained in Israel, but ready to perish. Further on He shews that man is dead spiritually; but there were in Israel quickened souls, as we see indeed in the beginning of Luke. But all was going to perish; the nation was going to be judged, was going to terminate its existence under the old covenant, no longer to subsist in relationship with God as a vessel of blessing. But He who is the Resurrection and the Life was there, to awaken and sustain life individually, to be its bread, there, where faith received Him. He shewed this, too, at Jerusalem, but it began naturally in Galilee, in the midst of the poor of the flock, where He went when He was driven out of Judea. Faith receives the word of Christ, and He who is the Life and who brings it, re-animates it taking away weakness, and communicates life. This application that we make of physical restoration is fully sanctioned by the use the Lord makes of it in the following chapter. The principle and faith are equally simple here; the father believed in the power of Jesus, but his faith was like that of Martha, Mary, and the Jews; he believed that Jesus could heal37—nothing more. He prays the Lord to come down before his son dies. Jesus would have men believe on a word, and not only in seeing signs; however He does not raise the question of the power to quicken, but He has compassion on the poor father, making everything depend, nevertheless, on faith in His word, when He says to the father, "Thy son liveth." The father believes the word of Jesus, and goes away; on the way he meets his servants, and they announce to him that his son is healed, and that this was

so at the very moment when Jesus said the word. “And he believed, both he and all his house.” The power of death had been arrested by the power of life come from above, and the man that had profited by it believed in Him who had brought it, and who was it; for in Him was life. (Compare 1 John 1:1-3 and ch. 5:11, 12.)

## Chapter 5

There still remained amongst the Jews some fragments of the ancient blessing: “I am Jehovah that healeth thee”; and by the administration of angels, a general principle of the ways of God among this people. It was but little, but a sign that God had not entirely abandoned His people; there were still cures in the pool of Bethesda; he who was the first to throw himself into it, when the angel troubled the water, was healed. The man who thus went into the water shewed faith in the intervention of God, and the desire to profit by it. But the history recorded for us in chapter 5 leads us to a far greater power, and to far more important principles.

A poor paralytic man was there, in the midst of all these infirm people who were lying in the porches of the pool; Jesus comes there. What is presented in Him has a double character; He is the answer in power to all need, and He also gives life.

There were needs in Israel at that time, needs of the soul, as well as of the body, and a consciousness of these needs. The Lord could say, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The poor paralytic man is the type and figure of this. In order that the object of the blessings which were enjoyed under the law should be able to profit by them, he must have power in himself. Whether it be to have

righteousness according to the law, or whether to enjoy other blessings, there must be, in the man who wished to possess them, a subjective state fitted for this; there must be power in man. The paralytic man's disease had deprived him of that power which was necessary in order to profit by the means of healing. It is the same thing as to sin. The blessings and means which the law offers, demand strength in man. The desire to be healed is supposed— "Wilt thou be made whole?" The Lord puts the question thus. Power was wanting, as in Romans 7, to will was present. Jesus brings with Him the power that heals; the good which He does, does not demand power in us. It was when we were deprived of all strength that His grace acted. (See Romans 5:6.) In John, we must remember, it is a question of life; even when he speaks of the cross, it is for eternal life, not for pardon.

Jesus then comes: power is in what He says; it accompanies His word—and the man is healed. Now that day was the sabbath. God's rest is the portion of His people; the sabbath was thus the sign of the covenant made with Israel; Exodus 31:13; Ezek. 20:12. The sabbath was the rest of the first creation, and of the first covenant, which depended upon the responsibility of man, and upon his strength to accomplish that which it demanded of him: "Do this, and thou shalt live." It was for man to act in order to get blessing. Here all is changed. God could not rest where sin was, where misery was; His holiness and His love made the thing equally impossible. Corruption, depravity, the horrors that sin produced, did not make of such a scene the scene of God's rest, of which the sabbath was the expression and the figure, but upon the principle of

obligation and law. But before the law even, the sabbath had been instituted as the rest of the old creation. The law imposed it, but man never entered into it, and a ruined creation was not God's rest, and did not give rest to man's troubled spirit. But God, if He could not rest, could work in grace: and this is the answer, infinitely beautiful, and beautiful because it is true, that the Saviour makes to the accusation of the Jews. It was the judgment of the entire old creation, but it said that since the fall, the grace of Him who was now fully revealed, the Father, in the coming of the Son, was working, to quicken and bless, at the work of the new creation (viewed in its moral aspect); for everywhere here it is this side, not the outward manifestation in result that we find. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Unless it be in His infinite essence, God has no rest: infinite blessing! grace without measure! God acts, He works now. When He shall have rest as to His operations, we shall have it with Him, and in the knowledge of the Father and the Son. God will rest in His love, in the blessing which surrounds Him in the glory of the Son, in the accomplishment of His counsels, in the eternal blessedness of which He is the centre and source.

We shall now see what this work is which the Father and the Son are doing, for it is of them that he speaks, of these names which John always uses in speaking of the operations of grace. He says, indeed, that God so loved —which is the source and foundation of all; there the Son of man and the Son of God, and God Himself, are introduced as source and foundation of all blessing; but when the subject is the operations of grace, in John, we always find the Father and the Son.

The Jews understood perfectly the position which Jesus took, and sought to kill Him. The Lord does not refuse this position which the apostle John recognises as His (for in verse 18 it is John who speaks); but He puts everything in its place. All that the Father does, He does it; but it is not as another, a second and independent authority, that He acts. He does that which the Father does, and He does nothing else: He acts in agreement with the Father, and moved by the same thought as He, and He does all things that the Father does. But having taken the form of a servant, He does not leave it, and whilst declaring Himself one with the Father (for before Abraham was He was the "I AM"), He receives all, in the position He has taken, in these operations of grace, and in their fruits in glory, from the Father's hand. This is striking in this Gospel, where the divine side of His Person is more fully brought out than in the others, although it be not more definitely affirmed. We find constantly that when He speaks of being on the same footing as His Father, He places Himself, nevertheless, ever upon the ground of receiving all from Him.

Jesus then goes on here to the work which, in fact, was being accomplished, and is being still accomplished, whether by the Father, or by the Son only, and He does all that the Father does. There is one work which He does as Son of man, and which the Father does not. "Father" is the name of grace and relationship; "Son of man," that of conferred authority. If the Father and the Son work, it is a work of grace that is in question. But the Father has not been humbled; He remains in the unchangeable glory of the Godhead. All judgment is committed to the Son, so that those who shall have

despised Him, will be compelled to recognise Him by this means.

But let us take the instructions of the passage in their order. The Son does more than heal; “for as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him “(v. 21-23). Thus the Son’s glory is maintained in a twofold manner, in that like the Father He quickens, and this we can understand, for we are in relation with the Father and the Son, as partaking of the divine life; then by judgment, for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all may honour Him. Those who are quickened, honour Him with all their heart, and with goodwill; those who do not believe, judgment will compel to honour Him, in spite of themselves.

To which of these two classes do I belong? The 24th verse furnishes us with the answer to this question—a simple, complete answer, and full of precious light. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” The word of Christ is that which is presented to the soul, to bring the glad tidings of grace: the effect produced, where this word is received, is faith in the Father as having sent His Son. But He who thus believes in the Father as sending His Son, grace and truth thus come in Him, has eternal life. That is one side of the answer; he who believes is quickened. We have

seen that this is one means of ensuring the Son's glory: the other means is not mixed up with this one. If Christ has quickened, it is not to put His work to the test of judgment; that is impossible: Christ would judge His own work, and would call in question its efficacy; and who is the judge? The consequence is evident: the other means of ensuring Christ's glory is not employed; he who has received life does not come into judgment. I limit myself to what the passage before us says; otherwise we should remember that He who sits as Judge is the same One who bore the sins of all those who believe. But John does not treat this side of the subject: to judge him who believes, would be to call in question the quickening work of Christ, and that of the Father also.

Here is what is precise and formal as to the two things by which the Son is glorified; that is, the quickening of souls, and judgment; the first which He accomplishes, in common with the Father; the second, which is entrusted to Him alone, because He is the Son of man.

This is not all that is said here. He who has eternal life is "passed from death unto life." It was not a cure: the soul had been spiritually dead, separated from God, dead in its trespasses and sins, and it has come out of that state of death by the quickening power of the Saviour. It is not merely that, being quickened, it escapes the consequences of its responsibility when the day of judgment shall come: the Lord has taken the other means, in grace, of glorifying Himself with regard to it. The soul was already dead: it is the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians: a new creation. The unrepentant sinner will come into judgment, if he who is under grace escapes it. But we are all dead now; it is the

state of us all already: we are dead as regards God, without a single sentiment which answers to what He is, or to His call, and if it were a question merely of that which is found in man, it would be impossible to awaken any. But God communicates life, and the soul passes from death unto life. It is a new creation; we become partakers of the divine nature. At the same time it ever remains true that we shall give account of ourselves to God, that we shall all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ; but it is not a question there, for us who believe, of any judgment as to our acceptance. We are in the glory, like Christ, when we get there; Christ, Himself will have come in person to seek us, that we may be there, and He will have changed the body of our humiliation into conformity to His body of glory.

Let us continue to study our chapter. The Father quickens; the Son also quickens and judges. The hour was coming, and had then already come, when it would not only be the Messiah, Jehovah Himself, who would heal the sick in Israel, in keeping with the promises and prophecies given to Israel according to the government and discipline of God in the midst of His people, working a cure which might give place to a more severe discipline; but from this time quickening power and eternal life in the Person of the Son, who revealed the Father in grace, were come, so that the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and those that should hear it should live {v. 25). This was the great proclamation as to life: it was there, and as the Father had life in Himself, He had given to His Son, a Man upon earth, to have life in Himself—a divine prerogative, but here found in a Man, come in grace upon earth.

I have already noticed that, while shewing us in Christ things which belong to God only, and that absolutely, in the Gospel of John, the Son, having become Man and Servant, never leaves the position of receiving everything. He has received authority also to execute judgment, because He was the Son of man. But one might be judged upon earth, and in fact the living will be judged there.

There still remains an important part of His power which belongs to the teaching of this chapter: the dead shall rise again, and, according to that which has already been declared in verse 24, life and judgment are not mingled here. Men were not to marvel that the souls who should hear His voice would live by the spiritual life which He could communicate: the hour was coming (and that hour was not yet come, and is not yet come) when all those who are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth. … It is no longer here, “those who shall hear shall live,” but all shall hear, and shall come forth; those who have done well to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Notice carefully, that, although the judgment assigns to each one his place according to his works, it is not the judgment that separates the risen; the resurrection itself makes the separation. Those who have done well have not part in the same resurrection as those who have done evil. He does not here speak of the interval of time which separates the resurrection of the one from the resurrection of the other; that must be sought in the revelation that God gives of the dispensations. Here it is a question of the essence of things: there is a resurrection, which is that of the just, called thus; and

another resurrection, distinct from the former, a resurrection of judgment, in which the living, glorified in the first, do not participate. Sometimes, indeed, a difficulty has been raised as to the word, “hour,” which is employed here, but it is a poor argument, for the same expression is found again in verse 25, which presents to us as an “hour,” a space of time which has lasted nearly two thousand years, and which comprises two distinct states of things—one in which Christ upon earth acts personally, and the other, in which Christ glorified acts by the Spirit. These two epochs, nevertheless, make up but one “hour,” from the point of view in the passage; it is the same thing here. The first hour is the period during which Christ quickens souls; the other hour, the period of verse 28, is that during which Christ raises bodies. This is quite simple; one of these hours, as I have said, has already lasted more than eighteen centuries.

Having declared these great truths, which reach to the end of God’s ways with men, in His Person, as to life, and as to judgment, Christ goes back to the great principle which was at the very beginning of His discourse; that is, that He could do nothing as an independent Person from the Father. If it had been otherwise, it would have been, indeed, the denial of that bond between Him and the Father in which they were one, and which was found in everything, with this additional fact, that He had the form of a servant, of One sent by the Father. He did nothing of His own will: according as He heard, He judged, and. His judgment was just, for He sought not His own will in anything, but that of the Father who had sent Him (v. 30). No selfish motive whatever was to be found in His manner of viewing things, but the judgment which He formed,

whatever it might be, flowed from the communications that the Father made to Him: this was divine perfection. He acted as Man, and as sent, but He did so according to the immutable perfection of God, not of Himself as a Man, which would not even have been human perfection, but forgetfulness of Him whose Servant He had become. Still, it was as Son of man, in this title of glory as of grace, of Him who had been humbled, that He executed judgment with authority.

The rest of the chapter treats of the question of man's responsibility as to life, as that which precedes presented to us the sovereign grace that gives life. Divine life was present in the Person of Jesus, and God had vouchsafed four testimonies to men that it was there: the testimony of John Baptist; the works which the Father had given Him to do; the Father Himself; and the Scriptures. They had been glad to rejoice in John the Baptist for a time, for the people held him to be a prophet. Now John had borne a clear testimony to the Lord on the part of God. Then the works of Jesus were an unexceptionable testimony that the Father had sent Him: the Father had given Him these works to do, and He did them. The Father Himself also had borne witness to Him: the multitude had thought they heard thunder; but His word did not dwell in them, for they believed not Him whom He had sent. Finally, they had got the Scriptures; they boasted of this, they thought to find eternal life in them; and what they did was to bear witness to Christ, to Jesus, who was there before their eyes. The Life was there, living before them; they had these testimonies, but they would not come to Him, that they might have life. The life was there, but they would not profit by it (v. 40). It was not that the Lord sought

glory from men; but He knew them, and knew that they had not the love of God in them. He was come in His Father's name, revealing what He was; they would not receive Him, alas! because He revealed Him perfectly. Another should come in his own name, with human pretensions, and adapted to man's heart, not to God's heart, him they would receive (v. 43). Terrible prophecy of that which shall happen to the people, as a consequence of their rejection of Jesus, and of the motives which impelled them to reject Him. The Antichrist will deceive them in the last days, because he will come with pretensions and motives adapted to the heart and desires of carnal men; the Jews will give themselves up to his deceptions and pretensions. The state of their souls hindered them from receiving the truth; they sought to receive honour and esteem from men, not the honour which comes from God alone. They were not following the path of faith, but quite the contrary; not that the Lord would accuse them before the Father: Moses, in whom they boasted, sufficed for that. He, in whom they placed their confidence, bore the most explicit testimony to the Lord. If they had believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus also: Moses had written of Him.

It is important to remark one or two things here: first of all, the clear testimony which the Lord bears to the writings of Moses; the writings were the writings of Moses; he had written concerning Christ. That which he had written was the word of God; one must believe what he said. More, that which is written is authority pre-eminently, as Peter says: "No prophecy of scripture"; and Paul, "Every scripture is inspired of God." Besides, it is evident that if men ought to believe in what Moses

had written of Christ so many centuries before His coming, that which Moses wrote was divinely inspired. It is evident that what Jesus said had divine authority; but as to the form of communication, the Lord attaches more importance to that which was written, than to that which was communicated by the living voice: God had deposited it there for all times—a very important testimony for these days of infidelity.

## Chapter 6

The fifth chapter presented to us Christ quickening whom He will in common with the Father, then judging as the Son of man. It is Christ acting in His divine power. In the sixth chapter He is the food of His people, as Son of man come down from heaven, and dying. It is not His quickening power in contrast with the obligation of the law, but who He was, the history of His Person, if I may dare to say so—that which He is essentially, that which He became—a history which terminates by His entering again as Son of man there where He was before: it is essentially the humiliation of Jesus in grace, in contrast with that which He was in right of enjoyment, with that which was promised in the Messiah when He should be upon earth. The teaching of this chapter embraces all, from His coming down from heaven, until He enters it again, so that in descending and ascending, He fills all things; but this teaching rests especially on the Lord’s incarnation and death, in connection with which He gives eternal life, and introduces His own into the glory of the new creation, far above and beyond all that an earthly Messiah could give.

Jesus went away beyond the sea of Galilee, and sat there upon a mountain with His disciples. Now the passover

was near; and this fact gives the tone to all the discourse we have here. Lifting up His eyes, Jesus sees the multitude that had followed Him, and asks Philip where they should buy bread for all this people, knowing well what He would do. The disciples think, not according to the thoughts of faith, but considering the resources upon which man can calculate; one thinks of what would be needed, the other, of what there was. There was indeed an immense disparity between the five loaves of bread and the five thousand men. Now one of the promises made for the time of the Messiah, was, that Jehovah would satisfy His poor with bread (Psalm 132); and Jesus accomplished this promise, working a miracle, which had its effect on the crowds which surrounded Him; there was abundance, and there remained over and above.

This gives occasion (v. 14-21) to a kind of framework of the Lord's whole history, a history in which He replaces the Messianic blessings by spiritual and heavenly blessings which should be consummated in resurrection, upon which He insists four times in the course of the chapter. He is recognised as the Prophet who was to come; they wish to make Him a king; but He avoids that by going up to pray alone, and the disciples cross the sea without Him. They are looked upon here in the character of the Jewish remnant; still, it is this that has become the Christian assembly. But these few verses give us, as I have said, the framework of Christ's history, recognised as Prophet, and refusing royalty, to exercise priesthood on high, whilst His people cross the waves of a troubled world with difficulty. As soon as Jesus rejoins them, they arrive at the place where they were going;

difficulties are over, their goal reached: here the disciples represent entirely the Jewish remnant.

The multitude rejoin the Lord on the other side of the sea, astonished to find Him there, knowing that there was not, where He had been, any other boat but that of His disciples. The Lord accuses them of seeking Him, not because they had seen the miracle, but because they had eaten the loaves, and had been filled, and He invites them to seek that food which abides unto life eternal, which the Son of man would give them; for Him had God the Father sealed (v. 26, 27).

In the fifth chapter Jesus is Son of God; here, Son of man, and we shall see what faith in Him as such works. The legal question of the crowd (v. 28), rather vague and trivial, introduces this development. What shall we do (they say), that we may work the works of God? This is the work of God (the Lord replies), that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. Thereupon they ask of Him a sign, led of God in their question, remembering the gift of the manna in the desert, as it was written: “He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.”

This quotation introduces directly the doctrine of the chapter. Christ was the bread. It was not a question of shewing a sign to men; He was Himself the sign of God’s intervention in grace, in His Person as Son of man come down here upon earth, and not as Prophet, or Messiah, or King. My father gives you the true bread which comes from heaven. The Father—it is always He when it is a question of active grace—gave them the bread of God. The true bread, in its nature, is He who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. This goes entirely outside Judaism: it is the Father, the Son of man,

He who comes down from heaven, and whom God gives for the life of the world; not Jehovah fulfilling the promises made to Israel by the coming of the Son of David, although Jesus was this indeed. Like the poor Samaritan woman—but impelled here by a vague need of the soul, they ask that the Lord would give them part in this bread of God which gives life. This furnishes the occasion for the full development of the teaching of Jesus. “I am the bread of life. He who cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst” (v. 35). If you would have bread for ever which is food indeed, come to Me; you shall never hunger. But, adds the Lord (for such was Israel’s state, always thus looked upon in John), ye have seen Me, and ye believe not. If it be a question of you, and of your responsibility, all is lost: the bread of life has been presented to you, and ye would not eat of it, ye would not come to Me to have life; but the Father has counsels of grace, He will not allow you all to perish. “All that the Father has given me shall come to me”; for grace, sovereign and certain in its effects, is clearly taught in this Gospel: since it is the Father who has given him to Me, I will never cast out the one that comes to Me, however wicked he may have been, or insolent enemy of Myself. The Father has given him to Me, and I am not come to do My will, but the will of Him that hath sent Me. What a humble place the Lord takes here, although all was fulfilled at His expense! He had made Himself a Servant, and He accomplishes the will of another only, the will of Him who sent Him (v. 38).

This will is now presented to us in a double aspect, and in a very striking manner: “This is the will of him that sent me, that of all that he hath given me, I should lose

nothing." Their salvation is assured by the Father's will, the fulfilment of which nothing can hinder. But it is in another world that the blessing will take place. It is no longer here a question of Israel and of the Messiah, but of the resurrection at the last day. The expression, "the last day," which we find four times in this part of the chapter, designates the last day of the legal dispensation in which the Messiah was to come, and will come. The course of these dispensations has been interrupted by the rejection of the Messiah when He came, which has given place to the introduction of heavenly things, which are brought in parenthetically between the death of the Messiah and the end of the weeks of Daniel. Those whom the Father gives to Jesus will enjoy as raised, the heavenly blessing which the Father's love keeps for them, and which the Son's work assures to them. Not one of them will be lost: all will be raised by the power of the Lord. Such are the unfailing counsels of God.

It is also the Father's will that whosoever sees the Son, and believes in Him, has eternal life: and the Lord will raise him up at the last day (v. 40). The Son is presented to all, that they may believe in Him, and whosoever believes has everlasting life. Here, again, it is not a question of the Messiah and of promises, but of seeing the Son, and believing on Him, of eternal life and resurrection. Before, it was the Father's counsels that could not fail; here, it is the presentation of the Son of God as the object of faith; if, through the humiliation of the Lord, one saw the Son, and believed upon Him, one would have everlasting life, and the result would be the same. In the first case it is a question of the Father's counsels and of His acts, as well as of those of Jesus in raising them: the Father gives them, Jesus raises them,

not one of them is lost. Next, we have the presentation of the Son in connection with man's responsibility: if a man believed, he would have eternal life, and would rise again. These are the two aspects, brought together, in which these great truths are presented.

The Jews murmur because the Lord said that He had come down from heaven. They saw the Son, and did not believe in Him: they knew Him after the flesh; He was, for them, Joseph's son. The Lord then insists upon the fact, that no one can come unto Him unless the Father draw him; He insists upon the necessity of grace to be able to come, not that every one was not free, as people say, to come, for whosoever should see the Son, and believe on Him, would have eternal life; but He shews that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. There is the blinding of sin, of the flesh, and hatred of God, as far as He reveals Himself; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God; so that the power of grace is needed to dispose the heart to receive Christ. Now when the Father draws to Jesus, it is by efficacious grace in the heart: the eyes are opened, one passes from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; one passes into a salvation assured by Christ, who will raise up such a soul at the last day. It is the revelation of Jesus to the soul by the grace of the Father: the soul sees the Son, it receives eternal life, it shall never be lost, but raised up at the last day. It is important to observe, that he who is drawn by the Father will never be lost, and that at the last day he will have his part with the redeemed in an entirely new world, in an entirely new state. Such a soul is taught of God to recognise the Son; the Father has spoken to it; it has learned of Him; it comes to Christ, and is saved; not that any one hath

seen the Father, save Christ Himself. Christ had revealed Him, and he who believed in Christ had everlasting life (v. 47). Solemn but precious assurance! Eternal life has come down from heaven in the Person of the Son, and he who believes in Him, possesses it, according to the efficacious grace of the Father, who draws him to Christ, and according to the perfect salvation that Christ has accomplished: his faith lays hold, as to life, of this Son of God, who will manifest His power later on, in raising the redeemed one from among the dead.

We see that, as in chapter 5, Christ is presented to us as a quickening power, He is here set before us as the object of faith, and that in His humiliation, as come down from heaven, and put to death. It is not the promised Messiah. It is Christ come down from heaven to save those that believe. His re-entrance into heaven is mentioned at the end of the chapter as testimony, with the title, “There, where he was before.”

As we have seen, the multitude, under the hidden direction of God, had alluded to the manna, asking some similar sign of the Lord. Jesus had said to them (a touching reply!): I am the sign of God’s salvation, and of eternal fife sent into the world; I am the manna, the true bread, which the Father, God acting in grace, gives to you: “He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst.” I recall all this, although we have already spoken of the verses which follow, in order to bring together what is said about the bread, and I pass now directly also to verse 48. “I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof,

and not die… If any one shall have eaten of this bread, he shall live for ever.” Here it is Christ come down from heaven, the incarnation, setting aside all idea of promise; it is the great and mighty fact, that, in the Person of Jesus, people saw Him who was come down from heaven, the Son of God become Man, as we see in the first chapter of the First Epistle of John: “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life … the eternal life which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us.” It was as to His Person, not yet as to our entrance into it, the beginning of the new order of things. Come of a woman, so that, according to the flesh, He was connected with the human race, Son of man, but still come down from heaven, one with the Father, in order that we might have part in this life, that we might be of this new order of things, He must needs die; otherwise He remained alone. But He had taken this flesh; He had been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, having taken this flesh, which He was going to give for the life of the world.

The first great point, then, was the incarnation, Christ come down from heaven, the Word made flesh—life in Him— and to give eternal life to him who should eat Him. The second point is, that Christ gave this flesh for the life of the world. He must die, close all relationship with the world, and the lost human race, by death; and begin a new seed, that He would not be ashamed to call His brethren, because He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one; then, redemption38 being accomplished, He would introduce them, risen, into the glory of the Father’s family, according to the counsels of

that Father who had given them to Him. This arrests the Jews: How could this Man's flesh be eaten? But Jesus does not spare them. He is, thus known, eternal life. It was no longer a question of conciliating the Jews, but of giving salvation and eternal life to the world by faith in Him, who had come from heaven for this, and of presenting to the Father those whom the Father had given to Him, such as the Father would have them in His love, and in His counsels, according to His nature, if they were to be in His presence. If they did not eat His flesh, and drink His blood, they had not life. In themselves there was none for that new world of glory, that blessed race. For that, it was necessary that a divine and heavenly life should come down from heaven, and be communicated to souls, and that in a Man; it was necessary that this Man should die, and terminate all relation with the fallen race, and risen, should begin a new race,39 possessing the divine life (inasmuch as they had appropriated Christ to themselves by grace), and which should be raised again by the Saviour's power, when the moment should come, "at the last day."

This work is accomplished. Now it is not of its efficacy to redeem our souls that we are speaking at this moment, nor of the pardon which we enjoy in virtue of its accomplishment, precious as these truths may be, but of the connection which there is between these divine events and the possession of life, in virtue of which we have part in this redemption and in this pardon, with all the consequences which flow from them. Christ is received in His incarnation; but, though the incarnation preceded necessarily, historically, the Saviour's death, I do not think that one can really seize the bearing of this life of humiliation, unless one first enters into that of His

death. Personally, the new thing, as we have already said, was presented in His Person—a Man, God manifested in flesh, but He in whom was life, He who was this eternal life which had been with the Father, and which was now manifested to the disciples. But, in this state, the corn of wheat remained alone, however productive it should be; in order to introduce those whom God gave to Him into the position of the last Adam, of the second Man, it was necessary that He should die, that He should give up His life in this world, to take it again in the state of resurrection, beyond sin, death, the power of Satan, and the judgment of God, after having passed through all these things, and having taken again His life of Man, but in a spiritual and glorified body. Now His death was, morally, the end of man driven out of paradise; His resurrection, the beginning of the new state of man, according to the counsels of God. Now man in Adam had no life in himself; he had not the life of God, and, in order to have it, he must understand and receive not only the incarnation, or a promised Messiah, but the judgment on the first man, borne by Christ's death; he must enter, as to himself, into the conviction, the realisation of this state thus shewn forth, although in grace, in the Saviour's death. He who appropriated to himself the death of Christ, accepted this judgment with regard to himself, when sin (not sins) was condemned in another. Sin in the flesh, which is enmity against God, has been condemned for us. In receiving by faith Christ's death as the absolute condemnation of that which I am, I have part in the efficacy of that which He has done: sin has been before God, and has disappeared from before His eyes in the death of Christ, who, however, had not known it. I say to myself, That is I. I eat it; I place myself

there by the operation of the Spirit of God, not that I believe that it is for me personally, but I recognise what His death signified, and I place myself in it by faith in Him. There, where I was, in death spiritually, by sin and disobedience, Christ entered in grace and by obedience, for the glory of His Father, in order that God might be glorified. I recognise my state in His death, but according to the perfect grace of God, according to which He took my place there; for it is in this that we know love, that He laid down His life for us. Now, if one died for all, then were all dead. By faith and repentance I recognise myself there, and I have eternal life. Now I can follow Jesus through the whole of His life, even the fact of His having been a Man down here, and I can feed upon this bread of life, upon all His patience, His grace, His gentleness, His love, His purity, His obedience, His humility—upon all that perfection of every day, and all the day long, which ended only at the cross, where all was consummated. “He who eateth me shall live for ever.” I have everlasting life, and Jesus will raise me up at the last day.

We have still some points to notice in this chapter.

The verb, “to eat,” is employed in it in two different tenses. He who has eaten, has eternal life; he who, by grace, has taken his place in the death of Christ, outside of all promise, of all title of any kind whatsoever, feels that he depends upon the sovereign grace that has placed Christ there, and believes in it. He who shall have eaten of this bread, shall live for ever. But in verses 54 and 56 we have the character of the man, and his eating is a present thing. Two things are the consequence of it: first, he has eternal life, and shall be raised up; secondly, he who feeds upon this bread,

dwells in Jesus, and Jesus in him: first of all, general blessing, with salvation present and to come; then communion, and the permanent presence of Jesus with us, and even in us. For as the Father, who has life in Himself, sent Jesus, and Jesus lived because of Him, as inseparable from Him, so he that eateth Christ shall live, because of the life that is in Christ. “Because I live, ye shall live also.” It is a union in life, by grace, with Jesus: life in us is inseparable from Him; we live because He lives. He is our life. As He is inseparable from the Father, and even as Man down here, living because of the life that was in the Father, this life in Him could not be separated from the Father, and our life should not be separated from Jesus. That is the bread which came down from heaven, that one may eat of it, and not die.

We may also notice that the passage before us comprehends more than a single discourse. The beginning refers to the moment when the crowds met the Lord again after He had crossed the sea, whilst the last part was spoken in the synagogue at Capernaum (v. 59). The Jews were scandalised at it, taking what He said literally, and thinking that Jesus wanted them to eat His flesh; many of His disciples even said, “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” The Lord appeals to the fact, that He was going to ascend up where He was before. He was not an earthly Messiah, but a heavenly Saviour, come from heaven into this world, come down into this world, in order to accomplish that which was necessary to make us ascend up there, to give eternal life to man, and to raise him up when the moment should come, to give him a part in the second Man, in the Man and in the world of God’s counsels and grace, an eternal part in His favour, by redemption, according to His counsels in

grace. It was not a succession of dispensations, a Messiah come in glory to terminate them, a Son of David according to the promises; but it is He (and that as a present thing) who came down from heaven to communicate eternal life, and to place the believer in heaven, as to the state of his soul, and finally, as to his body, fit for the light and the divine glory. But to have part in this, one must see Him who came down, not only in humiliation, as the bread come down from heaven, but who has been rejected, such as He was, by man, in order to enter into the presence of God, according to the true state of humanity which was enmity against God—passing through death and judgment, when He was made sin for us—and recommencing His life of Man in an entirely new state, beyond death and judgment. All relationship of God with the first man being impossible, save by the cross, where Christ in grace made a Substitute for the believing sinner met with God; man, dead in trespasses and sins, must know Him in this character, recognising there his own state; that is to say, in Christ dead, made sin, and sin condemned in Him. But the believer, in the fact that he died in thus identifying himself with Christ, as with Him who was made that which man is really himself, and who endured the penalty of it—in this fact, the believer, I say, is dead unto sin, he who before was dead in his trespasses and sins, for he has known himself there where Christ died to sin. Christ died there in grace, as sin condemned before God; and the sinner says to himself, That is really myself; I am that in the flesh; and now, Christ having offered Himself for that, God has made Him sin for us; but Christ, in dying, has done with sin, and therefore I have done with it too. There is, then, no existing relationship between God and the race of the first Adam:

the death of Jesus has made evident this fact, when God had tried everything, even to the gift of His Son. God has done with all this race of the first man upon the cross; and as for me, I have done with sin, which was the basis of all this. Oh, how marvellous and perfect are God's ways, full of infinite grace!

I recall also that it is not here a question of our present heavenly position; John, as we have said elsewhere, hardly ever speaks of it. Christ will raise up the believer at the last day. He speaks of His own ascension to complete the truth: come from heaven, He will go back there; but He does not associate us with Himself in heaven as a present fruit of His work. For us, He passes from His ascension to the resurrection of our bodies.

One remark more. I have spoken of the incarnation and of the death; and, as to that which is reached here, it is the knowledge of these things that sets us clear, and that delivers us. But the Lord says, in verses 40, 47, that He is come, that whosoever believeth in Him may have everlasting life, and that he that believeth on Him hath everlasting life; so that whosoever really sees the Son of God in the despised Man of Nazareth, has everlasting life. The Lord, however, does not hide the bearing of this fact; His rejection, His death, could but be the consequence of His presentation to a world such as the one in which we live, and of which we are according to the flesh; it is important we should know it.

In answering the Jews, offended at the fact of His ascension, Jesus adds, that it is the Holy Ghost that quickeneth—the flesh profiteth nothing—that He did not speak as though they were to eat of His flesh in a material sense. The words He spoke to them were "spirit

and life." It was by the word that spiritual things were communicated; and by the power and by the action of the Spirit they become realities, and living realities, in the soul, a real part of our being. But the Lord knew well that there were, even amongst those who followed Him as His disciples, persons who believed not, and He told them so j He well knew, too, who it was who should betray Him. These were the branches that were to be cut off, and that have been. Jesus must walk in the midst of those whom He knew to have no root, of whom He knew even that they would betray Him, and He adds: "It is for this that I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, unless it be given unto him of the Father" (v. 65). From that time many of His disciples left Him, and walked no more with Him.

It is striking to see how the Lord would have that which was true, divine, permanent, and nothing else. That which had led many to follow Him was not hypocrisy; there were, no doubt, hypocrites, but many had come under the influence of a passing impression, which wore off in presence of the difficulties of the way, and before the stumbling-block which was found in the truth, or rather in the prejudices which the truth offended. Jesus therefore said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter, always ready to put himself forward, prompted by a warm affection, but full of an ardour which sometimes betrayed him, and involved him in a path, out of which it could not take him with an undefiled conscience, this time becomes, happily, the mouthpiece of all to express true faith. There was with him—with all of them—(not to speak of Judas) a real need, to which Jesus alone answered. This is very important. It does not at all appear that Peter had

understood what Jesus had said: he knew not how to accept the sufferings of his Master, who called him Satan on that occasion when the flesh shewed the supremacy it exercised over him. Still, the root was there with Peter; the need of possessing eternal life was awakened in him; he was conscious that this life was only to be found in Jesus, and that He was the sent One of God, come from God; Jesus possessed the words of eternal life. Whatever want of clearness might be in Peter's views, Peter thought of eternal life, with the need of possessing it himself; he believed and knew that Christ had the words which revealed it, and, by grace, communicated it, and that He was the Holy One of God, the One whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world. True faith was there, as well as the needs which God produces. There was not knowledge either of the deep truths which Christ was teaching, or of the persons for whom Peter answered, when he said, "we"; but the needs of the soul were there, as well as faith in the words and in the Person of Christ. Thus, through many falls, Peter was kept to prove himself to be faithful to the Saviour to the end, and the Lord confided to him the sheep and lambs He loved—the apostle's ministry amongst the Jews— and also gave him to be the first who should bring in a Gentile. It is interesting to see that if the knowledge of the truths taught in this chapter was wanting, if there was true faith in the words and in the Person of Jesus, as sent of God (not merely as a prophet who spoke that which God gave him to say, but as being personally the Holy One of God, who had the words of eternal life), one possessed this eternal life, one possessed all.

## Chapter 7

The fifth and sixth chapters, which we have just been through, contain the doctrine of the Person of Christ: the fifth chapter presents Him as the life-giving Son of God, the sixth chapter, as Son of man come down from heaven, dying for men, and thus an object of faith.

In the fourth chapter Jesus had left Judea, to go into Galilee: it was there that He stayed, and presented Himself to the people; He would not walk in Judea any more, for the Jews sought to kill Him. The occasion of this special hatred was His having healed the paralytic on the sabbath-day, and that He presented Himself as Son of God, making Himself equal with God. The first of these acts set aside the Jewish system—not only according to the law, but in that which was the seal of the covenant, and the sign of the part which the Jews had in the rest of God; the second was the introduction, in His Person, of an entirely new system: later on, the healing of the man born blind excited their anger, as we shall see, God willing. A little remnant only attaches itself to Him, with a true, though ignorant, faith, receiving only that which was necessary to have salvation, namely, Christ and His words, as He presented Himself to them; but, I repeat, by a true faith given by God.

We find therefore now, in the seventh chapter, the Lord’s refusal to present Himself to the world, His brethren’s unbelief, and the declaration that the time was not come for Him to celebrate the feast of tabernacles. But this needs some development.

There were three great feasts of the Jews: every male who was a grown up man had to go to Jerusalem to

celebrate them; these were, the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The antitype of the Passover is found in the cross; that of Pentecost, in the descent of the Holy Ghost; but the antitype of the Feast of Tabernacles is still wanting: no event answers to it. Nevertheless, the ordinances established for this feast throw light upon that which should be its antitype. The Feast of Tabernacles derives its name from the fact, that the Israelites, once entered into the land of Canaan, ought, according to the law, to live during eight days in huts, made of branches of trees, bearing witness thus that they had been pilgrims in the desert, but that God, in His faithfulness, had brought them into the promised land. Moreover, this feast was celebrated after the harvest, and after the vintage, two events employed everywhere in Scripture as figures of the judgment: the harvest, of the judgment, which separates the good and the bad upon earth; the vintage, of the extent of vengeance on enemies, when Christ shall tread the wine-press. The fulfilment of this feast will take place when Israel shall no longer be dispersed, but shall enjoy the effect of the promises which God has made to them, after the judgment which will separate the tares from the good grain, and after that vengeance has been executed, the wine-press of God trodden, according to Isaiah 63, by the Lord Himself.

Now the time for these things was not yet come when Christ was upon the earth; it was needful for their accomplishment that He should be manifested in glory. To give life as Son of God He could; to suffer as Son of man, it was what He had before Him; but to shew Himself to the world, to fulfil in power all the promises made to Israel, after having judged and destroyed His

enemies; for that the moment was not yet come. What He was going to do, but after His rejection and death down here, was, being glorified, to give His Spirit to believers (v. 37-39). The bread come down from heaven He was; as to dying and shedding His blood, that was soon to happen to Him; but if it were a question of judging, of accomplishing the promises down here, and of shewing Himself to the world, it could only take place later on, when He would take His great power, and act as a King. In the meantime, having ascended on high, He was going to give His Spirit, until He returned.

Such is the teaching of this chapter: we are going to consider some details of its contents. Times are of God, as well as facts. It was not then for Jesus the time to shew Himself to the world, nor to observe the feast of Tabernacles. All times suit those who are of the world to profit by that which is worldly. They are of the world, and float with its current. The world does not hate them: there, where God’s testimony is, is the object of its hatred. An upright mind may be struck by the testimony that God bears to the truth, but there is not in this, sufficient motive to break with those who desire opposition, and* it is this that the intelligent leaders of evil always desire. Besides, in the world there are opinions for or against a thing, not a conviction of heart and conscience, and thus a need for oneself: it is there that the soul meets with God, and braves the world (chap. 6:68).

The Lord does not go up to the feast, but when His brethren had gone up, then He also went up, and He taught in the temple (v. 9, 10).

Let us notice, in passing, that we must not confound the people and the Jews. The people were composed of Galileans and others, who had come to take part in the feast; the Jews were those of Jerusalem itself, or at least of its environs. Thus, in verse 20, the people did not know that they wanted to kill Jesus; those of Jerusalem, on the contrary, well knew what they were plotting there against Him (v. 25).

The Jews, accustomed to listen to the rabbis, were astonished that Jesus, an illiterate Man from their point of view, could teach as He did. His doctrine was of the Father, not human. The means of understanding it was a state of soul answering to such a mission; the desire to do the Father's will would recognise the word which came from Him (v. 14-17). The moral state of the soul, the single eye, is the means of receiving, of intelligently discerning, the doctrine that comes from the Father; the conscience is open, the heart quite ready to receive the truth. Many things in the teaching may go beyond the knowledge possessed by such a soul; but the teaching answers to its needs; it bears to it the impress of truth, of holiness; it suits God; there is not self-seeking; the good of souls is sought, the conscience is sounded, however dealing in grace. Now there is a conscience in all men; and here the desire to obey is supposed. Such a man discerns that which is of God, when God speaks. It is not reasoning which convinces the mind: reasoning never convinces the will; but the desire being there, it is God who adapts Himself in His teaching to the wants and to the heart of man. It is the truth here, the words of God Himself. But amongst the Jews, and in the mass of the people, all was in confusion. Without scruple as to circumcising, and thus as to violating the sabbath by

working, the divine power which healed by a word exercised no influence over them, unless that of producing in them the desire to put to death Him who had given this proof of the goodness and of the power of God, whose rights were beyond even the sabbath. This confusion amongst the unbelievers is striking. Those who came from a distance jeered at the thought that some wished to kill Jesus: those of Jerusalem, who wished to kill Him, on account of the miracle He had done, were astonished that He spoke thus freely, and asked themselves if the rulers had then recognised Him as the true Christ; nevertheless, said they, “when Christ cometh, no one will know whence he is” (v. 27). Further, they wished to take Him; but, says the evangelist, no one laid hands upon Him, because His hour was not yet come. God’s ways are sure.

Nevertheless many believed on Him (v. 31). The Pharisees heard the people murmuring these things of Him, and sent officers to take Him. These found Jesus occupied in teaching the crowd. There, too, was the same uncertainty: some said that He was the prophet, others that He was the Christ; but others objected that the Christ could not come from Galilee, but that He should come of the seed of David, and from the town of Bethlehem, without giving themselves the trouble to ascertain the fact. Some would have wished to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him, and the officers return under the influence of His words: “Never man spake like this man!” The Pharisees and rulers did not hesitate: they sought to put Him to death. They disperse, disgusted. This is the picture of the heart of man, in presence of the truth; the mind made up of the religious leaders, confusion and uncertainty in the mind of the

masses, who waver between prejudices and the power of the word of God. Faith was neither in the one, nor in the other. As to Jesus, “his hour was not yet come”; His hour, remark, is the hour when He gave Himself on the cross for our offences.

Let us now go back to the teaching of the Lord, and to His position relatively to the people, from whom He was in a certain sense already separated, by refusing to go up to the feast, whilst continuing to teach them in grace.

Some details of the Saviour’s teaching mark out His position, before He speaks of the promise of the Holy Ghost, and after the discussion which took place about the desire to kill Him, when they made the remark, that they knew not whence the Christ would come. Jesus formally declares that they knew whence He came, but that they did not know the Father who had sent Him (v. 28). Terrible accusation! The proof was there in their conscience: they would not have wished, as they did, to get rid of Him, if they had not had the inward consciousness that He came from God. The proofs were there: the testimony in their conscience. The multitude (v. 25-27) seem to have had the same conviction in the main, although they excused themselves by the fact that they knew whence He came; to which the Lord replies, but in words the bearing of which went far beyond the application that the crowd, taught by tradition, could make of them to the Messiah’s character. “Ye know me, and ye know whence I am.” Terrible testimony, the truth of which we see in the words of Nicodemus that are related to us, and which, although they do not go so far, attest the conviction that the miracles of Jesus were producing in hearts. It was their will that opposed itself to this condition, and if Pilate was able to discern the

surface of their motives (they had delivered Him up through envy), he was not able to understand a hatred against God which decided to kill Lazarus, rather than allow the people to believe the coming in grace of the God, who had so often wished to gather them under His wings. They were disputing confusedly about the Messiah, and their God was there in grace, the Son sent by the Father. Their leaders knew very well, at bottom, that He who was doing these miracles, did them not by human power; they might attribute them to Beelzebub, but certainly not to man. The character of the miracles of Jesus, and the power that was manifested in them, confirmed His words: these shewed the source from which they came, and words and miracles shewed who He was, and whence He came. But they had no knowledge of the Father, of Him from whom Jesus came; they were not of those who desired to do His will, and they sought to blind others. The ignorant people strove, in the confusion, with some passing convictions; their leaders resisted, with an intelligent conviction that He who came from God was there, but decided not to receive Him. All this is developed further on, and affirmed by the Lord Himself (chap. 15:22-24).

It is important, painful though it be, to bring out clearly the state of this poor people, whether as to the leaders, or as to the mass: the mind of the former made up to reject Jesus; the moral, and, alas! wilful, blindness of the multitude. Jesus had no longer any place amongst them as Messiah; He must take a place far otherwise important and excellent—that of Man at the right hand of God. Still, He was the Good Shepherd, and the porter opened to Him; and, accomplishing His will, He went through the dangers, and His sheep heard His voice. So

it was at this moment; a great number, “many amongst the multitude,” believed on Him, saying, “When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than this man hath done?” (v. 31). Then the Pharisees send officers to seize Him, which becomes the occasion of a touching answer of Jesus, an answer which clearly sets forth the situation, “Yet a little while I am with you,” says He, “and I go to him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am ye cannot come.” You have no need to be in a hurry to seek Me, to get rid of Me; you will have Me for a little time longer, and then all will be over; it will no longer be a question of the Messiah; you will seek Me then, but you will not find Me. I go unto My Father; there you have no access. All will be changed; it will be all over as to the Messiah; the Son, as Man, will go to sit at the Father’s right hand—there you will not be able to come.

This was indeed where things were with regard to the Jews, and with regard to Jesus. The blindness of the Jews, and their religious pride, were as great as their hatred of the true God. They understood nothing of what the Saviour said, only suggesting among themselves that perhaps He would go to the dispersed amongst the Gentiles, to teach the Gentiles. The position was clearly defined.

Now the Lord shews who should come to take His place, since the hour was not yet come for Him to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles, and to shew Himself to the world. It was the great day of the feast, the last day, for the feast of Tabernacles had one day more than the two other great feasts, an eighth day, which was the great day of the feast. This day began a new week; the earthly testimony was complete, but with this eighth day we go

beyond that which was complete down here. The two other feasts had their sabbath on the seventh day; this one had its great day, its solemn feast, afterwards. I do not doubt but that this was, as a type, the beginning of the new week of God, that which is heavenly and eternal, as the resurreaion of Jesus was the first day of the week. Now the Lord gives to that day its true significance. It was no longer a question of the effect of the Messiah's presence, but of Him who should be the representative of a glorified Saviour, rejected in His humiliation. The manifestation of Jesus in glory down here could not take place now; but He could give to those who should believe upon Him, thus rejected upon earth, the earnest of the heavenly glory, and by this means a present joy which overflowed in blessing, as testimony of salvation and of the glory. On the great day of the feast, a day specially called "solemn," or "a day of obligation," in the Old Testament, Jesus stood there, and cried: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they who believed on him should receive" (v. 37-39).

That is the great teaching of chapter 7: The Holy Ghost here below in believers, following upon the glorifying of Jesus as Man, instead of an earthly Messiah, according to the promises of God. Rejected as Messiah He takes His place as Man, according to the eternal counsels of God, in the heavenly glory, at God's right hand, and that according to the righteousness of God, who has glorified Him with Himself. After having established all God's glory at the cross, and taken this place in the glory as having accomplished redemption, He sent the Holy

Ghost, witness of the glory into which He had entered, and of the redemption He had accomplished. To possess the Holy Ghost is the Christian position; not merely new desires, but the full answer of grace to these desires in the revelation of Christ glorified. We await participation in that glory, but we know that it is our portion, and the accomplishment of redemption gives us the right to be there. We wait for the return of Jesus to enter into it, that our body may be transformed into the likeness of His glorious body; and the love which has given us all this which has thought of giving it to us, is shed abroad in our hearts.

There are some details to be noticed here. The Lord invites those who thirst to come unto Him, and drink. This principle is to be found in John, although sovereign grace, which quickens, is very clearly and positively announced in chapter 5, as also the fact, that those alone whom the Father draws come in reality. In calling the reader's attention to this point, I would wish to bring out the important difference that there is, between the work which disposes the heart, and produces needs in the heart or in the conscience, or, as it always happens, at the same time, in one and the other, and the answer to these needs in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. This desire can produce a true kind of piety, but never peace, nor a state of soul distinctly Christian; for this, the knowledge of the Person and of the work of Jesus, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, are necessary. One may feel that he has need of Him, and even love Him, but he is not yet, in the true sense, "of him." See the prodigal son, before and after he had met his father; and the poor woman that was a sinner. Everything belongs to such a soul, but it does not possess it. The prodigal had

not yet the best robe, and the poor woman had not yet heard the voice of Jesus saying to her, “Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace”; but she loved much. So, again, the thief on the cross shews a remarkable faith, but it is the answer of the Saviour that gives him the certainty of his present happiness, founded on the work of Christ. I notice these cases, that the reader may distinguish between the word that attracts and awakens the conscience, and the answer, founded upon the work, which gives one to enjoy pardon and salvation.

It is well that we should also call attention to the three operations of the Spirit of God. In chapter 3 we are born of the Spirit; in chapter 4 it is a fountain springing up to everlasting life. Here the new man enters into the enjoyment of things not seen, of things heavenly and eternal; when they fill the heart—when the heart, drinking of that which is in Jesus, is satisfied, then these things overflow, and refresh thirsty souls; heavenly affections meet souls, shewing what it is that revives a soul without God, which groans, without knowing, perhaps, what is wanting. The words of Jesus were truly some of those waters.

The people who were not armed with a breastplate of ill-will, and determination already come to, felt this; and, without any miracle, under the influence of the words of Jesus, cried out, “Of a truth this is the prophet.” Others said, thinking that Jesus was the Christ, “Shall Christ come out of Galilee?” But the reasoning of the human mind raises difficulties, and closes other hearts to the power of the word in His mouth. The people are divided, and the officers return, under the impression which the words of Jesus had produced, to throw into the same confusion the minds of those who, pretending to guide

Israel, were the blindest of all. Nicodemus expresses a thought of equity according to their own law. They attack him, he also must be of Galilee. The theologians of the Sanhedrim shew their contempt for those who, according to the prophets, were the sphere of the light which God sent in Israel, the poor of the flock; claiming for Jerusalem and for themselves the glory of all that God had given, they affirm that no prophet had arisen out of Galilee (v. 52). As a matter of fact it was false; and then, again, how had they treated the prophets, of whatever country they might have been? Where was the city who had slain the prophets, and was going to slay Him of whom all the prophets had spoken? Irritated at their powerlessness, being able to do nothing to hinder the testimony of Jesus, they disperse, and every one goes to his own house. His hour was not yet come.

## Chapter 8

The history which is given us of the Lord in this Gospel of John to replace the Jews, and their portion in the Messiah, according to the promises, ends with this chapter 7, which has just occupied us. In the fifth chapter Jesus is Son of God, who quickens; in the sixth, Son of man in incarnation and in death, His return to heaven being in view; then, in the seventh chapter, not being able yet to shew Himself to the world, but, being glorified, He gives the Holy Spirit to believers, that which could not take place till after He was glorified; He is rejected, but, as we have seen, His time was not yet come. In the two chapters upon which we are now entering, we find His word rejected in chapter 8, His works rejected in chapter 9. These are the two great personal testimonies which declare His origin. (See

chapter 15:22-25.) In the tenth chapter He declares He will have His sheep for Himself nevertheless, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the leaders of the people. The eleventh and twelfth chapters shew us, in a very interesting way, the testimony which the Father bears to Him as being the Son of God, Son of David, Son of man, when man has rejected Him. Then, from the thirteenth chapter onwards, come heavenly things, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter, who should replace Him on earth.

At the beginning of our chapter 8, the law in man's hands, raised against outward immorality, but without uprightness, without life, and without grace, is put in a striking manner, in contrast with the word of God, that searches hearts, that turns the sword of the law against every one, and leaves room for grace, not quickening, or pardoning grace, but the grace which at least does not give its force to the law to condemn; that was not the Saviour's mission. The whole world was placed under condemnation by the law, if God were to apply it; God had not come for this; but in shewing them to be all condemned, without exception, on this ground, entire humanity disappears under the sentence of the law, at least the humanity which takes the law as a means of righteousness, and the ground is cleared to bring in the light of life, from God. The position of the adulteress is only negative; it is quite a different case from that of the woman that was a sinner, in Luke 7, where the full grace which saves is established. All were guilty, but the Lord was come to reach the conscience of all, not to apply the law to the guilty. He does not condemn—only every mouth is stopped. The conduct of these men was wretched; sinners, like the accused one without mercy,

and without pity, they desired to expose this woman, so that the Saviour might find her guilty; for, if He condemned her, there was no advance upon the law, He was neither Messiah nor Saviour; if He did not condemn her, He put Himself into opposition with the law of Moses. The scribes and Pharisees did not know with whom they had to do. The penetrating voice of God needs only a word to reach the conscience: “Adam, where art thou?” or, “Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone!”—suffice to lay bare the conscience, because the power of God is there, and man is found necessarily revealed to himself in the presence of Him who is light. But the will is not changed, and man avoids that presence; one takes refuge amongst the trees of the garden; others, rather with shame than with a sincere conscience which leads to confession, slink away, each one alone, to preserve his reputation; the eldest first, but fearing, even to the last, that presence which pierces them through, and ashamed of finding themselves in each other’s presence. Then, having given the law its full force upon all, Jesus allows the poor woman to go away, according to divine mercy.

After this, we have the doctrine with regard to the Saviour, which is connected with the preceding fact: “I am the light of the world” (v. 12), not yet here the Messiah of the Jews, but the presentation, on the part of God, of light in the world, light which manifested everything, but which remained alone, for the whole world was darkness, far from God, and the heart of man himself darkness. This light manifested the effect of even the law, it shewed where man was, as placed under it. But it was far more; if man followed it, it was “the light of life” (compare chap. 1:4), that which made

manifest as the revelation of the divine nature, but that which communicated life to those who received this light. It was an entirely new thing come into the world, God Himself, in the power of grace, become Man; rejected, all was morally judged; but, received by grace, it was the new life, the life eternal, for Christ is eternal life come down from heaven; 1 John 1:1, 2. As light and life, it was for us, for it was communicated to us; the new man is created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth, and there is also the renewing of knowledge according to the image of Him who created us. But it was the word of life, and it was a question of receiving that word; and here it is the light in conflict with darkness. All depends, as we shall see, on the Person of Him who speaks.

The question is put in verse 13: “Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true.” Now, they might have spoken in this way, if it had been a question of a man who bore witness of himself; but if God speaks, that which He says is necessarily the truth, and reveals Him. One question only arises: Do men know Him, and is the soul capable of receiving the truth even? The two things go together, as we shall see. Jesus came from heaven, from the Father; He was going back there, and had the consciousness of it; it is the lowest point of His testimony here; He is forced, by the opposition He meets, to go to the end and to say “I am” (v. 56); but here it is as Man in the world, who nevertheless had the consciousness of whence He came. (Compare chap. 3:11-13, 33, 34.) His words were the words of God, but by the Spirit, without measure, in a Man, who also could say of Himself: “The Son of man who is in heaven.” He spoke with the consciousness of whence He came. They

knew nothing about it; for them He was a carpenter of Galilee, who had not even learnt letters. But it was the divine nature in the presence of that of man. They judged according to the flesh; He, as He had just shewn, judged no one. He had not come for that, but to bear witness. Nevertheless, even if He judged, His judgment would be just, for not only He knew whence He came, but the Father was with Him—He was not only such a Son of man, but He was also Son of God. The law said that the testimony of two men was true; well then, He (the Son) bore witness of Himself, and the Father, who had sent Him bore witness of Him. Then they ask Him: "Where is thy Father?" for there was no divine light in them, not even a conscience sensible to the truth, unless when the eye of the Light penetrated it, in spite of them. No man, however, laid hands on Him; His hour was not yet come (v. 20). We cannot separate this divine testimony from that which is given at the end. He spoke the words of God; but the form is different, He did not speak directly in His divine nature, although that which He said implied it; but as Man upon earth on the part of God, and as Son, by the Holy Ghost.

The Lord begins again by telling them, that all was over, that He was going away (v. 21, etc.). They would seek Him, indeed, but they would not find Him: "I go away, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sin: where I go, ye cannot come." The separation, fruit of their unbelief, was complete and final; they, dead in their sins, He in heaven; but He did not say openly where He was going. The Jews only looked upon Him as a man, and remained in their self-righteousness, as heirs of the promises. "Will he kill himself? "and thus deprive Himself of them. The Lord's answer is decisive: "Ye are

from beneath; I am from above." There was absolute opposition, moral and actual—with a terrible supplement for all that surrounds us: "Ye are of this world" —of this world, of which Satan is the prince, and those who are of it in heart are of him. Christ was not of it. He was, indeed in the world, but He was not of the world. He was essentially of heaven, the bread which had come down from heaven, personally and morally; but here He is speaking negatively, and this is the chief point for us. He was not of this world: He brought the divine light, God Himself, into this world; but He was not of it. This is why He had said to them, "Ye shall die in your sins"; for they were rejecting the Light which had come into this world, grace, the Son of God. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

But this introduces a principle of all-importance; that is, the identification of His word with Himself. He was God; His words expressed God; it is this that left the Jews without excuse; in rejecting Him, they despised God who was speaking to them. In answer to the words of Jesus, they say "Who art thou?" (v. 25). The answer of Jesus declares this identification: "Absolutely that which also I speak unto you":— perfectly, in principle and in reality, that which I speak unto you. The words of Jesus expressed what He was; and being thus the true expression of God manifested to man, they put man into the place of either receiving or rejecting God, and God as light of men. If God speaks, and expresses Himself, man accepts what He is, or rejects Him. The Saviour was in a position to say many things to them, and to judge them; but now He was communicating to them, as a faithful witness, that which He had heard from the Father. This was, indeed, the truth sent by the Father:

He was telling the world that which He had received of the Father. This was now His service as the sent One. The Jews did not understand of whom He was speaking. Later on, when it would be too late to receive Him as come to them in grace, but when the thought of God should be accomplished, and their own hands should accomplish His counsels in crucifying the Son of man,40 the consequences which would flow from this for the Jews, would cause them to know (Jesus does not say, to believe) that it was indeed He, that He did nothing of Himself, but that He spoke as the Father taught Him. His word was the demonstration of that which He was, and though He could say many things to them, and judge them, He only told them now that which He received of the Father. Once rejected as Son of man, and put to death, then, when He should no longer be there, they should know that it was He, the Messiah, and that He had spoken to them from the Father. But more, He who had sent Him was then with Him; He had not left Him alone, because all that He did was pleasing to the Father. Under the effect of His testimony, by the weight of His words, the expression of what He was and that all His conduct confirmed, many believed on Him (v. 30).

That which this chapter puts forward most distinctly, is, the divine character of Jesus, demonstrated by His words, and the diabolical character of the Jews manifested in the way in which they had received Him. Already, in verse 23, the Lord announced it, with the terrible testimony, that that which was of this world was from beneath, that is to say, of the devil, whilst He was from above, and not of this world. That which He said expressed His nature, His divine character. He reveals the Father: His words are the words of God; that which

He said revealed Him to the world (v. 26, 27; ch. 1:10; ch. 3:32, 33). That which follows, on the other hand, throws into relief the character of the Jews.

The Lord declares to those who had been brought to believe in Him, that, if they remained firmly attached to His word (for it is a question of His word), they should be His disciples indeed, they should know the truth, and the truth should set them free (v. 31, 32). The truth supposes the full revelation of that which is divine and heavenly, that which was revealed in His Person, and in His words, and would be fully made evident when He should be glorified, and the Holy Ghost should have come. I do not think that those of whom verse 23 speaks were those who believed in Jesus, but the Jews in general. They trust to their outward position according to the flesh: they had never been in bondage, they say, forgetting, however, all their history, and their position at that very moment. The Lord passes over all that, to present the ground of the truth as to the state of man before God, and the effect of the law; for He identifies these two things—being a slave of sin, and being under the law, as the man of Romans 7. “Every one that practises sin, is the slave of sin,” captive of that terrible law of sin that is in his members; but being a slave, he may be sent away from the house, and sold. The Jews, sinners under the law, would be sent away from the house of God; but the Son belonged to the house, and dwelt there always, and necessarily; if He made them free, they should be free indeed, free from sin, and free from the law. The Son, the revelation of the Father, as object, and power of life in him who shall have received Him, acting by the word, takes the place of the principle

of sin in man, and the law which in vain forbade man to commit it.

Outwardly the Jews were indeed the children of Abraham; but the word of Christ had no place nor entry into their hearts, and they sought to kill Him. Here the contrast becomes formal: Jesus spoke (for it is always His word) that which He had seen with His Father, Himself the Son who revealed Him, and announced that which was heavenly and divine; but this brought out of their hearts the Satanic hatred against God which fills the heart of man. Here, then, the two great principles of sin which characterise the adversary, manifested themselves in them—murder, and the absence of the truth (v. 44, 45). This opposition between the revelation from above, and that which is in the world and from below, characterises the chapter, and forms its basis. Their descent from Abraham is for the Lord but a circumstance of no value. If, in the moral sense, the Jews had been the sons of Abraham, as the believer is, they would have done the works of Abraham; but instead of that, they sought to kill a Man who had told them the truth He had received from God. The Jews take still higher ground: Abraham no longer suffices for them, it is God who is their Father (v. 41). They are conscious that the words of Jesus come more home to them and they retire into the stronghold of their privileges. The Lord follows up the side of moral and essential truth, whilst avoiding, so to speak, to declare everything openly at once; but He is obliged, as it were, to say it, both as to them, and as to Himself.

Until now we have had the revelation of the thing heavenly and divine, in itself, in a positive way, outside and above all that was Jewish; here we are come to the

conflict between man's heart and this revelation, and there, where the privileges of a religion which was composed of the elements of the world (separated from Him who, all earthly as was this religion, was its centre), only blinded the more the hearts which made their boast in it. The divine word, in the Person of Jesus, the Father's word, which was in His mouth, pierced through all this religious drapery, and manifested man's heart. The Lord, in His answer to the assertion of the Jews that God was their Father, shews that the rejection of His Person gave the lie to such a pretension. The question was raised and decided by His presence and by His word: if they had had God as their Father, they would have loved Jesus, for He came from God; He did not come of His own will; God had sent Him. It was necessary to speak openly, for things were being fulfilled: truth, and hatred against the truth, against God, are found in presence of one another. The Jews did not understand the words, because they did not understand the things, a very important principle in divine things: in human things, words are explained, in order to learn what the things are; thus we but designate by a word things which come under the senses, or things of the intellect, for these things are within man's grasp; divine things are not so. If I say, "born again," to understand the words, I must know what it is to be born again. Let us remember this.

The Lord allows no uncertainty to remain here any longer: you have the devil for your father, and you will do his works; and "he is a liar, and the father of lies "(v. 44). As we have said before, the double character of Satan and of sin, is to be "a murderer "and "a liar"; man has added to it corruption. Such was the character of

these poor Jews. They did not believe Jesus, because Jesus spoke the truth, and they were going to kill Him. They claimed, indeed, to be of God—sad and blinding effect of an official religion; but if they had really been, they would have listened to the words of God. There is a certain perception which belongs to the life of God, which recognises that which is of Him, and especially His words. It was, for a Jew, a monstrous thing, subversive of all his pretensions, of the whole divine history of the ages, to say to Jesus that He was not of God. Who, then, was He? A Pagan, a Samaritan? This was enough to shew whence Jesus was.

Jesus continues to shew the effect of His word where it is received into the heart. “If any one keep my word, he shall never see death.” This put Jesus above Abraham and all the prophets. Who, then, was Jesus? For, with all their pretensions, the Jews were really in great embarrassment; they felt the force of His words; this can take place where the will is not at all changed; but they sought to justify themselves in their own eyes by interpreting His words according to human reasoning. The Lord does not spare them any longer, for they were enemies of the truth. He spoke in His Father’s name, and He knew Him: He would have been a liar, like themselves, if He had denied it. The second character of the enemy was thus realised in them. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad” (v. 56); for it is He who was expected, according to the promises. The Jews, who only saw things according to the natural mind, cry out at the folly of it: then, as He had declared of whom they were, the Lord now openly declares who He is Himself: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am” (not, I was). The Jews

were speaking with God, and they resisted His words: their hatred bursts forth, and they take up stones to stone Him.

Note here, that Jesus gave eternal life by His word; He was the accomplishment of the promises; but, again, He was God in this world; life and truth were on one side; murder and falsehood on the other. It is this that makes this chapter so solemn. That which, grace excepted, was the whole life of Jesus in the midst of this people, in this world—the truth, the life, the sent One of the Father, God manifest in flesh—in the presence of hatred of the truth and of God, are concentrated in this chapter, and are in presence of one another.

It is important also to remark, that it is a question, not of miracles, but entirely of the word of Jesus. The Jews do not ask for a sign, as they often did: it is not the ordinary current of incredulity that we have here before us; but the truth, the light, are in direct conflict with the darkness which does not understand them, but which, at the same time, is troubled by them; for the light shines even when it is not received. It is not in man’s heart; and that makes itself felt in the heart: nothing can be imputed to the witness which weakens the testimony; no one could convince the Lord of sin; they did not believe, because He told them the truth. Here it is the pure opposition of man’s heart to the truth, because it was the truth. Light may reach the conscience, and if the will is not changed, this only produces hatred, as in the case of Stephen; but here, I repeat, it is the truth itself and the light that are in conflict with the darkness, He who came from above, with whom the Father was, and then men, who alas! were from beneath. What could be more

solemn than such a meeting? God, in the presence of men, to be rejected, and that for ever and ever!

It may be useful here to notice some details: the Lord begins by announcing Himself, personally and distinctly, as the light of the world. In John, it is always a question of the world; also, it is not a question of the Messiah according to the promises, but of what the Lord is in Himself, of what He is, He only, in the midst of the darkness. In following Him, one would have the light of life; for the life was the light of men. We see how this chapter reproduces that which is said in chapter 1; only here it brings out historically the contrast and the conflict between the light and the darkness, for the world was in it, and Satan was the prince of the world. The Lord having thus announced Himself as light (and light manifests itself, and manifests everything), His testimony is rejected, as being that of a Man who bore witness of Himself (v. 13). They do not see the light, they reject it; that which is divine is hidden, although it is light. He was the light, and His words were the expression of what He was; but He had not come to judge, as the case of the woman shewed, however just His judgment would have been, for the Father was with Him. But the law was their law; then Jesus was the revelation of God Himself in that which He was as light: it was Himself and the word of testimony, the Father being with Him. If that were rejected, it was not disobedience to a commandment, but the rejection of divine life and light, so that those who rendered themselves guilty of it should die in their sins.

All chapter 8 is the expression of the divine light by the testimony of the Lord; but the chapter treats of more than one subject, where this testimony is given in more

than one aspect. The first part is to be found from verse 12 to 20, which present the position in itself: the Lord is the divine light; He is not come to judge, but the Father is with Him; God and the truth are presented to men; He is rejected by the darkness of man's heart, but His hour is not yet come. Then (v. 21-29) He goes away. In John His death is never what is spoken of, but He goes away, and the Jews would know when He had been lifted up as Son of man, that it was He; it would then be too late to find Him again. After that (v. 30), many having believed in Him, He announces to them what their position should be, if they persevered; the Son would make them free, and they would be free indeed; this in contrast with the Jews. There was a complete change of position. Man committed sin—he was the slave of it: the Jews, no doubt, were in God's house, but by the law as slaves; for to be under the law, and to commit sin, is the same thing. The Jews, therefore, had no sure place in the house; and they would even lose the one which they had: but Christ then would have His place as Son over God's house, and those who believed in Him, who persevered in His word, made free by Him, should possess true divine liberty. As to the promises, they were indeed, according to the flesh, the seed of Abraham; but they were not sons of Abraham according to God. Being come personally as light, the Lord would have what is true, not merely dispensations j they were, in reality, sons of him who was a murderer and a liar; they were rejecting the truth, they were going to put Christ to death, and did not believe Him, because He spoke the truth. Finally, for He was the life as well as the truth, he who should keep His word, would never taste death (v. 51); He was not only the light, but the light of life. Besides, not only was He the object of the promises which Abraham's

faith had realised, but He existed with an eternal existence, God— “I am,” before Abraham was. Then the hatred of unbelief burst out. Before, they had maliciously sought to turn away the truth, and to justify themselves before one another in rejecting Him, but as soon as what He was is fully revealed, their murderous hatred shews itself by violence.

## Chapter 9

In the eighth chapter we had the testimony given, the divine word of the Saviour: the ninth chapter relates to the testimony of His works. The Lord sets aside the entire governmental system of the Jews; He speaks, too, of Himself as being only a little longer of this world; but so long as He was, He must do the works of His Father who had sent Him, for although He was God present in this world, He always takes the place of a Man subject to God, and He does so specially in John’s Gospel, where His Person is set in relief. It is this position Satan sought to get Him out of, in the temptation in the wilderness, a position in which He remained firm and perfect. He is always the sent One, although He be Son of God, and one with the Father.

Crossing this poor world, the Lord meets with one born blind, a picture of man, and specially of the Jews. Here He is truly the light of the world, while announcing, as I have just said, that He was going to leave the world. But there is more; He works in grace, He gives life. Not only is He the light of the world as long as He is in it, for this is only for a time; but He is powerful in grace to give the capacity of enjoying the light. Nevertheless, although it be divine power that communicates it, He must be received as the sent One of the Father; He never leaves

His position. His presence, without His work, only blinds the more, at least presents an outward difficulty; He is a stone of stumbling. The spittle (v. 6) presents the efficacy which came from Himself; the earth, the humanity which He had taken. But that, in itself alone, only made the blind man doubly blind: a positive obstacle was added to natural blindness: but it was necessary that this object should be before his eyes. Jesus sends the poor man to the pool of Siloam. The text itself gives the meaning of this word: it signifies “Sent.” The moment this truth is connected with the Person of Jesus, in the blind man, all is accomplished; the man sees clearly, with a clearness which is according to the power of God: “I washed, and I see” (v. n).

In the eighth chapter it was a question of man’s responsibility, a responsibility connected with the testimony of the word of God: here it is its powerful efficacy to give sight to the blind man, in revealing the Son sent by the Father. Man’s folly, his religious blindness, are made manifest: for him, Jesus was not of God, because, although He did works of power and of divine goodness, He did not keep the sabbath. Now, the sabbath was the sign of God’s covenant with Israel, the sign of the rest of God. But in Jesus, God was there, and the Son of man was Lord of the sabbath, and the rest of God was not for those who rejected Him. Further, this rest became heavenly at that moment.

What is striking in this passage is the perplexity of religious people, and they instructed in their religion, characterised by the elements of this world, when they are in the presence of divine power. “He does not keep the sabbath!”. What a subterfuge! Others said, “How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? “The

evidence was too strong: there was a division among them. Then they would not believe that the man had been born blind, until they had called his parents. These feared to compromise themselves, but bear the only testimony that it was of consequence to hear from them, that is, that the man was really their son, and that he was born blind. The Jews call back the man himself for the second time, and seek to cover up the whole question by their religious authority. They are quite willing to recognise the fact that the man had been blind, and that now he saw, and they invite him to give glory to God for that; but, as to owning the truth and the Son of God, they will not do that; it is with them a foregone conclusion. The poor man is indignant at their blindness, wise as they were, and guardians of their religion, for he had personally experienced the powerful efficacy of the word of Jesus. His testimony is clear and simple: “he is a prophet,” and taught of God, he does not understand how the Jews can hesitate to receive the brilliant proof of it, that was there before their eyes; for simple faith, that had experienced the power of God, does not understand the difficulties which religious learning opposes to it, when will does not want the truth and Jesus. This man did not know what governed the hearts of those who were questioning him; but, as for them, they well knew that they were resisting the light of divine power. Disgusted at his bold frankness, which wonders at their unbelief, they arrive exactly at the conclusion that the Lord had condemned; that is, that the man’s blindness was the effect of his sin: and they cast him out.

Thus the Lord’s sheep finds itself outside: the Lord rejected already, having heard of it, seeks it, but to bring

it into the flock of grace, by the knowledge of His Person. All that belonged to those who found a place there, was not yet developed; but the Person of the Son of God was down here, and the Father's name was revealed, for he who had seen the Son, had seen the Father. Expiation was necessary, in order that all the privileges might be revealed, and that the door of heaven might be opened, for entrance into the most Holy place. Until Christ had been glorified, the Holy Ghost had not come down to reveal these things: but the Good Shepherd seeks His sheep, and puts the question to him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (v. 35, 36).

Remark here, that the man had received the Lord's word as the word of God; he had said, "he is a prophet." To speak thus was, like the woman of Sychar, to believe what Jesus said—not only to own the truth of something He had said, but the authority of what He said. Further, this man's heart was attracted; fully persuaded of the folly of his religious leaders, he sought that which the prophet of God would say to him. This reception of the word as having divine authority, and the desire of the heart to possess it, and to possess that which it reveals, is of all-importance; we have already seen it in the case of the Samaritan woman. Here, the fact that he had already personally made experience of the power of Jesus, grace acting in his heart with this work, disposes the man to believe what Jesus would say to him, and gives implicitly in his soul a divine force to that which the Lord says. Now Jesus says to him, "Thou hast seen him, and it is he that speaketh with thee!" Then the man owns him explicitly— "Lord, I believe"; and he worships Him. He believes in His Person by the means of the

word, which he had believed already beforehand, when he said, “He is a prophet.”

Thus the Lord had found His sheep; it was delivered from the fatal influence of false shepherds, who held the souls of the people in captivity. Come to save, and, in any case, not to judge, but to bring the word of life—through man’s perversity, the effect of His coming would be judgment. Those who pretended to see, but who were blind leaders of the blind, would be blinded all the more that the light was there; but it was none the less true that He was there in the sovereignty of grace, to give sight to others who were blind (v. 39, 40). As light, the Lord put man to the test; as Son of God in power, He gave sight to those who saw not, but who had the consciousness, by His word, and by the knowledge of His Person, that they were blind; knowledge founded on faith in His word.

## Chapter 10

The tenth chapter, in John’s Gospel, terminates the history of the Lord down here. The Good Shepherd, come from the Father, will find His sheep, notwithstanding the opposition of the enemies of the truth and of God, and will give eternal life to those who hear His voice.

This chapter, so precious to believers, gives us a picture of the entire work and position of the Lord. Nevertheless, we do not see Him driven away here, as He is however constantly in John, but we see Him putting forth His sheep Himself, according to the will of God; His sheep whom He knows, and of whom He is known. Then He is “the door of the sheep”; He lays down His life Himself, no one takes it from Him; lastly,

He and the Father are one. A Servant sent and obedient, He is nevertheless one with the Father; the sheep, too, are His, although it be His Father who gave them to Him. Note here, and I repeat it, because of its importance, and as characterising the Gospel of John, that the Lord is a Servant, and receives everything, even the sheep, from His Father's hand; but He is, at the same time, one with Him; a Servant, as Man down here, but Son of God, God, one with His Father.

We must examine these details more carefully.

In the first place, all those who, before Him, had pretended to be the shepherds and leaders of Israel; all those, whoever they might be, who did not enter by the door, were thieves and robbers, climbing over the wall, forcing an entrance by violence or cunning; thus they betrayed their true character. The sheepfold was Israel. These men sought to get possession of the sheep for their own profit, for their own glory: they were neither Messiahs, nor servants of God, nor sent by Him, very far from being one with the Father. I say this in order to establish the Lord's position more distinctly. The second verse presents to us this position in its first features: "He who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." He entered in by the door; He came by the way chosen by Him who had established the sheepfold, there, where the porter was; he who could open the door, or keep it shut; thus He attracted the attention of him who was the keeper of the fold.

The door is always the place indicated and appointed by the architect to enter by it. This is why Jesus says lower down, "I am the door of the sheep," because, it is He that God has appointed as the door of exit for the Jewish

remnant, and as the door of entrance for us all into the sanctuary, into His holy presence. Christ Himself had entered into the fold, following out what God had prescribed for the Shepherd. All that was laid down in the prophets, all that was fitting for Him who walked according to God's will, Jesus followed out, and accomplished at every point. He did not seek to arouse men by exciting their passions, like the false Messiahs, nor to draw in His footsteps an unconverted and stiffnecked people; meek and lowly in hearts, He followed the path Jehovah had traced for Him; He entered by the door. Providence and the Spirit of God opened the way for Him. All the efforts of the high priests and scribes could not prevent His voice from reaching the ears and hearts of the sheep. God opened the door to Him, and the sheep heard His voice. Here it is not a question of any other than they; they are the real object of His service, carried into effect, in spite of all the power of Satan. The Lord knows His sheep; they are His; He calls them each by his name, and leads them out of the fold.

It is interesting and touching to see how Jesus' own sheep are here the only object of His heart, and with what intimacy He knows them individually; He thinks only of them. He comes, and calls them, to the exclusion of all the other Jews. He does not fail either in His purpose. He does not leave them in the Jewish fold; He leads them out of the fold where the Jews abode, outside the enclosure where those who were "of their father, the devil," still remained. Moreover, He does not leave them when they are outside; He goes before them in the way of life and of faith. They are His own sheep, they belong entirely to Him, and in leading them out, He goes before

them; He conducts them Himself; He is Himself at their head in the difficulties they should meet. His voice is known to them; they follow Him. If He is exclusively occupied here with the sheep, they recognise no other voice but His. In Him, and in Him alone, they have confidence; they trust in Him, and in Him alone. Every other voice is, for them, that of a stranger; it is enough that they do not know it, that it be not His. It is His voice that inspires them with confidence: weak in themselves, they flee when the voice is not His.

In that which we have gone over, up to the present, we find, at the same time, general principles, and the description of the Lord's work in the midst of the people. He makes use of the customs known in the country with regard to flocks, to describe that which He had been, and that which He had done in His life and in His service down here. But it was all over with the sheepfold. He leads the sheep out; the others were only reprobates, rejected in rejecting Him; all who recognised Him, Him and His voice, followed Him, and were led outside. This very fact sets forth the divine Person and authority of the Saviour. The law and the ordinances had been established by the authority of God Himself, and the law was the perfect rule for the children of Adam. But here we have to do with the law as a dispensation of God, not with what it is in its intrinsic nature. Who could take away men from the authority of Him who had established His ordinances, and had invested them with that authority? He alone, who Himself was invested with the authority which had established them and possessed it. (See chap. 15:22-25.)

Christ ends His discourses on this subject by the statement of His divinity, as He had done before, in

chapter 8; but He begins here, as in chapter 8, in His character of a Servant who accomplishes the service confided to Him.

The men whom the Lord addresses do not understand the parable He spoke to them; He Himself, in grace, furnishes the application. Resuming His discourse, He says, “I am the door of the sheep” (v. 7). God has set Me as the One by whom My sheep can go out without fear, for it is there that God has placed the way out. In following Jesus, he who believed in Him could leave the fold that God had set up. Jesus was Himself the door. If a Pharisee were to ask, “Where are you going thus? “the sheep could answer, “I am going where the Shepherd sent by God will lead me.” He is the door, not of Israel, but of the sheep. All who had come before, and who pretended to present themselves as divine leaders of Israel, were but thieves and robbers; the sheep had not listened to them. Now, to go out, although authorised by the voice and conduct of the divine Shepherd, was a small thing; the Shepherd’s Person implied something positive; He was also the door by which to enter. He had said nothing of this in His parable; only shewing that He called His own sheep, and led them forth, going before them, a sure warrant that they did well in leaving the fold; His voice was enough. Now He reveals the effect.

Before pursuing this subject, I revert for a moment to verses 1-5, in order to fix the bearing of it more exactly. It is the life of Jesus that is presented to us, in connection with the Jews, who were God’s fold. The true Shepherd, Jesus, entered by the way chosen and ordained of God. Born at Bethlehem, born of” the Virgin, He had submitted to all the ordinances that God had established; this was the mark of the true Shepherd.

God, by His Spirit and by His providence, opened for Him the way to the ears and heart of the sheep; the rest remained deaf to all His appeals. It was not a Messiah come to establish the glory in Israel, but the only true Shepherd, who would have His own sheep. They listened to His voice. He knew them, and called them by their names, and led them out of the Jewish fold, to put them in the possession of better things. Then, in putting forth His own sheep—the only ones He sought here—He had been before them, and they followed Him, for they knew His voice. This was the mark of the sheep. He did not leave them in the fold, but led them outside. The form of what is said is abstract, and in the present; it is that which is always true of a good Shepherd.

We must notice here, that, although the man born blind had been driven out, and also Jesus Himself, the Lord speaks here as having authority. The sheep are His, He puts them out; He goes before them; the sheep follow Him, they will not follow a stranger. It is the history of what Jesus was doing in Israel. Jesus says nothing, as yet, of the blessings towards which He was leading His own, nor of His death, the foundation of these blessings.

Now, having entered by the door, according to God's will and testimony, He was, for every other person, Himself "the door"; that which God had ordained as the means of having part in His blessings.

It is not (as I have already said in passing, and we should notice it well) the sheep's knowledge of the stranger that keeps it from the snares which he tries to set for it; but there is one voice which is known by the sheep, the voice of the Good Shepherd, and they know that what they hear is not that voice. It is thus the

simple are kept; the wise wish to know everything, and are deceived. The voice and the Person being known, encourage and authorise the sheep to follow them. Israel remains there, in the hardness of its heart: the Christ is the door of the sheep.

Now the happy results are given to us—the position of the sheep that follow this voice. If any one enter by that door, he shall be saved. Salvation was found in the Shepherd, that which the fold could not give. The sheep should be free; the fold afforded it a kind of security, but it was the security of a prison; it would find pasture, it would be fed in the rich pasturages of God: it is Christianity in contrast with Judaism. Christianity was salvation, liberty, and divine food. Security is no longer imprisonment, but the care of the Good Shepherd. Free under His care, the sheep feed in safety in the vast and rich pasturages of God.

This is the general position, but there is more (v. 10). Jesus, in contrast with all the false pretenders, who only came to steal and to kill, came that we might have life, and that we might have it in abundance. The first expression is the object of His coming in general, which characterises the Gospel, and also the Epistle, of John: it is the Son of God come down, that we might live through Him. He is the eternal life which was with the Father, and gives life, and becomes Himself our Life. (Compare 1 John 4:9; ch. 1:2; ch. 5:11, 12; John 3:15, 16; one might multiply quotations.) The second part of the sentence shews the character and fulness of this life: this life is in the Son. Having the Son, we have life, and we have it according to the power of His resurrection. The faithful in old times were quickened; but here it is the Son Himself who becomes our life, and that as Man

risen from amongst the dead. We have it “abundantly.” This 10th verse gives us the great purpose of the coming of the Son of God; but His love must unfold itself fully; He is not only the Shepherd, but the “Good Shepherd,” and the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. His death has done everything for them; it has redeemed them, washed them from their sins, justified them, purchased them for heaven; however, I think the object of the passage is the love and devotedness of the Good Shepherd; rather than lose His sheep, He lays down His life. The hireling thinks of himself, and runs away; and the wolf comes and seizes41 the sheep, and scatters them. In Gethsemane, Jesus said: “If ye seek me, let these go their way.” Those who have the place of shepherds, abandon the sheep when the enemy comes; He lays down His life, rather than leave them a prey to the wolf. But there is yet more: the Good Shepherd knows His own, and His own know Him, as the Father had known Him, and He had known the Father. Wonderful position! Wonderful relationship! Jesus had been the object of His Father’s heart; in the same way His sheep were the objects of His heart. Taught of God, His sheep knew Him, and trusted in Him, as He trusted in the Father; and He lays down His life for them. But in laying down His life, He opens the door to the sheep from amongst the Gentiles, which He must also bring, and they should hear His voice. With both one and the other, all should be the fruit of His heart and of His mouth, and there should be but one flock, and one Shepherd. As to man, this completes the fruit of the Lord’s work, at least down here.

It is important to remark that, whilst submitting in everything to the will of His Father, it is He Himself who

acts here: it is not a rejected Messiah. In the activity which belonged to Him, He puts forth His own sheep. He was rejected: He had sought one of His sheep that had been rejected (chap. 9), to reveal Himself to it. But here it is the divine side. The Lord enters according to the will of His Father, proof that He was the Good Shepherd; but once entered in, the action is His own. He is recognised by the porter, His voice is recognised by the sheep; He calls them by their names, and Himself leads them out. It is not, I again repeat, a rejected Messiah, but the divine Shepherd, who knows, and who leads His own sheep, for the sheep are His; when once they are outside, He goes before them, and they follow Him, for they know His voice. He gives His life, no one takes it from Him. He brings other sheep who were not of the Jewish fold.

In this act of devotedness, the gift of His life, the point is not only the feelings of the sheep, but of the Father. Jesus could give a motive to the Father that He should love Him: it is only a divine Person who could do this. The Father takes pleasure in the faithfulness of His children; but to lay down His life, to give Himself even unto death, and to take His life again in resurrection, whilst re-establishing the Father's glory, tarnished by the entrance of sin and of death, was a motive for the Father's affection. Glorious and devoted Saviour! Although He felt everything, He never thought of Himself, but of His Father, and, blessed be His name, of His sheep. To give Himself thus was His own act, an act of voluntary devotedness on His part; but, having become Man and Servant, an act, nevertheless, according to His Father's will. The act about which we are now occupied, is not the gift of His life for the sheep,

but the fact that there, where death had entered, and where man was subjected by sin to death, He who had life in Himself gives His life, to take it again beyond death, and all that was its cause and power, and to place man, the being in whom was God's good pleasure, in an entirely new position, according to the divine glory, and that by an act of voluntary devotedness, but of obedience. (Compare chap. 14:30, 31.)

The Lord now, in a second discourse, still speaking with the Jews, develops the blessings which His sheep should enjoy, blessings eternal and immutable. The Jews were in the moral embarrassment in which we have already seen them. Good sense said: "These words are not those of one possessed by a demon; can a demon open the eyes of one born blind?" (v. 21). But the prejudices of many of them got the better of all their convictions. They surround the Saviour, for they could not free themselves from the influence of His life, and of what He said and did: "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus had already told them, and they did not believe; He appeals to His works, that bore witness of Him; but they did not believe, because they were not of His sheep. It is only a question of His sheep, of those that belonged to Him, outside the external election of the people of Israel; but the Lord finds here the occasion to bring out the blessedness of His sheep.

The first mark that characterises the sheep of Jesus, and that we so often find here, is, that they listen to His voice (v. 27, see v. 3, 4, 5, 16); then come two other marks which belong to them: the Good Shepherd knows them (compare verse 14, and for the sense, verse 3), and they follow Him. (Compare verse 4.) Then the Lord declares plainly to us what He gives them; that is,

eternal life, in the full assurance of the faithfulness of Christ, and of the power of the Father Himself. Already had He declared that His object in coming was, in grace, to give life, and life in abundance; not to seek booty, like a robber, but to give life from above, in grace. We have here the nature and character of this life, in grace: it was eternal life, that life of which Christ was the source and representative in humanity (compare 1 John 1:2, and also John 1:4), that fife which was essentially in the Father Himself, which was in the Person of the Son down here, the life that God gives us in Him (1 John 5:11, 12), and by Him, which we possess in Him; for He is our life (Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20); which bears the impress of Christ, new position of man, according to the counsels of God. For us—first character of this life, for we were dead in our trespasses and sins, and under the power of death down here—Christ is, then, the resurrection and the life, a life which ought to manifest itself in us now, and which breathes, so to speak, by faith in Him (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:10-18), and will be fully developed when we shall be with Him, and glorified (Rom. 6:22), but which subsists in the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. (John 17:2, 3; see 1 John 5:20.) It is the gift of God, but it is real and moral: we are born of water and of the Spirit. (John 3:5, 6.) Of His own will He hath begotten us by the word of truth (James 1:18). Thus it is that that which was in Christ reproduces itself in us, according to the word which is the expression of it. (1 John 2:5-8; ch. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:21-25.) This word nourishes the life (1 Peter 2:2), and thus we can say of this life, or rather the Lord says it: “Because I live, ye shall live also “(John 14:19). Here it is the life itself; but to complete the character of this life in the Christian, we must add, “the Spirit of

life”: then that becomes “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2); then, according to John 4, with heavenly objects before it, it is a source of living water springing up into everlasting life.

But if Christ is thus our life, then life in Him does not perish, nor fail in us: because He lives, we shall live also. Can He die, or can the divine life in us come to decay? Assuredly not. We shall not perish; the life of which we live is divine and eternal life. But the wolf is there that ravishes and scatters the sheep. The sheep would not be able to defend themselves from this ravenous wolf, but the Good Shepherd is there, the Son of God, and no one can pluck them out of His hand; there is no greater force that can do anything against Him who keeps us.

There is more: the sheep are the object of the common care of the Father and the Son. Precious thought! The Father, who gave them to the Son, is evidently greater than all other: who should pluck them out of His hands? And the Son, that Good Shepherd, who humbled Himself, to have them and to save them, and to keep them, is one with the Father. The Shepherd entered, doubtless, by the prescribed door, but He is God, one with Him who had prescribed it; He is the Son of the Father, one with the Father; such is the security of the sheep.

The Jews take up stones to stone Jesus. The Lord, calm in faithfulness to His Father, shews them that according to the language of their own scriptures they were wrong, but appeals, at the same time, to His works, as proof of the truth of His testimony, and that He was Son of God, and the Father in Him, and He in the Father. Then they seek to take Him, but He escapes from their

hands, and goes away beyond Jordan, where many come to Him, and own that all that John the Baptist had said of Him was true.

Before going further, I think that it will be useful to recapitulate what we have gone through in detail, so as to give the whole together. Chapters 8 and 9 give us the side of the responsibility of the people, in that they reject the testimony of the word, and of the works of Jesus; chapter 9, in particular, presents to us the Jews driving out of the synagogue the man who had believed that Jesus was a prophet, after having learnt in his own person, by experience, the power of Jesus that had miraculously cured him; but there Jesus and those that believe were rejected, and put outside. Now in the tenth chapter it is the divine thought and operation that are presented to us. Christ, without doubt, enters in by the door, in obedience; but it is to accomplish the work and the will of God with regard to His own. The sheep belong to Him; He calls them by their name; He leads them out; He goes before them, and they follow Him: it is the true work of the Lord. No doubt the responsibility of the Jews in rejecting Him subsisted all the same, but did not frustrate the counsels of God: the Shepherd did not intend to leave the sheep in the fold. The Jews were guilty of the crucifixion of the Lord, but His death was according to the counsels and foreknowledge of the Saviour-God: it was the same here as to the Jews; they drove out this sheep, the man who was born blind, who had been healed; but in fact it was God who freed this man from the prison of the sheepfold, to place him under the care of the Good Shepherd (v. 2-4). After that, the Lord gives life, life abundantly, to His sheep, who enter by the door, by faith in Him—who enter into the

enjoyment of heavenly things: they have a life which belongs to heaven; they are saved, free, fed in God's pastures. Next, the Good Shepherd does not spare His own life, but lays it down for them, that they may enjoy salvation, and the privileges prepared by God; then it is a question of the value of the death of Jesus for the Father's heart; also it is He Himself who gives His life, it is not taken from Him. Finally, in another discourse, the Lord presents to us the blessedness of the sheep, in all the fulness of grace and of security which is bestowed on them under His and the Father's protection.

## Chapter 11

Chapter 10 ends the historical part, properly so called, of John's Gospel. The Lord had left Judea in chapter 4; but the history of His habitual ministry in Galilee is not recorded for us in this Gospel; the Lord, on the contrary, is with the Jews at Jerusalem, presenting to them the new things which are connected with His Person, His death, and His being glorified, in chapters 5 to 7. These communications are terminated by the rejection of His Person, of His testimony, and of His works, which closes the question of their responsibility. Then we have His actual work in Israel, and that which would follow, according to the counsels of God, and by His power in His Person, in chapter 10. Chapters 11 and 12 contain the testimony that God bears to Jesus, and that in every respect, when man rejects Him; then the Lord's declaration, that death is necessary, that He may take His title of Son of man; chapter 13 looks at Him as going back to God again.

Chapter 11 presents Jesus as Son of God: the raising and giving of life to a dead man is the witness of it.

Lazarus, a member of a family beloved of Jesus, was sick. Jesus Himself, away from Jerusalem, had withdrawn to the side of Jordan. The sisters of Lazarus, one of whom, when He frequented the house, had remained sitting at His feet to hear Him, whilst the other was preoccupied with household service, and had complained that she was left alone, sent to tell the Lord that their brother was sick. Jesus answered: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby” (v. 4); after this, He remained two days in the place where He was; then He said to His disciples, “Let us go into Judea again.” The disciples raise the objection that the Jews, a little before, had sought to kill Him. The answer of the Lord reveals to us the principle which governed all His conduct. During these two days He had received no direction from His Father to go to Bethany, and, in spite of the affection He had for this family, of which He was reminded by the two sisters, He remains there where He was, without stirring. Then, His Father’s will being revealed to Him, He goes away without hesitation to the place of danger He had left. The light of day was on His path, the light of His Father’s will. There He always walked.

After this, Jesus said to His disciples, “Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep” (v. n). Jesus spoke thus, because death took this character in His eyes, the power of resurrection and of life being in Him. The apostles apply His words literally to natural sleep, upon which He explains them to them. How many things passed in the heart of Jesus which did not come out! For His walk, the will of His Father was enough, and He had the discernment of that

will. But His own death was before His eyes, the dominion of death over man, the power of life in Himself, the glory of God manifested in the exercise of this, the fact that He was the Son of God in whom the resurrection and the life had come, the ways of God that brought Him back there, where, in effect, death awaited Him, the affection of the family of the deceased man, which, real as it was, did not for a moment set aside His waiting upon the will of God, His isolation—for His disciples did not understand Him—all the immense consequences of this journey, where the dominion of death over man, the presence of the Resurrection and the Life, the subjection to death of Him who was both one and the other, and that for man—all this weighed upon the Saviour's spirit, His spirit alone in the midst of the world! But for Him, I repeat, His Father's will was sufficient to light His path; He needed but this. Invaluable teaching for us, and for our feeble hearts, but which have divine power with them in that path. One does not stumble there. The precious Saviour never failed in it, either in life or in death; He led a hidden life with His Father, a life which shewed itself in obedience and perfect love for Him, but which made up His life where hatred and death reigned, these, however, only leading Him to the end He was pursuing, namely, perfect obedience to, and the absolute glory of, His Father. Oh! may we be able to follow Him; and, if it be afar off, at least may it be Him that we follow while walking in His footsteps, in the inner life which looks to Him, and in obedience, and seeking what He wills!

"Let us go to him," said Jesus (v. 15). He goes to meet death as a power that exercises its dominion over man; and to undergo it Himself, He who was the Resurrection

and the Life, in view of our salvation, and for the glory of God. In His walk of obedience down here, the Father always hears Him, and He exercises thus divine power, even to raising a dead man; but He walks in this path of obedience to obey to the end, finding that He could not be heard until the cup, of which He had a holy fear, had been drunk; that cup that He was going to drink, in being abandoned of God in His soul, then heard, doubtless, and glorified, but after having experienced to the end what it was not to be heard.

But whatever may have been the Saviour's thoughts and the pressure of circumstances upon His soul, they never overcame Him, nor hindered the exercise of the most perfect love. "I rejoice, on your account, that I was not there" (v. 15). If He was tried by seeming to be wanting in affection for these poor women, not only was He perfectly obeying His Father's will, which is confirmed here, but, in the midst of the deep exercises of His heart, the power of life and all the weight of death meeting in His mind, He rejoiced at the profit that the disciples were about to have from it.

Another testimony of the grace of God is found here, in the fact that the devotedness of Thomas, who, later on, was wanting in faith, is recorded, so that we cannot doubt of his loyalty to Jesus. But let us follow this important history of the resurrection of Lazarus.

The fact of the death of Lazarus was clearly established, by the delay, that God's wisdom had caused in the intervention of the Lord; Lazarus had been four days in the tomb. That which is but obedience to God's will at the moment when it is a question of submitting to it, later on displays the wisdom of God. Jesus had healed

many other persons; but here, close to Jerusalem, in the sight of the Jews, the power of life, divine power in Jesus was manifested at the moment when He was about to die, and that in a very striking manner. It was a power unknown to all, although He who exercised it, and who was it, had already restored life to the dead. Jesus, then, being come, found that Lazarus had already been four days in the tomb (v. 17). Bethany being near to Jerusalem, many Jews had gone there, to testify their sympathy with the dead man's sisters, and to comfort them; a crowd of witnesses were thus brought upon the spot, to verify the Lord's wonderful work, to spread the report of it in the holy city, and establish the authenticity of it without possible contradiction, and thus bring on the crisis, which was soon to have a solemn result in the death of the Saviour, according to the counsels and determinate purpose of God.

The news of the arrival of Jesus reached Bethany, and Martha heard of it, and arose immediately and went to meet the Lord (v. 19, 20). Martha's heart was governed by circumstances, and the tardy arrival of the Lord sets her at once in action. What would Jesus say? What would He do? There was with Martha confidence in Him, but nothing was weighed. Mary was more serious; she was accustomed to sit at the feet of Jesus, to listen to the divine testimony that issued from His mouth; there was, perhaps, more perplexity in her heart as to why the Lord had not come earlier, but with more reverence for His Person, she was more influenced by the sense of His divine character; she remains quietly in the house waiting until God ordered for her that she should be found with Jesus; her heart full, ready to burst forth, still counted upon Jesus and relied on Him, cast down I have

no doubt, but knowing that there was in the Lord a heart more deep, more full of love than her own. Martha, having come to Jesus, is quite ready with a word; she recognises Him truly as Lord, she believes in Him truly, but with a faith that knows little what He is. “Lord, if thou hadst been here,” she says, “my brother would not have died,” but still she knew that as Messiah, what Jesus asked of God, God would give Him. It is not here a question of the Father, of the Son who had life in Himself; but Martha had known too well what Jesus had done to suppose that God would not hear Him. All this passage is interesting, for it shews us a soul that believed in Jesus, a soul that loved Him, but a faith—one sees many thus—where all was vague, a faith that recognised in Jesus a Mediator, whom God would hear, but that knew nothing of His Person as come into this world, nor of the quickening power which was found in the Son of God, come into the midst of the scene where death reigned. The Lord’s answer raises this question and gives room for the public testimony of God on this subject. “Thy brother shall rise again,” said Jesus. Martha, an orthodox Pharisee, answers, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day”; she might have said as much of the greatest enemies of Christ. These will certainly rise again, the power of God will effect it. Martha’s answer did not say more of it, did not say one word of what the Saviour was. Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life” (v. 25). As in the whole Gospel, we have here what Jesus is as light and life, in His Person, as come into the world, in contrast with all the promises made to the Jews, even though they had been justly appreciated. They were scarcely so here, they were at least in a very vague manner.

The Lord speaks here (v. 25, 26) as already present to accomplish the great result of His power, still hidden in His Person, but of which He was going to give the proof in the resurrection of Lazarus. When He shall exercise this power, he that believeth42 in Him, even though he be dead, shall live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Him, shall never die. Power is in His Person; the present proof of it was found in the resurrection of Lazarus; the accomplishment of it will be when He shall come back to exercise this power in its fulness. In the meantime the thing is realised according to the place that Christ has taken; He raised up Lazarus for life in this world where He was. Now that He is absent, the soul that is quickened by His power goes to Him where He is; when He comes back, He will raise the believing dead in glory; believers who are alive will not die. Evidently we find in this the power of life that is in the Person of the Saviour, in contrast with Martha's vague thought, so common among Christians, too, that God will raise up all men at the end of time. The words of the Lord apply only to believers.

Note, that the resurrection here precedes life, for death was before the eyes of Jesus, and weighed upon all hearts. But also Jesus had the power of life to raise from the dead, when death had already exercised its power, and this is what was needed for man over whom death reigned.

The Lord puts the question formally to Martha: "Believest thou this?" Indeed this was the great crucial question, for death reigned over man, and Christ Himself was about to undergo it. Was there anything more powerful in the world, on the part of God? Martha had not been sitting at the feet of Jesus; she does not

know how to answer, nor Mary herself: Martha's precipitation, however, had served to bring to light the question which she knew not how to answer, and the state of ignorance in which all hearts were. But the glorious Person of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, was there. Martha, feeling that the Lord went beyond her spiritual intelligence, makes a correct confession of faith, according to Psalm 2, but altogether general; and feeling that Mary knew the Lord's mind better, she goes to call her, saying, "The Master calleth for thee"; which, though not formally true, expressed that which she felt morally, that which the Saviour's question implied; for the "Believest thou this?" was addressed, she felt, not so much to her, as to Mary.

Mary rises at once, and goes to Jesus. Her heart was, the needs of her heart were, there already; her respect for the Lord, and the perplexity of her soul, agitated by the power of death, had kept her in the house until then: but that shewed that death weighed upon Mary's soul also; all was subjected to it. Jesus could heal; but death ruled over the living as well as over the deceased. Mary, with a subject heart, though exercised and perplexed, for the Deliverer in whom she trusted had not arrested the evil, comes near to Jesus. Attached to the Lord, who possessed her heart's confidence, a confidence which Martha's words had revived, but having still the weight of death upon her soul, Mary falls down before Him as soon as she sees Him, for her devotedness was connected with deep reverence for the Person of Jesus, a reverence engendered by His word. But Mary, too, was under the weight of death; in that respect she did not go beyond Martha, but sure of the goodness of jesus, as indeed Martha also had been, she said, "If thou hadst

been here, my brother had not died.” Death was between her hope and Jesus, since Jesus had not been between Lazarus and death. Death, for her, had shut the door to all hope; Lazarus was no more in the land of the living, there was no longer any one to be healed.

The Jews, seeing that Mary had got up and gone out, followed her, thinking that she was going to the grave to weep there; they but thus add their voice to the testimony rendered to the power of death over the body and the soul, “Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?” (v. 37). Jesus feels it; He groans and is deeply moved43 in His spirit, but the love which animates Him and the testimony which He had come to render to the truth, press Him on towards the grave where the body of Lazarus lies. He asks, “Where have ye laid him? “They conduct Him to the sepulchre. There Jesus relieves Himself by tears, which are the witness to His estate as man, and to His sympathy for men and as a man, but also the expression of a heart moved by divine love. It was not however the loss of Lazarus, nor His love for the dead man’s sisters that was the cause of those tears, for Jesus was going at that very moment to raise Lazarus. In thinking of the latter, that which He was going to do would have made joy spring up in His heart. No, these tears of the Saviour were profound sympathy for the human race crushed under the weight of death, from which it could not raise itself, as also for these tried souls. The Jews thought that the tears of Jesus had their source in His affection for Lazarus: “See how he loved him!” they say. This was very natural, but that which He was about to do forbids us to entertain the like thought. The remark, already quoted, of some

amongst them (v. 37) only renews the groans of Jesus, in recalling the thought of the subjection of men, not only to death, but to the dominion of death over their spirits.

This is what caused the Saviour's tears to flow. Poor Martha cannot conceal her unbelief, that is to say, the influence that external circumstances exercised over her soul. Lazarus had been in the grave four days already! Corruption must have already begun, she says. God permits that there should not be the slightest doubt, and that the proof of the reality of Lazarus's death should be given; but the glory of God did not depend on the facility of the work, it shewed itself in its impossibility. Then they took away the stone which closed the sepulchre where the dead body of Lazarus lay.

Jesus here, as always in this Gospel, attributes the work to the Father's will, and accomplishes the work as heard by Him: His hearing Him being the proof that the Father had sent Him, and bearing witness to it. This is the position that Jesus places Himself in; He does not leave the character of Servant that He had taken; He could do, and did, all that His Father did: but it was as sent of Him to accomplish it, as having made Himself a Servant, whilst being one with the Father. He never glorifies Himself, nor departs from this dependence on His Father, in His course down here. He would have failed in His perfection in doing so; He could not. Also, His mission from heaven, on the part of God, was the chief point for the multitude.

Then with the powerful voice that raises the dead, the voice of the Son of God, He cries, "Lazarus, come forth!" (v. 43) and the dead man came forth, bound with the sheet in which he had been buried, and with his face

bound about with a napkin. Jesus commanded those standing by to loose him and let him go.

The effect of this miracle was, that many of the Jews believed in Him; but others, hardened by their prejudices, went away to the Pharisees, and told them what Jesus had done. Israel was laid under the necessity of believing or of shewing an incurable hatred against God, and against His will: for, let us remember it, almost under the walls of Jerusalem, and known of all, the God of light and truth shewed Himself as the resurrection and the life, and raised from amongst the dead a man whose body was going to corruption. At the powerful word of Him who, nevertheless, owned His being sent from the Father, the dead man buried already four days, comes out alive from the tomb. The power of God entered, even as to the body, into the domain of death, from whose dominion no human being could free himself, that no living being could avoid, that all were condemned to undergo by the power of Satan and by the judgment of God. Here was a Man, who, insisting that He was sent of the Father in grace, calls a dead man from the tomb with authority, and in fact quickens him and raises him. The Son of God was there, overturning the power of Satan, destroying the dominion of death, and setting man free from the state to which he had been subjected by sin: He was there the Son of God, the Resurrection and the Life, presented to man, declared Son of God with power. Would man receive Him?

The news of the wonderful event of the resurrection of Lazarus having reached the ears of the Pharisees, they gathered together to take counsel as to what was to be done. Avowed adversaries of Christ, whatever might happen, only thinking of their national importance, their

consciences and hearts remaining alike insensible, they were afraid that the manifestation of such power would awaken the jealousy of the Romans; their hatred against the divine light being greater, however, and having more effect on them than the fear of the Romans, for when occasion arose it did not cost them much to excite disturbances and rebellions. Caiaphas, for the counsels of God are about to be accomplished, declares that it is better that one man should die for the nation, than that it should entirely perish. “Ye know nothing, nor consider that it is profitable for us that one man die for the nation, and that the whole nation perish not” (v. 50). God put these words in his mouth; the evangelist adding that Jesus was going to die, not for the nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Enmity against the light come and manifested in grace, and against divine power, which did not now seek to shelter itself, but accomplished the will of God—absolute enmity against the Son of God, in whom these things were realised, and who was manifested by these things—was indeed determined on, and without scruple. From that day, therefore, they consulted together that they might put Him to death (v. 53). It was a diabolical will to put to death Him in whom was life, and in whom God Himself had visited this poor world in grace—a will without any scruple whatever, for they wanted to put Lazarus also to death, a witness too irrefragable of the power that had raised him. Nothing is more frightful, but it is man laid bare.

Jesus therefore walked no longer openly among the Jews; He went away until His hour should be come. They asked each other if He would come to the feast, for the

passover of the Jews was near; and the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment that if anyone knew where Jesus was, they should make it known, that they might take Him.

What a testimony we have here to the entrance of the power of life into this world of death, of its entrance in grace, and victorious over death, however real this might be! Let us remember that resurrection comes first, for in reality we are all dead. Yet another thing was needed, the death of Him who possessed this life; for we are sinners, and the mind of the flesh in all is enmity against God: redemption was needed as life was needed where death reigned, and reigned through sin. (Compare 1 John 4:9, 10.) But we possess the testimony of divine power come into the domain of death—how God glorifies Himself—and the Son of God revealed as the one in whom that life is for us; we see, too, who He is who was going to give Himself for us on the cross.

## Chapter 12

But the solemn hour of the Lord's death was approaching, and six days before the Passover of which He was to be the real Lamb, Jesus comes back to Bethany (chap. 12:1), and what a wonderful scene unfolds itself there! Seated at the same table, there was Lazarus risen, come back from hades, and He who had brought him back, the Son of God. Martha, according to her ordinary practice, is occupied with service; Mary, completing the moral picture, is occupied with Jesus. Mary had tasted the word of the Lord: that word, full of love and of light, had penetrated her heart. Jesus had given her back her beloved brother. She saw the hatred of the Jews rise against Him whom she loved, and who

had introduced into her heart the feeling of divine love; in proportion as the hatred rose, her affection for the Saviour rose too, and gave it courage to shew itself. It was the instinct of affection which felt that death was casting its shadow over Him who was the life, as Jesus felt it also;—the only case in which Jesus found sympathy on earth. The Lord gives to Mary's act, instinctive fruit of affection and of devotedness, a voice that came from His divine intelligence: what she had done she had done for His burial. He knew that He was going away; Mary had spent all for Him; Jesus was worthy of it, for her heart. As I have said, her affection rose in the measure in which the hatred of the Jews increased. The shadow of His approaching rejection reached her already. Indeed, everything was centred, everything assumed its form, in Him and around Him; in Him, the power of life, and devotedness unto death; in Mary, affection which made of Jesus everything for her heart; in Judas, the spirit of lying and of treachery; in the Jews, hatred against that which was divine, even to wishing to put Lazarus himself to death— inconceivable malice and hardness that would not have the light! On the occasion of the remark of Judas, the Lord expresses the consciousness He had of His approaching departure from this world, but with striking patience and gentleness.

This brief history contained in the first verses of this chapter, has a special character, introduced, as it is, in the midst of the testimony that God caused to be borne to the personal glory of His Son, at the moment of His rejection. But, at this very moment, and in the midst of the increasing hatred of the heads of the nation, this little flock gathers together, a witness to the divine

power of which one amongst them had been the object, a power which led many of the Jews to believe in Jesus (v. u). Jesus must go away, He must die; but before He dies, there are men who are witnesses of the quickening power of the Son of God, and see in it the glory of God, witnesses of what He was already, of what He was in His Person. The verses which follow shew what He was going to be in His position—that which belonged to Him, but which He did not appropriate to Himself, and which, in one way, He could not so appropriate before He died.

The first two titles to which testimony is borne here, belonged to the Lord while He was alive, but the first was connected with His Person, was inherent in Him; He was Son of God, He was the Resurrection and the Life, so that the little assembly that surrounded Him, was gathered about Him on a principle with which eternal life was connected, and upon which the Christian position (not yet developed nor known, it is true, either as a principle or as a fact) was founded by anticipation—Christ, Son of God, Resurrection and Life, going away to the Father, by the way of the shadow of death, and His rejection down here. In fine, the three characters of Christ, of which the two first are found in the second Psalm, and are recognised by Nathanael at the beginning of our Gospel, and of which the third, contained in Psalm 8, is reproduced in the answer of the Saviour to Nathanael, are found again here; only there is this difference with Psalm 2, that the first of these names is presented here not only as by right of birth in this world, but as the exercise of divine power that raises and quickens. As to the two others, we are about to pursue the manifestation of them as it is given us in our chapter.

Before going further, I wish to draw attention once more to this solemn bringing together of the power of death over man's heart, over the first Adam, and the power of divine life in the Son of God, present in a man in the very heart of the dominion of death, destroying this dominion, and He who possessed it in His Person, giving Himself up to death, in order to deliver from it those that were subject to it. That Jesus had this in view is apparent. (See chap. 10:31, 40; ch. 11:16, 53, 54; ch. 12:7.) He had it on His spirit when He came back to Jerusalem, and when He spoke with Martha and Mary; He must Himself undergo death for us.

The next day (ver. 12, etc.) the people, having learned that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, struck by this great miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, go forth to meet Him with branches of palm-trees, and salute Him as the King of Israel that cometh in the name of Jehovah, according to Psalm 118. It is the second character in which God would have Jesus recognised, notwithstanding His rejection. The resurrection of Lazarus had shewn Him as Son of God; now He is owned Son of David. Here the event is in direct connection with the resurrection of Lazarus, and the title of Son of God; in Luke, and even in Matthew and Mark, this circumstance is connected rather with the title of Lord, and we find there the details of the manner in which Jesus found the ass's colt. In these three Gospels too, although this difference is less striking in Matthew, the disciples are put forward, whilst here it is more the people, moved by the noise which the resurrection of Lazarus had caused. It is the prophecy of Zechariah, but leaving out that which, in the prophet, refers to the deliverance of Israel. John and Matthew mention it, for it

was only after that Jesus was glorified, that the disciples could connect the prophecy with that which they had themselves done to honour Him, and to cause Him to enter in triumph into Jerusalem, Jesus, however, having given the order about the ass's colt.

Such are, beside the divine power that quickens, the two titles that belonged to Jesus, as the Christ manifested upon earth, the titles of Psalm 2.

After this the Greeks, from amongst those who had gone up to worship during the feast, arrive and desire to see Jesus. They come to Philip, who tells Andrew, and then Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. Although coming to worship at Jerusalem, they were strangers to the covenants of*promise; an entirely new order of things was needed to introduce them into it. They had no right to the promises; Jesus must die to lay the foundation for this new order of things. Jesus is here, not the promised Messiah, but the second Man, head of all things that God had created, that He had Himself created: but He must receive them by redemption, and especially His co-heirs. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (v. 24). He must redeem the co-heirs in order to have them with Himself. If He were King of Israel and Son of God according to Psalm 2, He was, as Son of man, Lord of the whole creation; only He must die that His co-heirs should have part in the inheritance that He had acquired. "The hour is come," said He, "that the Son of man should be glorified" (v. 23).

It is well to remember the testimonies that the Old and New Testament furnish on the bearing of this title of Son of Man. The Psalms and Daniel speak of it. We find it in

Psalm 80:17, where the point is, the blessing of the Jews, when they will return to Jehovah; in Psalm 8, after having been rejected in Psalm 2 as Son of God and King of Israel, the Son of man appears as Lord of all; it is still here, when the name of Jehovah, the God of the Jews, is "excellent in all the earth," but His glory exalted also above the heavens, that Man, at the same time the Son of man, is set over all the works of God. This Psalm 8 is quoted by the Lord to justify the cries of the children when He entered into Jerusalem (v. 2); and by the apostle Paul (Eph. 1:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:27), in view of Christ's position as Head over all after His resurrection; and in Hebrews 2, to shew His glory in this position above angels (chap. 1 of this epistle having presented this position as a consequence of His divinity), but when this human supremacy had not yet taken place, although He was crowned with glory and honour. These three passages develop clearly the position of Jesus as Son of man; one other (Dan. 7:13, 14) completes the picture of the place of the Son of man in the government of God. In this passage the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of Days in order to take up the government, not of the Jews only, but of all kingdoms, exercising from on high, from heaven, the universal dominion of which He holds the reins, by it replacing all the powers that have held a more or less universal sway after that the throne of God had left Jerusalem on the Babylonish captivity.

Now to take this position of dominion not only over Israel and over the nations, but over all the works of God, over all that He Himself had created, Jesus must die, not to have right to everything, but to possess on the ground of redemption, all things reconciled to God, and then to have co-heirs, according to the counsels of

God, He being the Firstborn among many brethren. This death is the first thought that comes to the mind of the Lord when the arrival of the Greeks brings forward His dignity as Son of man. Death and the curse were man's inheritance; Jesus must undergo them, to raise man from the state in which he was found, and to place him in the lordship which had been destined for him according to the counsels of God. He was the second Man, the last Adam; but sin having entered into the world, He must redeem the co-heirs, purify them, that they might have a place with Him; He must take away all right from the enemy, so as to deprive him later on of his power over the heritage that he had acquired by man's sin, and even by the judgment of God, and to reconcile all things to God having made peace by the blood of the cross. In this path of death, for it was indeed the death of the cross, if any one serve Him, he must follow Him. Whosoever loves his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Solemn word! But we have already seen that His rejection must, according to Psalm 2, be associated with His character of Messiah and Son of God: He should be no more of this world. His position as Son of man, Head over all things, only comes afterwards in Psalm 8. From the tenth chapter, we find ourselves historically in the shadow of His death, which made thus an absolute breach between Him and the world, and was also death in all its terror as the judgment of God. He has borne the judgment in our place; but it was there the judgment of a world that should see Him no more. The friendship of the world henceforth would be enmity against God; it had been always so in reality, but now the fact was publicly manifested; it is the rejected Lord who is the Saviour. It is He whom man has crucified,

that God has raised to His right hand. He had fully revealed the Father, and they had seen and hated both Him and the Father, as He says (chap. 15:24), and in appealing to the judgment of God, “Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” To be a Saviour, He had to be lifted up from the earth; the Son of man had to suffer and die; a living Christ was for the Jews. The shadow of death only grew thicker up to Gethsemane, where its deepest shades enveloped the soul of Jesus, and where He took in His hand the cup which contained that which had thrown its shadow on His soul all along the way, but which now penetrated it with its most profound darkness. One only thing remained to Him up to the cross, and even in the sufferings of perfect obedience— communion with His Father; at the cross, obedience was accomplished, and the communion was lost, to make His obedience and His perfection shine the more. It was man’s hour and the power of darkness which only drove Him on towards the judgment of God, more terrible than the subordinate instruments that darkened the path of obedience and of sufferings, in which He perfectly glorified God, there where He has been made sin for us, and has blotted out our sins for ever.

The Lord speaks in an abstract way, as of a rule or principle, the ground of which He Himself was going to lay for all; only He was giving Himself that others might have eternal life; and He could have delivered Himself, or have obtained twelve legions of angels; but then, how would the scriptures have been fulfilled? The thing could not be; He had not come to deliver Himself. He would have remained in heaven, and have left us exposed to God’s righteous judgment; but that could not be either:

His love did not allow Him to do this. He had also too much at heart the accomplishment of the counsels of God, and the glory of God His Father, which should thus be made evident in a remarkable and perfect manner. The Saviour's rejection on the part of the world has been the rejection of the world on the part of God. The last effort to find or arouse good in man's heart had been made, and they had "seen and hated both me and my Father." God could save out of this world, in grace; but the world was lost, it was in a state of enmity against God. He therefore who attaches himself to this world, who seeks his life in it, or who keeps it as a life to which he clings, in contrast with the rejected Christ, loses it. We are not always called upon to sacrifice our lives outwardly, although this might take place, and has often happened; but morally this applies always: he who loves his life, who cleaves to it as if it belonged to this world, loses it. It is a life of vanity, alienated from God as the world itself to which it attaches itself, a life which ends only in death; for here Jesus does not speak of judgment.

The Lord adds, to that which precedes, a most important principle of conduct: "If any man serve me, let him follow me" (v. 26). It will be in principle, through death, that we must follow Him—death to sin and to the world; but the consequence of such a path is simple; where the Saviour is, there shall His servant be. Such an one follows Him through death into the heavenly glory where He has entered, and "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

But the heart of the Lord, if He exhorted others to take the narrow road in which one was to deny oneself, and the world that was enmity against God, whilst losing a

life identified with the world which rejected the light when it had come into it in grace—His heart, I say, realised what was before Himself, for He was going to meet death, death armed with its sting— the judgment of God against sin, and the power of Satan—but a death in which we find all the more the perfection of Jesus. "Now," He says, "is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour"; it was for this that I came into the world. Then the Saviour goes back to the true motive of everything, a motive always present to His heart: "Father, glorify thy name!" Cost what it might, this was what He desired always. There was no delay in the answer of the Father: "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again." I have no doubt that this "I will glorify it again" was to be accomplished in resurrection. The Father had glorified His name in the resurrection of Lazarus, a resurrection in this world; He was going to do it again in Christ Himself, in a better resurrection, a true answer to death, where the sovereign power of God in grace, and towards Christ in righteousness, has been manifested; a new state in which man had never been, but which was, according to God's counsels, the expression of what He is in Himself, and perfect blessing for man: "Christ (says the apostle) was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." The multitude did not know what to think of this voice that it had heard; they said it was a clap of thunder; others, that an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus answers: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes"; the Father's voice was in His heart; for the people, it was necessary to have that which was sensible; grace gave it to them. But the Lord explains this solemn sign, by that which was in His heart, and that He knew to be taking place at that

moment: “Now is the judgment of this world.” Then, indeed, took place the judgment of the world, which is condemned absolutely and finally in rejecting the Lord; but in this also is accomplished the work that has broken for ever the power of Satan, prince of this world; and, on the other hand, a Saviour has been manifested, point of attraction for all men, instead and in place of a Messiah of the Jews, for these things He said to signify by what death He should die. The multitude (ver. 34) oppose to Him that which was written of the Messiah, and ask: “How sayest thou that the Son of man must be lifted up [from the earth]? Who is this Son of man?” The Lord answers by warning them that the moment was approaching when the light, He Himself, would be put out for them, and when they would lose it for ever: they would walk in darkness, not knowing whither they went; for them, wisdom was to believe in the light before it went away, that they might be sons of light; then He went away.

Remark also here, a very important expression. The Lord says, “And I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all men unto me” (v. 32). He is no longer at all of this world, nor in heaven either. It is a Saviour rejected, suffering, dying, who has left the world for ever, a Saviour ignominiously rejected, driven away, cast out by the world; it is He who, being no longer on the earth, nor in heaven either, I repeat, exposed to the gaze of men, lifted up from the earth and not yet in heaven, but alone between the one and the other with God, like the altar that was neither in the camp nor in the tabernacle —it is He who is the attractive refuge of those who would flee from the world that has rejected Him to enter heaven, to which He thus opens the way for us.

The rest of the chapter is a summing up of the position. In the first part, it is the evangelist who records the obstinate incredulity of the people, and the sad motives that governed their minds, preoccupied with the approbation of men, rather than looking to God. In the second part, Jesus Himself shews two things; first of all, that in rejecting Him thus, those that did it, rejected the light itself, come into the world, that those who believed on God should not remain in darkness; then, that in rejecting Him, they rejected the Father, for what He said were the Father's words. Thus He did not judge him that heard His word, but did not keep it, for He was not come to judge the world, but to save it; His words would judge them at the last day. Now, that which He said was the Father's commandment, and this commandment (He knew it, He had faith in it, the certain consciousness in Himself) was eternal life. All that He said then, He "spoke" it, as the Father had spoken to Him.

This summing up of the rejection of Him of whom the prophets had spoken, of the light, and of the words of the Father, closes the history, properly so called, of the Saviour's life. That which follows refers to His departure, to the gift of the Holy Ghost, as well as to the ministry of those whom He left down here as witnesses in His place. But before entering into this new portion of our Gospel, I would remind you that the 41st verse, quoting Isaiah 6, and applying it to Christ, shews that Jesus was the Jehovah of the Old Testament. I would point out too, how the fear of man and the pursuit of his approbation, obscures the testimony of God in the heart, and stifles the conscience. If the eye be single, the whole body is full of light.

## Chapter 13

In chapter 13 the instructions begin that relate to a heavenly Saviour. Although He was upon earth, He was the Light come from heaven, the eternal life that was from heaven; but, rejected upon earth, He now takes His place in heaven—not God manifested in human humiliation down here, but Man glorified in the glory of God above; and He exhibits and develops what He is for us in this position, before entering into it.

From this thirteenth chapter, then, the Saviour presents Himself as having finished His testimony upon earth, and going to the Father. This leads Him to speak of His position and of His service on high in heaven, of the position of the disciples, and of the other Comforter, that He—and the Father in His name—would send from on high. He was seated at supper with His disciples, their friend and companion at table down here, one of them, whatever might be His glory, and their servant in grace. But He must leave them and go to His Father; solemn moment for them: what would become of them, and what would be their relationship with Him? Their thoughts hardly went further than this with regard to Him; they thought that they had found the Messiah who was going to set up the kingdom of God in Israel, although the Holy Ghost had attached them to His Person by a divine power. They knew that He was the Son of the living God, He who had the words of eternal life. But He was going to leave them: He had been among them as one who serves; must His service of love come to an end? The Father had given all things into His hands, He knew it; He was come from God, and was going to God; could the link of His service of love with His own continue? If it should, it was necessary that

they should be fit for the presence of God Himself, and for association with the One to whom all things were committed.

Now Jesus had loved His own that were in the world: it is the precious source of all His relations with us, and He does not change. He had loved His own, He loved them to the end; His heart did not give them up, but He knew that He must leave them. Would He cease to be their servant in love? No, He would be it for ever. Everything was ready for His departure, even the heart of Judas. But neither the iniquitous treachery of Judas below, nor the glory into which He was about to enter above, separated His heart from His disciples. He ceases to be their companion; He remains their Servant; it is what we read in Exodus 21:2-6.

Jesus rises from supper and lays aside His garments; He takes a napkin and girds Himself with it: then, pouring water into a basin, He begins to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the napkin with which He was girded. He is ever a Servant, and does the service of a slave. Wonderful truth and infinite grace, that the Son of the Most High, humbling Himself even to us, is pleased in His love to make us fit to enjoy the presence and the glory of God. He took the place of a Servant to accomplish this work of love, and His love never gives it up. (See in the glory, Luke 12:37.) He is a Servant for ever, for love delights to serve.

Peter, who in giving way to his own feelings, though very natural, gives occasion so often to the words of the Lord that reveal to us the thoughts of God, objects strongly to the Lord’s washing his feet. The answer of Jesus discloses the spiritual meaning of what He was doing, a

meaning which Peter could not then understand, but which he should understand later on, for the Holy Ghost would make them understand all these things. One must be washed by the Lord in order to have part with Him: this is the key of all that was being done. Jesus could no longer have part with His disciples down here, and the disciples could not have part with Him, and before God Himself, to whom He was going, unless He washed them. There must be a cleanness such as could suit the presence and the house of God. Then, with his ardent spirit, Peter desires that the Lord should wash his hands and head, and Jesus explains to him the import of what He was doing.

We must remember that here it is a question of water, not of blood, however necessary the blood of the Saviour be. It is a question of purity, not of expiation. Note, in the next place, that the scripture uses two words here which must not be confounded; one means to wash the whole body, to bathe; the other to wash the hands, the feet, or anything small. The water itself, employed here or elsewhere as a figure, signifies purification by the word, applied according to the power of the Spirit. One is born “of water”;—then the whole body is washed: there is a purification of the thoughts and actions by means of an object which forms and governs the heart. These are the divine thoughts in Christ, the life and character of the new man, the reception of Christ by the word. Christ had the words of eternal life: this was expressed and communicated in His words, where grace acted, for they were spirit and life. The disciples had received these words, except the one who should betray Him; but although they were thus washed, converted, purified in reality, by the Lord’s words, yet they were

going to walk in a defiled world, where they could indeed defile their feet. Now this defilement does not suit God's house, and the love of the Lord does what is needed that the remedy should be soon applied, if they contracted defilement which shut them out. Ready to do everything that they might be blessed, Jesus washes their feet. This action was the service of a slave in those countries, where it was the first and constant expression of hospitality, and of the attentive care it claimed. (See Gen. 18:4; Luke 7:44.)

With this washing of the feet is connected the truth that conversion is not repeated. Once the word has been applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, this work is done, and it can never be undone, any more than the sprinkling of blood can be repeated or renewed. But if I sin, I defile my feet; my communion with God is interrupted. Then the Saviour occupies Himself with me, in His love.

It will be well to notice here the difference that there is between the Priest and the Advocate. In practice the difference is important. Both offices have to do with intercession; but the Advocate is for sins that have been committed; the Priest is there that we may not sin, and that goodness may be in exercise in respect of our weakness; I speak of the Priesthood in heaven. Upon the cross Jesus was Priest and Victim (the goat Hazazel); but there the priest represented all the people, confessing their sins on the goat's head. This was indeed the work of the priest, but not properly a priestly act; and, as I have just said, the priest acted there as the representative of all the people, these latter being looked upon as guilty. This work is accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, made once for all: by

His one offering He has perfected for ever those that are sanctified, so that we have no more conscience of sins. But Christ intercedes for us, in order that we may obtain mercy, and that we may find grace in time of need; so that, in our weakness, we may be the objects of the care of God's goodness, and that we may not sin. The Advocate intercedes, when we have sinned, to re-establish the interrupted communion, for it is a question of communion in 1 John 1. Righteousness and propitiation remain always perfect, and form the basis of that which is done for us when we have failed; 1 John 2:1, 2. The effect of this grace in Christ is, that the Spirit applies the word (the water in figure), humbles us in convincing us of sin, and brings us near to God. The red heifer (Numbers 19) is a very instructive development of this renewing of communion. Notice here, that the Advocate does His work in order that we may be cleansed, not when we have been: also, we do not go to Him that He may do it; it is He who takes the initiative in grace, as He did for Peter, that His disciple's faith might not fail, when He should be obliged to leave him to himself for a moment, that he should make experience of his weakness.

The washing of the feet is therefore a service with which Christ is now occupied for us. When by our negligence (for there never is a necessity that we should do it) we have defiled our feet, and we have made ourselves unfit to enter spiritually into the presence of God, Christ purifies us by the word, so that communion may be re-established between our souls and God. It is a question of our walk down here essentially. When the priest amongst the Jews was consecrated, his body was washed, then he washed his feet and hands at the time

of the accomplishment of each service. Here it is only the feet that had to be washed; it is no longer a service of work that is in question, but our walk down here.

The Lord gives what He had just been doing as an example of humility; but the spiritual intelligence of what He had done would only come when the Holy Ghost had been given. Still, we are called, in this sense also, to wash one another's feet, to apply the word in grace to the conscience of a brother who needs it, and in the humility, of which Christ has given the example. But the teaching refers to what Christ is doing for us on high, remaining ever our Servant in grace.

The Lord, in speaking here to His disciples, makes an exception of Judas, for He knew that Judas should betray Him, and He warns the disciples of it, that it might not be a stumbling-block. Still, in receiving one sent of the Lord, as sent of Him, they received Him; and in receiving Him, they received the Father Himself that sent Him. But although the Lord knew who should betray Him, the feeling that it was one of His own companions grieved Him; He even opens His heart before them: "One of you shall betray me." (v. 21). Sure at least of the truth of His words, of the certainty of them, they look at one another with the sincerity of innocence. Now John was near the Lord; Peter, always ardent, wishes to know who it is, and makes a sign to John to ask Jesus, for he was not himself near enough to Him to ask the question. Peter loved the Lord, a sincere faith attached him to Him, but he lacked that concentration of spirit that would have kept him near the Lord, as Mary, the sister of Martha, was kept there. John had not placed himself near Jesus to receive this communication; he received it because, according to the

habit of his heart, he kept near Him, glorying in the title, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Thus John was there where he could receive the Lord’s communication. This is our secret, too, in order to have the intimate communications of the Lord. Blessed place, where the heart enjoys the affections of the Saviour, and where He communicates to us what His heart contains for those whom He loves.

But nearness to Jesus, without faith in Him, if the heart overcomes the influence of His presence, hardens in a terrible manner; the morsel which shewed that one was eating of the same dish, the morsel which Judas received, dipped by His hand, is but the sign of Satan’s entering into his heart. Satan enters into this heart to harden it, even against every amiable sentiment of nature, against every remembrance of that which could act upon the conscience. There are many unconverted persons, who would not betray an intimate companion by covering him with kisses; many wicked people that would have remembered the miracles they had seen—perhaps done themselves. Covetousness had been there, it had never been repressed; then Satan suggests to Judas the means of satisfying it. For myself I have no doubt that Iscariot thought that the Lord would escape out of the hands of men, as He had done, when His hour was not yet come: his remorse, when he knew that Jesus was condemned, makes me think it—a remorse which only found other hearts as hard as his own, and indifferent to his misery; an appalling picture of man’s heart under the influence of Satan. Then, almost the final phase of this influence, Satan hardens Judas against all feeling of humanity, and of man towards the

man of his acquaintance, and finishes all by abandoning him, giving him up to despair in the presence of God.

Morally all was over when Judas had taken the morsel that had been dipped: and Jesus charges him to do quickly that which he was doing. The disciples did not know why the Lord said this; they thought of the feast, or of the use which might be made of what was in the purse; but in the heart of the Lord, all the import of this solemn moment is realised. As soon as Judas had gone out, He declares it: “Now is the Son of man glorified.” It is no longer affection, wounded by the treachery of one of His own, that expresses itself in the anguish of His heart; His soul rises, when the fact is there, to the height of the thoughts of God in this solemn event, which stands alone in the history of eternity, and on which all blessing depends, from the beginning, to the new heavens and the new earth. It rises even above the blessings, to the nature of God, and to the relations of God and of Christ, founded on His glorious work. This passage is thus of great importance; the cross makes the glory of the Son of man. He will appear in glory, the Father will subject all things to Him; but it is not this glory that is here in view; it is the Saviour’s moral and personal glory. He who is man, who (although in a miraculous way, so that He was without sin) was, on His mother’s side, of the nature of Adam, has been in suffering, the means of establishing and bringing to light all that is found in God, His glory. God is righteous, holy, and hates sin; God is love: it is impossible to reconcile these characters in any other way, than by the cross. There, where the righteous judgment of God is in exercise against sin, infinite love is manifested towards the sinner. Without the cross, it is impossible to

reconcile these two things, impossible to manifest God such as He is: in it, holiness, righteousness, love, are manifested as a whole; then obedience and love towards the Father were accomplished in man, in circumstances that put them to the test in an absolute manner. Nothing was wanting in this test, either on the part of man, of Satan, or of God Himself. It is in Christ, made sin, that obedience has been perfect; it is in Him, forsaken of God, that His love for God was at its height. The forsaking of man and his hatred, the power of Satan, had been fully realised, so that when He appealed to God, He found no answer, but that in the solitude of His sufferings, He had the occasion of shewing perfection in man, and of bringing out the glory of God Himself in all that God is, the foundation in righteousness, of the blessing of the new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells—a righteousness that has already placed the Son of man, in the glory, divine righteousness that cannot but recognise the value of this work, by setting already at His right hand, the Man who has accomplished it, until all shall be manifested in the ages to come.

Thus the Son of man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him; and God, having been glorified in Him, has glorified Him in Himself, and has not waited for the display of all His glory in the future, but has glorified Him straightway at His right hand (v. 31, 32).

There is found the demonstration of God’s righteousness; that is, in the exaltation of the Lord Jesus as man to the right hand of God, God having withdrawn Him from the world, so that the world should see Him no more, as the way of the tree of life was closed, when man forsook God for sin. But the second Man, the last

Adam, having passed through death, having been made sin, having passed out of the power of the devil and the judgment of God, takes His place in heaven, in the divine glory in righteousness, when the first Adam had gone out of the garden of Eden in sin.

For the moment no one could follow Him. Who could pass through death, Satan's power, and the judgment of God, being made sin before God, and enter beyond it all into glory? It was thus for them as well as for the Jews. For the Jews, it was an outward thing, but looked upon in connection with God's glory and the power of evil; but a thing as impossible for the disciples as for them. The Lord shews His disciples that their strength would be in the love they would have to each other, loving one another as He loved them: this was the new commandment He gave them (v. 34). He was love; He had loved them; His love had been like a strong central stake, which held up all the poles that met around it. He had been the bond of their union; now, this same love in their hearts should bind them together, as poles that supported each other, when the central support should be taken away. In reality, this would be the power of the Holy Ghost who would fill their heart with this divine love of Christ Himself, and would thus make them all one. Their love for one another would be the characteristic proof that they were disciples of Jesus, for He had loved them, and He was shewn out by love in them.

Peter, always ardent, asks Jesus where He was going (v. 36). The Lord answers him that he could not follow Him now, but that he should afterwards, announcing to him his martyrdom. Peter insists: "I will go with thee to prison and to death," "I will lay down my life for thee";

but Jesus said: “The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.”

## Chapter 14

In chapter 14 the Lord presents to His disciples the consolations which were suited to make them accept the revelation He had made to them of His approaching departure.

The first thing that He declares to them, in His grace, is, that if He was going away, it is not to abandon them, but to prepare them a place elsewhere, that is, in His Father’s house. There, there was not room for Him alone (perhaps He alluded to the temple?) but abodes for them also; and then He Himself would come for them, so as to have them with Him where He was Himself. He could not dwell with them down here, but they should be with Him; and He would not send to seek them, but He would come Himself to take them to Himself. Precious and tender love that associated His own with Himself, according to the place they had in His heart, and according to the eternal counsels of the love of God. Instead of the kingdom of an earthly Messiah, they would have the eternal and divine glory of the Son of man in heaven, to be like Him, and with Him. Man having entered there, consequent upon redemption, the place was prepared for them. It was not a question of preparing them for the place (that is the subject of chapter 13), but of preparing the place for them. The presence of their Forerunner, where He was going, accomplished it. The blood made peace according to divine righteousness, the water prepared them to enjoy it. The entrance of Christ left nothing to be done that they might enter; only the co-heirs must be gathered,

and till then, the Lord remains seated on His Father's throne.

The return of the Saviour is therefore the first consolation given them, and it would introduce them, where Jesus was, into the Father's house, being themselves made like Him in glory, instead of His remaining with them down here—which, moreover, was not possible, since all was defiled, and unfit for the Lord's continuance with His own. Jesus will come again, and take us to Himself, that where He is, we may be also (v. 1-3). But there was more. The Lord says, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (v. 4). Thomas objects that they did not know where He was going, how therefore could they know the way? In His answer, Jesus shews them that what they had possessed during His stay upon earth, would furnish an immense blessing when He should have left them. He was going to the Father, and the Father had been revealed in His Person down here. Thus, having seen the Father in Him, they had seen Him to whom He was going, and they knew the way, for in coming to Him, they had found the Father. He was the Way, and, at the same time, the Truth of the thing, and the Life in which it was enjoyed. No one came to the Father but by Him; if the disciples had known Him, they would have known the Father, and from henceforth said He, "Ye know him, and have seen him" (v. 7). Philip says, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us"; for the disciples, although they were attached to Jesus, always had in themselves a reserve of uncertainty. The Lord blames Philip for his want of spiritual perception, after His having been so long with them; for they had not really known Him in His true character of Son, come from the Father, and revealing

the Father. The words that He spoke were not as coming from Himself as man; and the Father, who dwelt in Him, was He who did the works; that which He said, that which He did, revealed the Father. They ought to trust His word, if not, on account of His works; and not only so, but glorified on high He would be the source of greater works than those which He did Himself in His humiliation, for He was going to ascend to His Father. All that they should ask in His name, He would do it, that the Father might be glorified in the Son. He was the Son of the Father; His name should avail for all that they could desire in their service; and the Father, to whom He referred everything, would be glorified in the Son, who would do all that they should ask in His name. His power had no limit: “and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.” In fact, the apostles gave proof of a greater power than the Lord when He was down here. Peter’s shadow healed the sick; one single discourse of his was the means of converting three thousand men, and the napkins, carried to the sick from Paul’s body, drove away the sickness from them, and cast out the evil spirits.

It is well to remark here, that the disciples never did any miracles to save themselves from suffering, or to heal their friends when they were ill. Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus; it was only God’s mercy that healed Epaphroditus. The miracles performed by the apostles were the confirmation of the testimony, of which Christ glorified with the Father was the object and source.

In the next place, obedience would be the proof of love when the Lord should be gone away. This introduces the second principal revelation of this chapter; that is, the effect for them of the presence of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter.

Verses 4-11 had given the revelation of that which Jesus had been for the disciples during His stay upon earth; but the Holy Ghost would teach them more still, and would procure advantages for them that they could not have during the stay of Jesus down here; whilst, at the same time, that which they had possessed by this means, would remain always true, and be understood in quite another manner.

But there is a difference between these two Comforters. To begin with, there was no incarnation in connection with the second; the spiritual power of God was in Him, and the power of the truth, but not an object for the soul. He was characterised as the source of truth and revelation, there where He acted; but He was not presented to the world as an object to be received by it. The world cannot receive Him. The world would not receive the Lord, but He had been presented to it to be received, and He had manifested the Father; He could say of those amongst whom He came, “They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.” As to the Holy Ghost, the world could not receive Him; it did not see Him, neither know Him; He presented the truth, and acted by this means. But He should be given to believers; they should know Him, for He would dwell with them, and not leave them, as He [Jesus] was doing, and He should be in them.

Here also we find the other Comforter, in contrast with the Lord. Jesus was going away at that moment, then He had been with them; but the other Comforter should be in them.

The presence of the Comforter is the grand present fact of Christianity: its basis is the revelation of the Father in

the Son, then the accomplishment of the work of redemption by the Son; but the fact that man in His Person has entered into the divine glory, has given occasion to the descent of the Holy Ghost down here, given to believers to dwell with them and in them, that they may realise the fulness of this redemption, their relationship with the Father, the fact that they are in Christ, and Christ in them, and the heavenly glory where they will be like Him; and that He may lead them across the desert, with spiritual intelligence, and having their conversation in heaven, till they arrive there. The Spirit also gives us to realise the presence of Jesus with us here below. Jesus does not leave us orphans; He comes to us, and manifests Himself to us. Strengthened in our hearts by faith, the joy of His presence makes itself felt to our souls during our pilgrimage below.

Soon the world would see Him no more (ver. 19); His relations with the world were ended, save as Lord of all, but they were not with His own; they would see Him, not yet with their natural eyes, but by faith, and revealed by the Spirit—sight far clearer and more excellent than that which their natural eyes had given them. It was a sight that became identified with the possession of eternal life. Their eyes had seen Him bodily here, but they would have the sight of Jesus glorified, and who had accomplished the work of redemption, and that by the power of the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter. The sight of the life of faith identified itself with a real union with Him, so that if He lived, they should live also; He Himself would be their life. Rather than that they should die, it was necessary that He Himself, such as He is in the glory, should die, and they would have by the presence of the Comforter, the consciousness of being

thus in Him. “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” The disciples ought to have seen the Father in Him, and to have recognised that He was in the Father during His sojourn upon earth, however little intelligent they might have been. Now, in that day, when the Holy Spirit should have come, they would know Jesus as being in the Father (the Father in Him is omitted, because it was no longer a question of His manifestation in Him down here). Thus Jesus would be in the Father in His own deity; but, more, the disciples should know that they themselves were in Him, Jesus, and He in them. After that, the Lord establishes, as in all this part of the Gospel, man’s responsibility, here that of the Christian, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (v. 21). This supposes that we pay attention to what the Lord says: one listens to the voice of divine wisdom, as a child who seeks to please its parents, or a wife her husband, observing the words of the parents or the husband, without even their having the form of a commandment, and knowing what they wish. Thus the Christian attends to the words of Jesus; he is familiar with that which the Lord wills, and desires to do His will. This is the proof of true affection. Now, he who is thus attached in heart to Christ, and obeys Him, shall be loved of the Father, and Christ will come, and will manifest Himself to him. The manifestation of which He speaks here is a manifestation of Himself, and from Him, to the soul which He causes to realise His presence and makes him sensible of it. This is what Jude does not understand; he does not perceive how Jesus could be manifested to His own, without being manifested to the world (v. 22). Alas! it is just what too many Christians do not understand. Jude, too, was only thinking of some

outward manifestation, of which the world could necessarily take knowledge; but the Lord was speaking of a manifestation such as we have just shewn, adding still something more permanent; that is, that if any one loved Jesus, he would keep, not only His commandments, but His words, so that the Father would love him, and that the Father and Son would come, and make their abode in him (v. 24).

We see everywhere here responsibility. It is not sovereign grace which first loves the poor sinner: here the Father loves the soul which shews its affection for the Saviour in keeping His words. It is fatherly government, the satisfaction of the Father's heart because the Son is honoured and obeyed. "If a man love me, he will keep my word," and then—precious words —"my Father will love him, and we will make our abode with him." The Father and the Son come to dwell in the loved person; and this does not take place merely by the Holy Ghost, as every divine activity; but by the Spirit we enjoy the presence of the Father, and of the Son, their dwelling with us; and the Spirit does not leave us, so that we enjoy constantly in our hearts the presence of the Father and the Son. The kind of communion, of the realisation of the presence of the Father and the Son, is of all-importance, and gives an ineffable repose and joy. We shall dwell in the Father's house, and we shall find there the Son in glory; but, till then, the Father and the Son come, and reveal themselves in us, and make their abode in us. All is done by the Spirit, but it is the presence of the Father and the Son that makes their presence felt in this character of Father and of Son; and the Son is Jesus, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. The Son had revealed the Father, for him who had eyes

to see; and now the Holy Ghost makes us enjoy the presence of the Father and Son, but “in us,” if we keep the Saviour’s words.

We may remark that the scripture employs two different words here: “commandments” and “word.” Both have their importance, in that the first speaks of authority and obedience, the second of attention to what the Lord says, each having thus a special bearing. To the soul that has the commandments and keeps them, the Lord manifests Himself, and it is the fruit of obedience; but the blessedness of the abiding of the Father and Son in the heart, is the fruit of the word of Jesus, exercising its rightful influence in the heart. Now he that does not love Him, he, whose heart is not governed by this personal affection, does not keep the words of Jesus; and the word that they heard was not their Master’s word, as of a man, of a teacher who spoke on his own account, but the word of the Father who had sent Jesus. All the work of grace is indeed the Father’s work, but the Son’s work also, the Spirit having His place in it in immediate operation in the soul. Thus the miracles of Jesus were really His own works, but it was by the Spirit of God He cast out demons; the Father also, who dwelt in Him, did the works. Here the Spirit would teach the disciples and would call to their remembrance that which Jesus had said to them; but that which Jesus had said to them was from the Father; He spoke the words of God, for the Spirit was not given by measure. Here again we find the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

We have seen that the Father and Son make their abode in those who keep Christ’s word; but also it is by the Holy Ghost that this abiding is realised, not that we should not feel the presence of the Father and Son, but

to make us feel it. It is a lasting thing, not that our thoughts are always there, that cannot be, but the consciousness and influence of their presence are always there. I think of working at something which my father, according to the flesh, wishes; but if he is there, in thinking of the thing, the consciousness and influence of his presence will always make themselves felt.

To the things which He had just said to them, and which terminate this part of His discourse, the Lord adds the precious revelation, that the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in His name, should teach the disciples all things, and should bring to their remembrance that which He had said to them. We enjoy every day the effect of this precious promise.

There are here other points of great value which is it important to notice.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are not separated in this work of blessing. The Holy Ghost comes to communicate all, but it is the Father that in His love, sends Him: but He sends Him in the Son’s name, for His glory, and as Mediator in grace, in virtue of the redemption He has accomplished. The Holy Ghost should make the disciples realise according to the thoughts of the Father, all that had happened, all that manifested God’s ways in grace during the Son’s stay here below. This is what we find in the Gospels, which give us, not a human recital of things that come to the mind, but the communication (according to divine intelligence, and according to God’s intention in the facts) of that which happened in the life of Jesus; for there is a divine intention in the Gospel recitals.

Finally, if the Lord leaves His own, He leaves them peace, which He could not have done had He remained with them, for peace would not have been made; but He defines this peace in a way that gives it a perfection which the fact of the purifying of the conscience would not have procured for them. That indeed took place by His blood: the disciples would be perfect as to the conscience. His conscience was always perfect; ours is made perfect by His blood. But, with the exception of the cross, and the anticipation of the cross, the heart of Jesus was ever with God. Feeling everything in love, nothing distracted Him, nor weakened His communion with His Father. Perfect obedience and confidence maintained in Him a peace which flowed from a walk with God, and from communion with His Father that never belied itself. The current of the life that He lived on the part of the Father was uninterrupted: there were no breakers in the life of Jesus. The difficulties He met with were but the occasion of the shewing forth of divine life in the heart of a man, of the peace which the consciousness of being always with God gave Him. Thus His words and actions were words and actions that came directly from God, in the circumstances in which He found Himself as man. A perfect sensibility, a perfect measure and characterising in His mind of all that acted upon Him, gave occasion to the answer, to that which the presence of God and the divine impulse produced in man. What could trouble the peace of Jesus? When it was a question of being made sin, and of bearing our sins before God, it was another thing; because that was taking place, the answer of God in His soul was not the effect of His perfect and blessed presence, but the being forsaken, according to the perfect opposition of His

nature to sin. But here we approach sufferings that no one can fathom.

The Lord does not give as we give anything which consequently we do not possess any longer; He brings us into the enjoyment of all that He Himself enjoys: the glory, the Father's love, His joy. He keeps back nothing for Himself, which is reserved to Himself, and in which we have not part.

The verses that close the chapter contain a touching expression of the manner in which the heart of Jesus expects the affection of His own. "If ye had loved me, ye would have rejoiced that I go to the Father" (v. 28). If you think of yourselves, it is quite natural that you should be troubled; but if you could think of Me, it would have been your joy to think that I leave this world of sorrow and suffering to go to the Father, in taking again My glory and entering again into the land of holiness and peace, where all My rights are recognised. Thus the Lord places Himself near us, and desires that we should think of His happiness. What Christian is there that does not rejoice at the thought of His glory?

Jesus can still speak, while making His way towards Gethsemane, of what His own had had in Him, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost, but in reality, His communications in their midst were at an end. The prince of this world was coming: it is this character that Jesus now gives to Satan. The disciples were fled in fear; all the rest of the world united together cheerfully to drive out of it the Son of God, come in grace; they had seen and hated both Him and His Father.

It is not all that man has sinned. After the sin, God came in; God worked in a world too evil to be any longer

borne with. The promise had been given to Abraham, called from the midst of the idolatry which overran all; the law was given; the prophets were sent; last of all the Son came, healing all those who were under the yoke of Satan (the strong man having been bound, his victims were delivered)—the Son, God's last resource for putting man's heart to the proof, to see if that even could produce in him any return towards God, and discover any good that might have remained there hidden in the midst of the evil. But God was manifested there; and if the effects of sin disappeared by His means, the presence of Jesus awakened the enmity of the flesh, and Satan's power took possession of the world, or rather shewed that Satan was its prince. Up to that time —that is, until all the means that God could employ to reclaim men had been exhausted, this title of "Prince of the world "had not been given him; but when He of whom God had said, I have yet My Son, had been rejected, Satan was called by this terrible title. There was One, One only, in the world who was not under this power of Satan, One only in whom the prince of this world had nothing, One only who was not of the world, One only, who though truly a man in the world, and who passed through all its temptations, sin apart, had nothing whatever in Him, either before or after, that gave Satan a right over Him, even in death which now He was going to meet. Neither in His walk, nor in His Person was there anything whatever that exposed Him to the enemy. Satan had tried, he had used the power of death to hinder Jesus from obeying unto the end, but his efforts had been vain. The death of Jesus was the effect of obedience, and of His love for the Father. "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" (v. 30, 31). That which brought death for Him, was not sin in Him, or by Him, but it was His perfect obedience and His love for His Father. Jesus warns His own of it beforehand, so that, knowing it, their faith should not be shaken by it.

## Chapter 15

The Lord had then spoken to His disciples of His Person, above all dispensations, and of their place in Him when the Holy Ghost should have come down, and He had told them how He would make Himself known to them when afar, adding that He left them peace, even the peace He Himself possessed. Now, in chapter 15, He comes to the truth of His position down here in contrast with Judaism, of their position in relation to His, of their service following upon this position; then of the testimony rendered by the Holy Spirit of promise to the glory into which He was entering on high; and of their testimony as eye witnesses of that which He had been down here.

Judaism is thus entirely set aside, and its place taken by Christ Himself. This is what has happened with regard to all that God had established: the first man himself has been replaced before God by the second; the priesthood of Aaron by that of Christ; the king, son of David; Israel the servant (Isaiah 49:1), by the Christ (v. 5); even the earthly tabernacle by the true heavenly tabernacle, as well as all its service. Thus here, Israel was not the true vine, although it had been transplanted as God's vine out of Egypt into Canaan; Psa. 80:8-16. Christ was upon earth the true vine of God, the disciples were the branches. They still thought that Israel was God's vine, and Christ the long-expected Messiah, the principal branch. But it was not so; Jesus was the vine, they were

the branches; His Father, the husbandman. And they were already clean through the word He had spoken to them. The passage has occasioned difficulties to many souls, because they have applied these words to the church,44 but the union of the church with Christ takes place when He is glorified on high, and then we are complete in Him. There it is no question of bearing fruit, nor of being pruned, but as it is said in 1 John 4:17: “As he is, so are we in this world.” In our chapter, Jesus is the true vine upon earth; and there, although Christ could declare them to be clean, their responsibility is developed, in order that they may bear fruit. They were already clean by the word He had spoken to them.

The union which is in question here is association with Him as disciples. He no doubt knew them, but they are looked at as being in a position of responsibility. It is a question of fruit-bearing; if a branch did not bear any, the Father removed it entirely; if it bore fruit, He purified it, that it should bear more. Not that it was Judaism, far from that; it is Christ, on the contrary, who takes its place. We see this more than once in the word. Thus in Isaiah 49, Christ is the true servant in place of Israel. He is the Son called out of Egypt, a position that Israel occupied: “Let my son go”; Jehovah said by Moses. In the same way, He is the true vine. Consequently, the Father is introduced: He is the husbandman. Thus we find the true moral position that the disciples occupy, as well as the important principles upon which it is founded, but which are connected with that which we have already found as characterising this Gospel. That which had cleansed the disciples was the word that Jesus had spoken to them; but this cleansing is the same as the Father’s. The Father can use the

pruning knife. He does so evidently as to the branches that do not bear fruit; He does so as to those that bear it.

Now, all this is in connection with the revelation of the Father by the Son. The word that He had spoken to His disciples, was not the revelation of the Son glorified, by the Holy Ghost, but of the Father by the Son. It was this entirely new things; not what man ought to be according to the law, but what Christ was: grace and truth come by Jesus Christ. It was the communication of that which was divine, the words of God realised in the life of a man. The words of Christ were Himself (chap. 8:25); but they were the words of God (chap. 3:34), although of a man, by the Spirit without measure; they were of God, revealing the Father in sovereign grace by the Son, sent according to that grace. (Compare chap. 14:11.) It was in the name of holy Father that the Lord kept them during His stay down here: now the Father Himself becomes the husbandman.

Now this chapter (except the last verses) does not speak of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, but of that of the disciples (with the help of the Holy Ghost, chap. 14:25); and it is a testimony, not to His glory on high and the consequences which follow from it, but to that which He had been, and to what He had revealed being down here, to the subjective state of the divine life in a man in this world. This is what the Gospels essentially present to us; the epistles, in general, have the glory as a starting-point.

Thus the first three verses give the position as to detail: then come the exhortations founded upon this. The first, is to abide in Him. Let us remark here that it is always

the side of man's responsibility that comes first. It is not: "I will abide in you, and you will be able thus to abide in me"; but "Abide in me, and I in you." The second thing is the effect of the first: there is no verb in the second part of the phrase; it is not that which He would do, but the consequence, the effect stated. If a soul dwells in Christ, Christ dwells in that soul. Now a soul dwells in Christ, when it lives in uninterrupted dependence upon Him, and assiduously seeks to realise that which is in Him, that which His presence gives to us, for He is the truth of all that is come to us from the Father, and one lives in it in dwelling in Him. That which is in Him is communicated to us, as the sap flows from the vine into the branches. All comes from Him, but there is activity in the soul to cleave to Him, and it is thus that fruit is produced in the branch. Now we do not dwell in Christ that there may be fruit, but fruit is produced because we dwell in Christ. We dwell in Christ in the consciousness that we can do nothing without Him, but it is for the love of Christ. This is the first exhortation, and the first statement of that which we have to do.

In the sixth verse, He says no longer "you"; but "If a man," for He knew them, although this be not the subject treated in the passage, yet once one is really in Christ, one is there for ever. Here, also, it is as in chapter 13, "Ye are clean"; then He adds: "but not all"; for Judas was still there. If a man did not cleave to Christ, even though associated with Him by profession, he was cut off as a branch to wither and be thrown into the fire. There is another very important principle found in verse 7. If the disciples dwelt in Him, and His words dwelt in them, they should have at command the power of the Lord without limit. Always in the spirit of

dependence, it is true, they should ask what they would. This is the true limit of answers to prayer. The request is produced in a heart formed by the Saviour's words, and according to the desires created by these words, that is to say, of God Himself who should dwell in the heart. We never find that the apostles healed, or prayed for the healing of persons who were dear to them, although it be perfectly lawful in such a case to present our requests to God. But Paul says: "I have left Trophimus sick at Miletus." And again: "Epaphroditus was sick, very near to death, but God had mercy on him." The works of power they accomplished, had the confirmation of the word as their aim; but it was an immense privilege, in their work of faith, to be assured of the intervention of God when they should ask for it, and that, when the wisdom of God had formed their thoughts, His power should add [to it] His efficacious working. Christ is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

It will be asked how far we can apply this now. I do not expect miracles, I do not think that we ought to have them, except lying miracles from Satan; but I believe that if we dwell in Christ, and His words form the heart, if we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God, then when we find ourselves in the conflicts of faith, God gives faith for the circumstances of the service. He will answer to the faith given, and will hear us, He who disposes of all by means unknown to us, of all hearts—of the unrighteous as well as of those of the righteous. But it is important for us (first, so as not to make mistakes; and secondly, to seize the thoughts of God in all their import) to understand the true limits of this promise. God will never fail of His promise. The

fulfilment of the promise is sure for faith, but the words of the Saviour form the thought of faith to which the promise answers. It is thus the Father should be glorified, in that they should bear much fruit—fruit of souls saved by their means, by the revelation of the Father in the Son, that the words of Jesus, words of God in grace, should communicate to them.

Then there comes another precious side of these exhortations: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.” This is in connection with obedience: but the declaration is one of infinite grace. The Father had loved the Son, Jesus, in His course down here; He had loved Him according to the perfection of divine love, but as man in this world. So Christ had loved them: it was the love of a divine Person, for a man who perfectly accomplished all His will with an absolute devotedness, but it was also a love of communion, and that when He was in antagonism with evil. In the same manner Christ had loved them also. They were to dwell in this love. It is constancy in their relations with Christ, that is the great point in all the chapter. They were to continue in the realisation of this love, truly divine but which yet adapted itself to their human state, and thus it should be if they walked in the path where Christ had walked. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”

It is not here a question of the Father’s eternal love for the Son, nor of the unchangeable love that God bears to His children, but of the path in which these should enjoy divine love. Jesus, as man here below, never got out of the enjoyment of that love of the Father. His obedience had been absolute and perfect, and no cloud had ever

found place between His soul and His Father. His life was a life of perfect obedience and of communion. They should keep His commandments, and thus they should dwell in His love, even as He dwelt in the Father's love. He told it them in order that His joy, the joy He had possessed down here, might abide in them, and that their joy should be full. Here it is Christ's love in a direct way; we are in contact with the Vine, not with the Mediator; with Him in whom we are, not with the Father. It is a human love, although divine, a love consequently full of sympathy, which comes in in all the details of human life, and of the service of ministry. This is what took place at the time of His sojourn here below. It was impossible for the Father to forget Christ one moment in His service down here. He took knowledge of it; He was there. It is the same thing with Christ towards us, as far as we keep His commandments.

But His first commandment is that this kind of love should be realised amongst themselves also. Perfect communion of love with one another; but superior (in that this love was divine) to all the infirmities that might weaken it, so that they were but the occasion for the exercise of this love; still that which should characterise it was the bond which made them all one by its means; the love was mutual, in that Christ was all for each, and that, each one living in dependence and obedience, self-love disappeared. As being the branches, each one drew everything from the vine; Christ's words were the source of all the thoughts of the heart, in the consciousness of His perfect love.

Now if His life had been the continual expression of this love, His death was still more so. He could not have greater love than to die for them. We must notice here

that it is not the love of God to poor sinners, a love purely divine and sovereign, but the love of Christ for His friends. Neither is it Christ, who is here the Friend, but the disciples who are His friends, those in whom He has confidence: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” We communicate to a friend all that we have upon the heart, because we count upon the interest he bears to us. Christ had communicated to the disciples all that He had heard from the Father. There is the action of the human mediator, the vine with the branches. It is important to remark that He does not here place His disciples in His own relationship with the Father— that will be developed later on—but He communicated to them as from Himself all that He enjoyed. The relationship was with Himself, as He personally had been in it with the Father down here. It is in this relationship of intimacy in which He was with them, faithful in keeping His words, that He looks upon them when He lays down His life for them.

Their relationship with Christ was that of those sent by Him, as He had been by His Father. Jesus had chosen and sent them, in order that they might bear fruit in their work, and that this fruit might be lasting—of which we are the blessed result today; but being sent thus by Christ, the Father, so to speak, was pledged to give all that was necessary for the work, so that all that they should ask the Father in the Saviour’s name, the Father would give them. This places the twelve in their position as apostles, sent by the Lord, the Mediator, in the great work of salvation—the vine from which the branches drew all their strength—under the faithful care of the Sovereign Husbandman. Such is the moral position in which the Lord places them; it is union in love. They

form a body of workmen apart, united to Him as to the vine, in order to bear fruit; but now the fruit is borne by the branches, and not by the vine.

The bond between them should be love; but what should characterise the relationship in which they should find themselves with the world? The world would hate them. The world had hated their Master; they had seen and known Him. Christ was not of the world, but He had been in the world, bearing witness, in His life and by His words, to that which the world was as seen in the light of God. If the disciples had been of the world, the world would have loved them, but because they were not of it, although they were in it, the world would hate them. All their ways, their walk, their motives were different from those of the world. It was a company of men apart: the world is very susceptible; its happiness is not real; its glory is false and transitory: all there is hollow, and will not bear a little reflection. The world will allow you to say this in maxims and proverbs, but that there should be men whose lives tell constantly the truth with regard to the state of the world that surrounds us, that is what is insupportable. The relationship and connections of the disciples with the world were to be the same as those of the Saviour; the branches would be treated as the vine had been. But it is on account of the name of Christ that these things would happen, fruit of this hatred, because they had not known Him who had sent Him. It was always the manifestation of God in Christ, of the Father in grace, in Jesus, that had awakened this hatred and had given it its true character.

This is the grave and terrible question that has been raised. God the Father presented in grace to men, and especially to Israel, where all His promises and oracles

had been deposited, but God presented to men in Jesus, the word of God in grace; otherwise their state would not have been manifested as being a state of sin, and nothing else, a state of hatred against God, come into their midst full of goodness. If there had been any good in man that the presence of Jesus could have awakened, faults and grave sins might have been committed, but there would have been also remedy and forgiveness, for the bottom once reached would have been good. But now there was no longer any cloak for their sin. Their state was that of absolute sin in the will. In hating Jesus they had hated the Father, for Jesus manifested Him. His words were the words of God, of the Father; and more than this, He had given the clearest proofs of the revelation of the Father in Him. There never had been any like them; for not only was divine power shewn even in raising the dead, and in giving power to others to perform the same works, but His miracles were acts of goodness. Divine love was displayed in them, and united itself with the power whilst directing it. Thus they had seen and hated both the Father and the Son.

But terrible as that was, and it was fatal and final for man (save sovereign grace that created him anew), it was but that which was written in their law: “They hated me without a cause”; terrible judgment given upon man, such as he is. But it is sweet and beautiful to see that the sin of man does not stop the current of the grace of God. The Lord continues thus: “But when the Comforter shall come whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me. And ye also shall bear witness; because ye are with me from the beginning.” Another order of things was necessary; man dead and risen, man

in heaven even, redemption accomplished, the Holy Ghost come. This hatred of man would only accomplish that. Then the Holy Ghost would communicate to them the heavenly glory of the Son of man, the result of His rejection. Proceeding from the Father, sent by the glorified Son of man, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter come down here, would bear witness to this Son of man, to Him who had been rejected, perfect here below, but now in heavenly glory. They also should bear witness, having been with Him from the beginning of His public ministry down here. The same Comforter should be their power, to make them competent for this (chap. 14:26), but they would bear testimony as eye-witnesses of His life of suffering.

## Chapter 16

Now the Lord goes on to speak with them, not of the position they had enjoyed with Him upon earth, adding promises with regard to the Holy Ghost, but of what was about to take place, of the presence of the Comforter, and of the testimony He would bear. He had spoken of Him indeed in connection with the relations in which they should be with the Father: there this Comforter replaces Him, and it is the Father that sends Him.

Although the Lord comes spiritually to reveal Himself to them, and, with the Father, to comfort and strengthen them in making their abode with them in chapter 14, the Holy Ghost rather takes the place of the Lord. In chapter 15 the Saviour speaks of the testimony that the Comforter would bear. The apostles, with His help, should bear testimony to what Jesus had been down here. They could not be eye-witnesses of what He is above. The testimony they would have to bear to His life

down here, should be of a much more living character, more rich than a pure revelation from on high would have been, on account of the relations they had found themselves in with Him, all unintelligent as they had been. But it was a part of His life down here not to be understood by any one.

The testimony they have given to us is indeed that of the Holy Ghost (chap. 14:26), who has chosen the incidents suitable to communicate the true character of the Saviour, the divine life in Him. But the grace which manifested itself in Him was exercised every day towards them, or at least in the midst of them. Always Himself, in a life that He lived on account of the Father, He adapted Himself nevertheless (and could do it because His life was inseparable from the Father) to all the weakness of the disciples, to all that grace required from Him. It was not purely and simply a divine testimony, but as His own Person, never losing its divine perfection. His unalterable purity took all the colours that the circumstances which surrounded Him gave to this life in His grace. The account is a wholly divine account, but which, in that which it relates, expresses itself, by human hearts who have passed through it. That which Christ is on high would not be expressed thus. There all is perfect, His personal glory is accomplished. Patient gentleness, unshaken firmness, divine wisdom in the midst of evil, and of adversaries, are no longer in place; it is the glory that is revealed. And who shall reveal it, if not He who came from it, and who is in it?

In chapter 14 the Father sends the Holy Ghost in the name of Jesus, and gives us the consciousness of our place before Himself, as sons with the Son. Here, it is Christ, the Son of man, who sends Him from the Father,

from whom the Holy Ghost proceeds, and He bears witness to Christ Himself. He is the “Spirit of truth,” a purely divine testimony of the things that are above; the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. The testimony borne to the life of Christ down here, is a testimony fully divine, but that is borne through the circumstances through which Jesus passed, and by persons who were themselves in them, so that we may know what God was in the midst of fallen humanity; immense grace that awakens all the affections of a heart taught by the Holy Ghost, and engrosses it.45 But whatever might be the privileges of which they were going to partake by the Holy Ghost’s presence, they would have to undergo at the same time the consequences of their Master’s rejection, a rejection which was not merely that of an enlightened reformer who was not liked, but the expression of the enmity of man’s heart against God, and against God manifested in goodness. He was going on high, and was going to make them partakers of the Spirit; they remained down here, furnished no doubt, with that spiritual power up to the point of doing miracles, which would bear testimony to the source whence they came; but the continuance of the testimony and of the power, would bring against them the same hostility which had been manifested against Jesus. If they had called the Master of the house Beelzebub, much more would they treat those of the household in the same way.

And more, it was a religious hatred. If a religion adapts itself to the world, and costs the selfish principle nothing, it is held to; one prides oneself upon it still more if, by the truth that is recognised, one can raise oneself above others. Now this hatred, whilst

recognising indeed its object—that is, the revelation of God in this world—was an ignorant hatred, especially for the multitudes. The hatred of the leaders was more moral, more positively diabolical, as the Lord had said to them. (chap. 8). The masses were jealous for their religion, as Paul acknowledged (Acts 22:3); the leaders detested that which was manifested, because it was the light. Terrible state! But what can a state be that opposes itself with a resolute will, with animosity, to such a Saviour? The Lord says that he who should kill His disciples would think to do God service. It is what Saul of Tarsus was doing. But the leaders, the Lord said, "had both seen and hated both me and my Father."

But here some practical truths come out of what is said. It is by the revelation of a new truth that the heart is exercised and tested; I say new, at least for the heart that finds it. One gains credit by an old truth; the Jews believed in one only true God, and they were quite right. It was a privilege, a moral advantage of immense bearing. In truth, there was but that God; as far as there was reality in Paganism, the gods of the pagans were demons. But, although the pious Jew acknowledged this true God, obeyed Him and trusted in Him, it was the glory of the nation to have this God for God, and the Jew without piety boasted also in Him. But alas! he saw the power that bore witness to God's presence, elsewhere than in the temple, its earthly abode. The house, fine as it was, was empty; and a double hatred broke out against that which was the proof of it. God had brought in quite a new thing; the Father had sent the Son in grace, and had manifested Himself in Him, and this grace could not be limited to a Jew alone. It penetrated as light to the bottom of the heart of man, whether Jew

or Gentile. The one and the other were sinners. The Jew had manifested it in the rejection of this Son, and sovereign grace extended itself to the Gentiles. The Jewish sinner had just as much need of it; the partition wall had fallen down at the cross. It was God and man now, not Jew and Gentile. In vain God had recognised the privileges of the Jews; in vain had He sent His Son, according to the promises, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; Israel would have none of it; they desired their own glory. From this comes that for them, the Jews, he who would destroy such a testimony, the testimony of an infinite grace, of the Father sending the Son into the world, of grace exercised in salvation towards sinners, Jews or Gentiles—he who would destroy it, I say, would do God service. He would think to render service to God, to his own God, the God who made his glory. As to the Father and Son, he did not know them; this was the new truth that put to the proof the state of his heart. A good Protestant can boast in rejecting the deification of the host, and in believing in justification by faith as a dogma: that is his glory as a Protestant. But where is his soul as to the presence of the Holy Ghost, and the expectation of the Saviour? New truths always confirm the old, judging at the same time superstitions; but faith in the old, which make our own glory, is not a touchstone for the state of soul, although we are to maintain them carefully.

There is another remark of the Saviour which merits our particular attention. It is simple, but exposes the state of our souls. “Now,” He says, “I go unto him that hath sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? “Sorrow had filled their heart. It was very natural, and in a certain sense very right. They felt the present and

actual effect of the departure of Jesus. This touched them very closely, but they judged of the circumstances entirely in connection with themselves. They had given up all for the Lord, and they were going to lose Him; and not only that, but they must give up all, that for them was connected with His presence down here; all their Jewish hopes were fading away. They felt the effect of the circumstances upon themselves, but did not think of the purposes of God which were being accomplished in those circumstances, for the Son of God was not going out of this world by an accident. It is the same thing in our most minute circumstances: not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. That which troubled them was in reality the work of redemption. Moreover, that which constitutes our cross in this world answers to glory and happiness in the other. Preoccupation with the circumstances, hid from them heavenly things, and the glory into which the Lamb was entering.

But this remark introduces, not the heavenly glory of the Lord—though what He says depends on it—but the consequence for them down here, which is what should occupy us now. It is the coming down here of the Comforter, of the Paraclete. His presence in this world should have for its object to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is not the question here of demonstrating to a man’s conscience the sins of which he is guilty, but of a testimony as to the state of the world, and that by the very presence of the Holy Spirit, though He bore it also to men. Sin had been manifested for a long time in the world; the law had been transgressed; but now God Himself was come in grace. All His perfections, His goodness, and His power, which were in exercise to deliver from the effects of sin,

had been manifested in this world, and all in grace towards men, with a patience which remained perfect to the end; and man would not have God. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; but man would none of it. This is sin: not the conviction of disorderly lusts, nor of transgressions against God's law, but the final and formal rejection of God Himself. The Holy Ghost would not have been there if that had not taken place. Moreover, we have the solemn spectacle of the only righteous One, who had glorified God in everything, and had been obedient to Him in every trial, abandoned by God, when, persecuted by men, He appealed to Him, and all is over for the world. No righteousness is seen, except in the judgment of sin in the Person of Him who had not known sin, but who had been made sin before God, having offered Himself to God for that, that God might be glorified in it.

Where can we seek for righteousness down here? Not in the rejection of God by man, not in the forsaking of the righteous One by God. Where then look for it? On high. The Man Christ, in suffering thus, had perfectly glorified God in all that He is—righteousness against sin, love, majesty, truth. He gave Himself up for that. And righteousness is found in that He who gave Himself to glorify God is upon the Father's throne, seated at the right hand of God;46 of which the presence of the Holy Ghost was the witness, with this terrible consequence, that as Saviour in goodness and in grace, the world would see Him no more. Thus He said: "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man seated at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven": but this will be in judgment. Supreme and terrible moment for this world

truly, although grace gathers many out of it for the heavenly glory, and though a remnant of the Jews should enjoy, by the same grace and in virtue of the same sacrifice, the effect of the promises to which the nation has lost all right, in rejecting the Person of Him in whom the promises are accomplished.

But although the will and lusts of men, their hatred against the light, and enmity against God, made them responsible for this crime, who was it that directed them, and concentrated their animosity on one single point? Who was it that induced the haughty indifference and the cruelty of a Pilate, warned and alarmed as he was, to connect himself, for the rejection of the Son of God, with the inconceivable hatred of the leaders of the people filled with jealousy, and the empty prejudices of the multitude? Who was it that united them to be co-partners in this crime? It was the devil. He is the prince of this world, shewn and declared to be such in the death of the Saviour by the hand of man, but judged by that very fact. He who ruled the world, its prince, shewed himself such in the death of Him who was the Son of God come in grace. Before and after, he could excite passions, entice men’s lusts, produce wars, stir up the wrongs of one against another, provide for the corrupt desires of the heart; but all this was selfish and partial. But when the Son was there, he could join all together, those who hated and despised each other, against this one object—God manifested in goodness.

The prince of this world is the adversary of God. The moment had not yet come for the judgment of this world, but its judgment was certain, for its prince, he who ruled it entirely, was Satan, the adversary of God, as the cross of Jesus shewed it. Now the presence of the

Holy Ghost was the proof, not only that this Jesus was recognised of God as His Son, but that, as Son of man, He was glorified at God's right hand. In fact this is the testimony of Peter, that is, of the Spirit, in Acts 2. The Holy Ghost would not have been in the world, if that had not been the case. The rupture between the world and God was complete and final: a solemn truth not sufficiently considered. The question that God puts to the world is: "Where is My Son; what hast thou done with Him?"

But is not this presence of the Spirit an advantage, a better thing for the world? Is it not a more blessed relationship than all that has preceded? Blessed be God! sovereign grace is in exercise toward the world in virtue of the death of Christ; but, except His sovereign rights, God has no relationship with the world. The Holy Ghost is amongst the saints and in the saints, but as we have read, the world cannot receive Him: He is given to believers. Between the rejection and the return of Christ, He bears witness to the grace manifested in the death of Jesus, and to the glory in which Christ is, to bring those who believe in Him into a heavenly association with the last Adam, delivering them from this present evil world. And it remains ever true, that "if any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"; and that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God." Now these new relationships are maintained by the Spirit in these earthen vessels; later on, those who possess this Spirit shall be glorified with the Lord Himself. Later still, when the judgment shall have been executed, this same grace towards man will establish the Lord, according to what is due to Him, and according to the eternal counsels of God, over a blessed

world, where the enemy's power will not be exercised. But this is not our subject here.

Now it is with the last Adam who is from heaven, with the glorified Son of man, we have to do. That which exists is a complete rupture between the world and God, and a heavenly Christ who has accomplished redemption. But the testimony that the Holy Ghost bears, the truth of which He is the proof, is twofold, and divides itself here. What we have gone through is the testimony that His presence down here bears with regard to the world; that which follows is what He should do for the disciples amongst whom He was found.

What a solemn judgment is that that has just been before us, coming from the mouth of the Lord Himself! The whole world lying in sin by its refusal to receive the Saviour come in grace; righteousness according to God not to be found save on the throne on high, where it had placed Him whom the world had rejected, and in that the world would see Him no more as such; finally, if the execution of judgment was still deferred, this last was not the less certain, for he who was in possession of the world, had shewn that he was the adversary of God, in leading on the world that he had subjected to himself, to crucify the Lord.

But with regard to the disciples, the Spirit would reveal the truth fully to them, and lead their minds into the knowledge of all the truth. The truth is the manner in which God regards all things, and what He reveals of Himself, of His own thoughts, and of His own counsels. Now Christ is the expression of it on the positive side, as being God manifested to man, and Man perfect before God. Being the light, He manifests all that is not

according to God's thoughts. The veil too, being rent, and Christ having entered into heaven as Man, and seated at God's right hand, that which was not within the province of human knowledge, "that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," the Spirit reveals, and He reveals even the deepest things of God. All, from God's eternal throne down to hades, and from hades up to the throne of God, and redemption which is connected with it, all is disclosed. And it is in Christ that all this revelation is made to us; but also, all that is revealed on God's part belongs to Him. "All that the Father hath is mine," He says; and it is not only that which is of God, as God, as creation for example, but all that which, in the counsels of grace, forms the new creation in relationship with the Father; that belongs to Him.

Thus the Holy Spirit would take of what was of Christ and shew it to the disciples, and this was all that the Father possessed. Grace and truth were come in Christ into the midst of the old creation. Man refused this grace, and rejected this truth, but now God would communicate to those who should believe in Christ the new things that were in His counsels, of which Christ was the centre and the fulness.

Into what a glorious scene we are here introduced, a scene which replaces that which the disciples were losing by the death of the Messiah! All the glory which belongs to the Person of the Son, whether as the One in whom all the counsels of God are concentrated, or as to what He is in Himself, is fully revealed. If, in that which we have first gone through, we have found the terrible but just judgment of the world, what a glorious scene, I repeat, opens itself here in the revelations which the Holy Ghost communicates relative to this new creation,

of which the second Man is the centre, He, the Son of God who reveals the Father—another world, where all that is in the Father and of the Father is revealed.

But this involved the death and resurrection of Christ, the end of all connection with the old creation, and a new state of man for the new. Now the glory of this new creation was not yet revealed, nor even established objectively; but the state of man subjectively, a state immortal, pure, spiritual even as to the body, was realised in the resurrection, even while the external glory was still wanting. The new and eternal thing existed in the Person of Christ, and as to Him personally, it was realised in that He was going to His Father, the source of all, "the Father of glory"—as it is said.

Now this new state of man was familiarly manifested to the disciples, during the forty days that the Lord passed upon earth after His resurrection, before He ascended to heaven. The return of the Saviour, when He shall come back in His glory, will be the moment when His dominion will be established over all things, when God will put them all under His feet, with an authority and power that He will make use of to subject them to Himself. Now that of which we speak, whether with regard to the state of man, or relative to the glory, is evidently something more than the presence of the Holy Ghost, precious as that is, and it is that which now occupies the Lord. The Holy Ghost was to be given to the disciples, but more than this, He should see them again. No doubt they would see Him, when He will return in glory, but then it will be no longer a question of a testimony to render. Before that time they should see Him for a little while, for He would then go to His Father. This was the introduction of the disciples into

the realisation of that new state which Christ inaugurated by His resurrection, Son of God in power. They should see the second Man beyond death, and be in living communication with Him. It was not the revelation of the glorious things of the new creation by the Holy Ghost; this revelation was going to be given to them: it was Christ Himself, the Christ they had known during the days of His flesh. “Handle me,” He said, “and see that it is I myself.” Touching and precious word! It was He whom they had known and accompanied every day and all day, who had borne with their infirmities, sustained their faith and encouraged their hearts; it was the same Jesus who shewed Himself as familiarly with them as before, though in quite another state. He shewed Himself, said Peter, “not to all the people, but to us, who did eat and drink with him, after that he was raised from the dead.” It was the same Christ, but what is of all importance, the basis of all for us, it was Christ beyond death, the power of Satan, the judgment of God, and sin; He who had been made sin for us, by whom our sins had been borne and put away, that God might remember them no more. We see here the hnk between Jesus, known in His humiliation in our midst in grace, and man in his new state, according to the counsels of God, a state in which He could no more be subjected to death, nor put to the proof.

The Holy Ghost is the blessed source of our right affections, but He cannot, like Jesus, be the object of them. As God, we love Him; but, we know, He was not made flesh for us, He did not die for us, we cannot be united to Him. We cannot say of Him as of the precious Saviour: “He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; wherefore He is not ashamed to call them

brethren." It is no question of preference or of comparison; it would be folly to speak thus of the divine Persons; but the Holy Ghost, as to His Person, has not placed Himself in the intimacy into which Jesus has entered with us; a Man who calls His own His "friends," who is indeed the Son of God and with power, but who is a Man and a Man for ever; the same who has been in our midst as He who served.

These words then (ver. 16, etc.), although their full and entire accomplishment should only take place when Christ returns, refer to events of all importance, which, in His death and resurrection, shewed, in a characteristic way, what He was doing and who He was. First of all, He was going to leave His own, and to put an end by His death, to all the relations of God with Israel and with man: "A little while and ye shall not see me"—He was going to die. "And again a little while and ye shall see me." He was not going to stay like other men in the dust of the tomb; He would be with them again. But once more they should not see Him, for He came not to be a Messiah upon earth, but He was going to His Father who ruled over death, and who, after having raised Him, according to His glory, would take Him to Himself in the glory that was His. It was a series of events, which, while they constituted the disciples eye-witnesses of the fact of His resurrection, belonged to His personal glory and to redemption, to the setting aside of all that is connected with the first man, to the glory that He, the Son of God, had had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and into which He was about to enter again as Man to order all things at the suitable time, according to the glory of God and His counsels

with regard to the Man in whom He would glorify Himself.

The Lord answers the hidden desire of the heart of His disciples, who sought in vain to solve the enigma lying in His words, and who feared to ask Him anything; but it is by shewing them first of all, the feelings that would possess their hearts, and then the true character of His coming and of His departure. Their hearts would be deeply afflicted; they were going to lose Him for whom they had left everything: hope founded upon Him was fading away. The world, on the contrary, would be quite happy to be rid of Him who troubled it by the testimony of the truth. But Jesus tells His own that He would see them again, and that their sorrow should be turned into joy, as when a woman brings forth. And in fact it was the child-birth of the new creation. Thus the joy with which they should be filled in seeing Him again would be an eternal joy—a joy that nothing could take from them.

Thus far for the human details; but the ground of the truth is that the Son had come forth from the Father and come into the world, and that He left the world and went to the Father. This was a declaration of incalculable importance, and before which both the disciples' sorrow at the loss of their Messiah, Son of David, and their joy at seeing Him risen again, faded entirely, real and important as they were. Indeed, it was the revelation of God Himself in grace, and in the accomplishment of all His ways; Man in Christ was the object of them, and the heavenly glory into which He was now entering was the result, the real fact that was taking place. The Son, Man in this world; the Father, perfectly and fully revealed; those who had received Him set in the place of sons with the Father, co-heirs with the Son; and the Father's house

the place of their dwelling and blessing: this is what the presence and departure of Jesus meant. It was laying the foundation of the whole of eternity; the full revelation of the Father and of the Son.

Indeed, it was not speaking in proverbs; but the disciples did not understand it. They fully admitted that He had spoken to them plainly, but their mind did not enter into the force of His words. “By this,” they said, “we believe that thou art come from God.” He had known what was passing in their minds, and that had produced its effect; besides, His words were simple. But to come from God, true as that was, was not saying that He had come from the Father, and was going back to Him. “Do ye now believe? “said the Lord; “all ye shall be offended because of me this night,” “and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

We may remark here that which characterises this Gospel all through, that is, that though the Lord must pass through death, He does not speak of it. He was come from the Father, and proceeded thither again. We see this at the beginning of chapter 13, and elsewhere.

This terminates the Lord’s discourses addressed to His disciples. He, in presence of that which His soul experienced, could think of them and tell them that which was suited to comfort them and to strengthen them in the time of His absence; it was the spiritual knowledge of Himself; the seeing Him after His resurrection, which would strengthen their faith powerfully; the presence of the Holy Ghost; and finally, that in going to the Father, it was not to abandon them, but that He was going there to prepare for them a

dwelling-place on high. Spiritually He would be with them. If they confessed His name, this would bring upon them persecutions. In this world they should have tribulation, but in Him they had peace. Blessed thought! In the circumstances and in the things that were passing, they would have testing, painful no doubt, but which would detach them from the world, and make them feel the contrast between what was such and their position. Inwardly they should have peace, divine peace in Him who appeared to them spiritually, yea, who should dwell in them.

Besides, He had overcome the world. This, indeed, gives courage, to think that what we have to overcome is an enemy already overcome; it is a blessed word for our souls. He went before us in the battle, and He has gained the victory. Thus, as I have said, the Lord's discourses to His disciples terminate here; but this brings us into a still more blessed position. It is given to us not only to hear the divine words of Jesus, who was thinking of us with a love that knew no bounds, with a devotedness which makes us know what love is (1 John 3:16); words of grace, words of truth, words of God Himself, but which were adapted to man (John 3); words whence we derive the knowledge of what God is for us—it is given to us, I say, not only to hear and to meditate on these words, but we are admitted now to hear Jesus pour out His heart into the Father's bosom, and to understand that we are an object of common interest to the Father and the Son: this is the subject of chapter 17.

## Chapter 17

The key to this chapter is the word "Father." At the commencement, the Lord lays the great foundations of

the position that He was taking at that moment, and then those of the position of the disciples. After that, He states what is their relationship with the Father, and their place before the world, and He closes by making known their place with Him in heaven, and the power of the Father's love during their stay here below.

The Lord, here, as in the whole of John's Gospel, is regarded from the point of view of His divine nature, the Son of the Father, but at the same time never leaving the place of service. He receives everything, and appropriates nothing to Himself. Once only, in contrast with an empty temple, He presents Himself to the Jews —at least He presents His body—as the true temple which, as God, He would rebuild in three days. But in His teaching, in the personal expression of relationship with the Father, He never leaves the subordinate place that He had taken in His service. Satan, in the desert, had tried, but in vain, to make Him leave it. He would obey, and He was obedient unto death. Here also, He does not appropriate to Himself the glory, but the hour being come, He asks His Father to glorify Him. It is the Son of the Father who is glorified, it is His personal glory; it is not the Son of man glorified according to the counsels of God. It is the Father who does it. In chapter 13, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of man who has glorified God, and that in His work on the cross. Then God, as God, having been glorified, the Son of man enters, according to the value of His work, into the glory of God, which He has established on earth where sin reigned. There, man made sin, and the power of Satan, the judgment and love of God met together, and God has been fully glorified; what He is has been manifested and made good in the obedience of man. Here, it is the Son,

who, having perfectly manifested the Father and glorified Him, re-enters, being Man, into the glory that He had had with Him before the world was, in order to glorify Him in this new position also.

His position as Son, and what belongs to Him being Man, is then stated. His rights are twofold: He has power over all flesh, but with the object of giving eternal life to those whom the Father has given Him. His title to power with regard to man is universal.47 If the first man should have power according to nature, the Son, become man, has it in a supernatural manner. But here, in the words of the Saviour, one of the most precious truths for us comes to light. There are those whom the Father has given to the Son. It is the thought and settled purpose of the Father. They are given to the Son; the Father has committed them to His hands, in order that He may bring them into the glory, in order that He may fit them for the presence, the nature, and the glory of God, for all that was in this settled purpose; and that He may place them, according to God's infinite love, in a position which should satisfy this love, and which is that of the Son, become Man to this effect. We can add that it is a position that answers to the value and efficacy of the work of the Son to place them there, not only externally (which, however, would be impossible), but in endowing them with a nature fit for such a position. Marvellous grace, of which we are the objects! This position is eternal life, a word of which we must examine a little the meaning. It is spiritual and divine life— a life capable of knowing God and of enjoying Him, as answering morally to His nature, "holy and without blame before him in love." Eternal fife, that is to say, a life not merely immortal, but which belongs to a world that is outside

the senses; for “the things that are not seen are eternal.”

But there is something more precise than that. In 1 John 1 we see definitely what eternal life is: it is Christ. That which they had seen, contemplated, and handled from the beginning, it was Christ, the eternal life which was with the Father and had been manifested to them. Thus again, in chapter 5:11, 12: “This is the testimony, that God has given unto 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.” Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. 1:3, 4) presents to us this life in its double character. In the first place, that which answers to His nature, that which Christ was and is personally; and secondly, our relationship with the Father; that is to say, sons, and that in His presence. We participate in the divine nature, and we are in the position of Christ: sons according to the good pleasure of the Father’s will. That is the nature of this life.

Here it is presented objectively. In fact, in our relations with God, that which is the object of faith is the power of life in us. Thus Paul says; “When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me”; but in receiving, by grace, by faith, the Saviour that he was to preach to others, he received life, for Christ is our life. But, as I have already said, it is the name of the Father that is the key to this chapter. God is always the same; but neither the name of Almighty, nor that of Jehovah, nor that of Most High, carries life in itself. We must have it to know God thus, but the Father sent the Son that we might live through Him, and he that has the Son, has life, and he only. But the Son has fully manifested the Father; so that the Son being received, the Father was also; and the life displayed

itself in this knowledge, faith in the mission of the Son, and by Him, faith in the Father in sending the Son, in love, as Saviour. The glory of Christ Himself will be the full manifestation of this life, and we shall participate in it, we shall be like Him. Still it is an inward life, real and divine, by which we live, although we possess it in these poor earthen vessels. It is no longer we that live, but Christ that lives in us. Infinite and eternal blessedness which belongs to us already as life, according to these words: “he that hath the Son, hath life.” But this places us also in the position of sons now, and brings us, later on, to bear the image of Christ.

Note also that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. However, this is not what is presented to us here, but the ways of God as Father in grace, and source of all in blessing; it is the Father who sends the Son. (Compare 1 John 4:14.) No doubt, it is the Holy Ghost that makes us to know the Father thus, and who renders us capable of having communion with Him, and with His Son Jesus Christ. In this development of grace, He is the power that works in us. The Father, who had in His grace the thought of sending, and who in fact has sent, His Son into the world; then the Son thus sent, in whom this grace is known; such are the effects that we know. The Father, in His divine and eternal thoughts, is the source of all this infinite grace, and the Son is the One in whom these thoughts are realised, who gave Himself to accomplish all, and that we might have part in all. He gave Himself, in order to accomplish all that was needed to bring us to the Father according to these thoughts; fit for God’s presence, like unto Him who has brought us there. “A body hast thou prepared me; lo, I come to do thy will, O God!”

Observe also, that it is not the essence of His nature that is presented here, but the development of grace. Although He had had, with the Father, before the world was, the glory into which He was going to enter again, nevertheless, as we have seen everywhere, He is the sent One of the Father; He receives all from Him, and takes the initiative in nothing of His own will, except in undertaking the work that He should accomplish; but comes to do the Father's will. He empties Himself of this part of the divine rights, free then to undertake all, having the same will with the Father. But the work that He undertook was, from one end to the other, a work of pure obedience. It was at His expense that the work was done, but according to the thoughts and will of the Father. He never left this position. He could say "I am" (John 8:58); but He lived by every word that came out of the mouth of God. The perfection of the work was obedience in love. Adonai (the Lord) whom we see in Isaiah 6:1, this Jehovah whose glory fills the earth, it is Christ; John 12:39-41. He is Adonai, at Jehovah's right hand, Adonai who smites the kings in the day of wrath; Psalm no:5.

Such then are the relationships in which we know God now. It is not simply a supreme God, the Most High; it is not only He "who is, who was, and who is to come," He who, always the same, accomplishes His promises; nor any more the mighty God, the all-powerful who keeps His own. All this is true; but these titles are connected with God governing the world, accomplishing His promises, and keeping His own down here. Here it is God Himself who reveals Himself, as the Father who has sent the Son, to bring us to Him according to the full manifestation of what He is in Himself, partaking

morally of His nature, His own sons, and destined to be like Christ.

Now the Son had fully glorified the Father down here; He had finished the work that the Father had entrusted to Him, and He asks to be re-admitted into the glory that He had had with the Father before the world was. The Father had sent Him, He had glorified the Father and finished the work He had to do, and now He was going to return into His former glory, the glory of the Son, but He re-entered it as man.

Up to this the foundations are laid; Christ ever seeking to glorify the Father, even when He should have re-entered into the glory that belonged to Him. All was accomplished with regard to His mission. Sent on the part of God, and from Him, become man to glorify Him down here, He had done it; for he who had seen the Son had seen the Father. Then He receives the glory from the Father, and sits on His throne, a glorified Man, but Son, in the eternal glory He had had. But the object of His mission was also to give eternal life to those whom the Father had given Him. Now, those who knew God thus, the Father, and Jesus, the Christ whom He had sent, possessed this life.

The basis of the whole position of His own being thus laid in Jesus, the Son of the Father, and in His work, Jesus continues, still addressing the Father. He shews how He had revealed Him to His own,48 and created thus in their hearts the consciousness of the ineffably blessed position in which, in virtue of His manifestation and of His work, they were now placed; and first of all in relationship with the Father. The Father's love was the source of it: "those," says the Saviour, "whom thou hast

given me." The Father had confided them to the Son's faithfulness; first of all, faithfulness towards the Father, to bring His beloved ones to Him, according to His thoughts of blessing and of glory, as sons, that is to say, as Christ Himself; then consequently, according to His own heart of love, unfailing faithfulness towards us—blessed be His name! Without it, we never should have been in the enjoyment which has been destined for us; it is exercised through all the sufferings that sin, in which we were, rendered necessary; it is exercised as to the burden of care that our weakness, the presence of the flesh in us, and the wiles of Satan required, and require from Him.

In order to place us in the consciousness of the position which the Father's grace had given us, and that His faithfulness assured to us, He has revealed the Father's name. The only Son who enjoyed ineffably the Father's affection (John 1:18), which was visible as a fact in this world,49 if the world had eyes to see it (John 1:5, 10, 11); He, the Son, who knew the Father as such, has revealed Him to the disciples. He was ever a revelation of the Father before their eyes (John 14:9), but, more, He had spoken to them of Him: this is one of the things that characterise His communications. It is true that before having received the Holy Ghost, they scarcely profited by them, but that by which they might have profited was there before them. Alas! never once did they understand what the Lord said to them. But He does not speak here of their want of intelligence, He speaks of the revelation itself that had been made to them, attributing to them the possession of all its value. Moreover, it is what He always did, even when they

declared that they did not understand it (John 14:4, 5), for they had a true faith in Him, in whom all was found.

He says also: “They have kept thy word”; and, in fact, whatever their ignorance might have been, they had, by grace, walked faithfully with Jesus. “To whom should we go?” said Peter; “Thou hast the words of eternal life.” They had also recognised Him as Son of God; He had communicated to them therefore the relationship in which He was with the Father in this world, and whatever their degree of intelligence, He placed them in the same relationship.

But He did more; He communicated to them all the privileges, which on the part of the Father, belonged to Himself on earth; the privileges inherent to His position of Son down here. It was no longer the glory and royal honour that the Messiah should receive from Jehovah; they had understood that what He had, belonged to the Son, to the Son who had emptied Himself, and come down to a state of abasement and humiliation here below, to shew forth all the glory of the power of God in goodness, taking away not yet the sin, but all the miseries that were the fruit of it. They had understood that that which Jesus had received from the Father was all that belonged to the Son of God, as Son of man on earth.

But this privilege that had been accorded to them, depended upon another, or was realised in another, which was still greater. He had shared with them all the intimate communications that the Father had made to Him as Son down here. It was all that belonged to this position which occupies us here— that of the Son upon earth. “I have given them the words that thou hast given

me.” Immense grace! It was in effect placing them in the same position as Himself with the Father. He had revealed to them the name of Father. It was placing them, in title and in fact, in His own relationship of Son with with Father. But Christ, having been Son here upon earth, and having come to accomplish the work the Father had given Him to do, had of right received intimate communications from Him, in order that all might be done in a perfect and unfailing unity with the Father. This was, for the Saviour, the blessed side of His life. Now, having placed the disciples (for He speaks here of the eleven) in the same relationship with the Father, as that in which He was by nature and by right, their position was not to be barren and dry, but furnished with all the communications which belonged to Him, and which Jesus enjoyed. And this is the grace which has been made theirs. It would be well, before going further, to make one or two remarks here.

This part of the Saviour’s words (verses 6-10, and even up to verse 19, although this last portion treats of the disciples from another point of view) applies to the eleven, as companions of Christ upon earth. He had revealed the Father’s name to them; He was placing them in the relationship in which He was Himself with the Father, as Son, but dwelling upon earth. The communications which He received were made to Him as being there, and were those that He communicated to them. I have no doubt whatever that Jesus spoke of what He knew, and bore witness to what He had seen; nor that the fact that He could say of Himself, “the Son of man that is in heaven” (John 3:13), had an essential influence upon His ministry. But He was the manifestation of grace and truth down here, and up to

the time that He was speaking, it was not a question of giving the disciples the consciousness that they were in Him in heaven; that was about to take place. In verse 24, this thought, not yet of union, but at least of association with Him in heaven, begins to dawn. His object assuredly was not to maintain Judaism, but to present that which manifested the Father, grace and truth come in Him, the character of God in a Man down here shewn out fully. It was not, either, to develop the counsels of God and the mysteries of grace, as Paul teaches them to us; that is a fruit of Jesus being glorified. The sun had shone behind the clouds in the previous dispensations; even now it is faith that lays hold of it; at the end, its manifestation will have an earthly character; but here the clouds disperse, and the sun itself appears. The Father in the fulness of grace, sends the Son; the Son manifests the Father perfectly, and glorifies Him, and the disciples understand that all that the Father had given to Jesus was the gift of the Father to the Son down here (not, as I have said, of Jehovah to the Messiah), that the Father had sent Him in sovereign grace, and that He had come from the Father.

Such is the basis of the prayer of Jesus. It was for them that He prayed, not for the world. The world was judged, but the Father had given Him His disciples; most precious truth, source of all our blessings and that which characterises them. Now the Lord, in leaving His disciples, prays for them, and with infinitely touching motives, which open also to our view the sphere into which we are introduced. All belongs to this revelation of the Father in the Son—the Object, and at the same time the Revealer, of His most tender love, and to the introduction of the disciples into the same relationship.

The first motive is found in these words: “I pray for them, because they are thine.” For the beloved Son, the Father was everything; He lived to glorify Him, and He prays that the Father may be for those who are His, such a Father as He Himself knew Him.

The second motive is the Son. The Father cared for the Son’s glory; because of this, He was to take care of His disciples, for now that Jesus was going back to the Father, it is in them that He was to be glorified. The Father would keep them because they belonged to Him, and that in them the Son should be glorified. It was necessary that they should be kept if the Father cared for the glory of the Son. Now there was no separation between the interests and glory of the Father and the interests and glory of the Son. All that belonged to the Father belonged to the Son, and all that belonged to the Son belonged to the Father. What a bond between the Father, the Son, and the disciples? They belonged to the Father, the Father had given them to the Son, and it was in them that the Son was to be glorified. Their present position, which gave occasion to the request, was that Jesus was going away from the world to the Father, and that He was leaving His disciples down here.

Then Jesus indicates the name according to which the Father was to keep them: “Holy Father,” to keep them with the affection of a Father, and according to the holiness of His nature. He had kept them Himself in this name during His sojourn here below, and now He gives them over to the immediate care of the Father, according to the love towards them common to the Father and to the Son, and always under the name of “Holy Father.” “Holy Father, keep them in thy name that thou hast given me.”50 Christ was down here the Son of

the Father, and as such He answered also to the Father's holiness in all His ways and His thoughts. The Father's will was exemplified in His life; He manifested in Himself the Holy Father. Now He prayed that the disciples might be kept by what the Father was in this relationship with Jesus. The Lord was in it, lived in it; he who had seen Him had seen the Father. As with Israel, He could have said: "Obey his voice, provoke him not; for my name is in him," Exod. 23:21. Thus the Father and He were one, not only in nature, but in thoughts, acts, motions of the will. Christ, in His life, was one with the Holy Father.

Christ prayed for His own, that they might be kept by the Father in that name. He was there by nature; it was His place upon earth; they needed to be kept there. He had kept them thus as long as He had been in this world; now He gave them over to the Father, that He should keep them thus, that there might be the same thought, the same purpose, and that all their words and actions might answer to it; that the expression of the life of each of them and of all together, might be that of the Lord in His relationship with the Father, according to the import and value of this name. Presently the Lord will speak of the mediatorial means; here, it is the fact that He presents. The disciples were to be one—a single vessel of the life, of the thoughts, of the revelation of the Father Himself, as Christ had been. "Father," the name of grace, of God sending the Son, the Son revealing Him as such; and "holiness" according to that which the Father is—this is what was to characterise them, and by the power of the Holy Ghost,51 all, as a single existence, were to be only this in the midst of the world; they should represent Christ in this relationship with the

Father. It is evident that if there were amongst them different thoughts or purposes, they would fail as to this position. The Father and the Son were thus one when the Son was down here; this is what they were to be amongst themselves according to the relationship in which Christ had been. It is the name of “Father” that had been given to Him, in order that He might manifest it in this world; and, according to His holiness, there was nothing of this world in Him to obscure the revelation of what the Father was.

Such was their position; it was not yet their mission. Being such, it was to have the joy of Christ fulfilled in them. Indeed, it was the joy of the Saviour, man here below. Infinite grace for them, and in a certain sense for us all. (Compare 1 John 1:1-4.) The sum of all is, that the relationship of the Son down here with the Holy Father, the name in which He had kept His disciples when He was here below, was to be their safeguard directly on the Father’s part.

He sends them into this world, having confided to them the Father’s word—this revelation, not of the dispensations of God in His government of the world, but the revelation of the Father in grace—a revelation, not of the counsels of God for the future in Christ, but a revelation which made known the Father Himself, as having sent the Son, and putting in relationship with God according to His nature, that which will be the eternal blessing when there will no longer be any dispensation.

Now this is what drew upon them the hatred of the world. Their presence, representing the Father in testimony, told the world that everything did not belong

to it; that that which was of God did not. There were men who were in relationship with the Father; but the consequence of this was that they were not of the world. Judgment was not executed, but the separation was made.

Christ did not pray that they might be taken out of the world, although they did not belong to it, as He Himself did not belong to it, but that they might be kept from the evil, negatively from the influence of the world that surrounded them. Not only so, but that they might be sanctified, set apart in heart and in fact by the Father's word; it was not prophecy, nor the government of the world, but the revelation of the Father in His grace in Christ: the eternal joy of His communion. It was the immutable, eternal truth: Christ had been and always is it, but they were to be witnesses of it, being sent by the Son into the world, as the Son had been sent into it by the Father.

Now for the accomplishment of this sanctification in them, an object is introduced in the Person of Christ Himself—Christ, I believe, glorified; however, His Person remains the same. One might have supposed that the Son, eternally One with the Father in His divine nature, and who had been Son down here, introducing this relationship into human nature, but always able to say: "I and my Father are one"; one might have supposed, I say, that He would have laid aside this human garb in leaving this world, in order to enter again into His simply divine position. But no! He keeps it in the glory. He sets Himself apart in the glory as Man; always Son, but in the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, in order that this relationship with the Father, in which man is placed in His Person, might be

effectively revealed in its perfection and in its fulness to the hearts of the disciples, that these hearts filled with what He was, might be at the same time sanctified according to this perfection, and thus made fit to be the vessels of it in their testimony. Thus the truth of what the Father is—the truth that sanctified them—was not, so to speak, a dry doctrine, applied to their souls to form them, judging evil and communicating that which was suitable, but a living reality which placed them in this position, with all the affections which were connected with a Person, in whom they were and who was in them, a Saviour known and beloved, who had been bound up with them in grace. All the fulness of the result of this relationship, established in its perfection in heaven, formed their heart according to this perfection.

This is what completes that which Jesus asks for the disciples before the Father, and in testimony before the world: the revelation of the name of the Father known in the Person of the Son, Man in this world and in the glory. But His prayer does not stop there; blessed be His name for ever!

Jesus prays also for those who were to believe through their means; but the request is not the same as that which He made for the disciples, although it depends upon it. For them He asked a unity analogous to that which existed between the Father and the Son in the work of redemption; the same thoughts, the same counsels, the same truth. The Son accomplished the Father’s thoughts in the unity of the same nature. They were, by the absorbing power of the Holy Ghost, to act in the work of testimony, as being absolutely and entirely one. No divergence existed between the thoughts, the counsels, the will of the Father, and the

testimony and obedience of the Son; and, by grace, the disciples became the depositary, one and all together, of the testimony of the revelation of the Father in the Son. Also, the Father's word having been confided to them, their function was to communicate it to others. They were communicators of these truths; the others, for whom the Saviour now prays, received this testimony, and thus entered into communion with those who were in the unity of this grace. (Compare i John i:1-4.) They enjoyed all that of which the disciples were the depositaries. The Lord prays that they may be one with them, the Father and the Son. It is always the Father revealed in the Son that is the basis of their union. Now this revelation gave them a heavenly object, one only and the same object that absorbed the heart's affections, and thus destroyed the influence of the earthly objects that would have tended to divide them, such as their social or national position, and even what was still more difficult, their religious position. They were Christians, sons of the Father, associated with Christ; their fatherland was heaven. Pilgrims and strangers down here, they declared plainly that they sought their native country. Now, in this, they were necessarily one; one in their origin, one in their object, and that with Christ Himself, the Son of the Father. He that sanctified and they who were sanctified were all of one. (See Heb. 2:11.) They formed part of the company of those to whom the Saviour had said: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." In this spiritual position, they were one in the Father and in the Son, who were one in themselves, and all together lived in this communion. Thus in 1 John 1, we read: "that ye may have fellowship with us: and our fellowship is with

the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," and then we have fellowship "one with another."

Thus, inasmuch as Christians, brought to the knowledge of the Father in the Son, the motives that animate and govern the world, had disappeared: "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." In this case John never speaks of the inconsistencies that may be shewn in the walk, nor the Saviour either, but He speaks of the thing in itself. Now the world was to see this unity (compare Acts 2 and 4), and the disappearance of all the motives that govern this world, a clear testimony to the revelation of the Father in the Son. It was the testimony that the Father had sent the Son into the world; for there is seen a people there formed by a power that was not at all of the world, and which, in overturning all human barriers, would give them but one heart and one soul, so that they were irrefragable witnesses of the reality of that which governed them. Such are Christians, led by the word of the Father, subject to the influence of this word, and living by it.

Note, that the subject here is not of the unity of the church— John never speaks of it—but of the family of God. It is not the counsels of God, but the effect and realisation of the revelation of the Father in the Son sent from Him; but in everything they are identified with Christ.

The third unity is in glory. The first was expressed by these words, "as we" (ver. 11); the second, by "one in us" (ver. 21); and this one, by "as we are one" (ver. 22), and by "I in them, and thou in me"; thus accomplished, brought to perfection in one. It is here the result in glory.

We have seen that the doctrine of the chapter, even eternal life, is the knowledge of the Father, and Christ sent by Him. Now this is accomplished in the glory. First of all, Christ a man, Son of God, in glory, is the source of the sanctification of His own according to that knowledge, the disciples and those that believed, being introduced by their means in spirit into the position where Christ was. In the second place, this relationship of association with Christ is transferred into the glory before the Father; not as now, realised by faith, but they themselves are transformed in this glory. It is union, perfect in nature, thoughts, and state—"as we are one"; Christ in them, so that their position was fully realised, and the Father in Christ, so that the spiritual connection that we have seen all through the chapter—the Father revealed in the Son, and Christ revealed in the disciples and believers—was now not only spiritually known, but gloriously realised.

But let us here notice what is striking and important. The three unities relate to the world. First, the word of God had been confided to the disciples, conjointly depositaries of the truth, so that the world hated them (vers. 11-14); then, secondly, we have the unity of communion, that the world might believe (ver. 24) in seeing the effect and the power of the present testimony; then, thirdly, the disciples and believers are made partakers of the glory given to the Son as Man; He in them, and the Father in Him, so that the whole of these thoughts, of grace so infinite which unites the Father, the Son as Man, and believers, being manifested in glory, the world will know (and not believe) that the Son had been sent from the Father, and that believers were loved by the Father as the Son Himself. The proof

of it will be there: the Son manifested in glory, and believers in the same glory as He. This will be the visible accomplishment of the doctrine, of the marvellous truth with which the chapter is taken up: the Father in the Son as Man, and believers glorified with Him. But whether it be a scene of testimony or of glory, it is the world that is before our eyes. In what follows, this is not the case, and it is this that gives quite another character to these last verses. “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” We see here, as we have seen throughout, that Christ speaks of Himself as man, though also as Son of the Father; as man, divested outwardly of the divine glory in which He had been— “the form of God” as we read in Philippians 2 —and having taken “the form of a servant” in humanity. The Father has given the glory on high to the Man Christ. He had had, He says in this same chapter, this glory with the Father before the foundation of the world, but He was going back into it as man, for as man it is clear that He had never had it. He was not yet glorified. Never, down here, though He said and shewed that He was one with the Father, and “I am” (John 8:59), and said to the Jews: “Destroy this temple [His body where God was], and in three days I will raise it up”; never would He go outside this position of servant: He took a body in order to be obedient to His Father; Psalm 40. Moreover, a man who had not been so, would have been by the very fact, in evil: it was this that Satan sought to lead Him into; Matt. 4. The Father had proclaimed: “This is my beloved Son”; and in the first temptation, Satan says to Him: “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones become bread”; but the Lord withstood his

wiles, refusing to leave the place of obedience: “Man,” He says, “shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Thus, in speaking as Man in the midst of His own, He speaks of the glory into which He was going to enter, as being given Him of God. Nevertheless He presents it here objectively as His personal glory.

He had been loved before the foundation of the world. We have learned, at the beginning of the chapter, that He had had with the Father, before the foundation of the world, the glory into which He was going to enter as Man. It is not that there are two glories; but I do not believe that human eyes down here can bear the glory as it is seen in heaven. The glory seen upon earth will be like that in which Moses and Elijah appeared upon the mountain—the glory of the kingdom. But we read in Luke 9 that the disciples entered into the cloud, the shekinah. Moses had spoken to God, when God came down in the cloud, but he did not enter into it. But we shall see Him such as He is there, in the Father’s house. The disciples had suffered upon earth, and had seen Him suffer. He was going to be crucified, and He asked therefore that they should see His glory on high, with the Father. It was the answer to the ignominy to which He had been exposed for His love for us, and for the glory of His Father.

But this request relates also to another solemn truth. He was going to suffer; the history of His sufferings begins with the next chapter. The world had rejected Him; the Father must decide between Him and the world. He had fully revealed the Father, and the world had not known Him who had manifested Himself in Christ. It was moral blindness that only saw the carpenter’s son there, where

the Father had been manifested in all His grace and all His goodness. But Jesus, as man in the world, had known the Father, and the disciples had known that it was the Father, who had sent Him. Now the end had come, the close of His earthly career; the result was to declare itself. The Father's righteousness was about to place Him in His house, and the world was left without God, who had been there in grace, and without the Saviour.

Notice that when He prays for His own, Jesus says, "Holy Father." He desired that they should be kept according to this name—sons with Him, and sanctified according to this revelation of the Father that Christ enjoyed, and of which He was the vessel for the others. Now He says "Righteous Father." The Father was to decide between Him and those who had received Him on the one hand, and the world that had rejected Him on the other. A solemn moment for the world, when He who had come in pure grace (2 Cor. 5:19) prayed, after having faithfully manifested and glorified the Father, that the Father Himself should decide in righteousness between Him and the world. The answer very soon followed, when Jesus sat down on the Father's throne.

But we have something else to remark here. First the union of the divine Person of the Son, and of the humanity of the Saviour. The Father had loved Him before the foundation of the world; Himself, Son of the Father, before there had been a world. But in contrast with the world, He had known the Father, that is to say, as Man down here, and He associates the disciples with Himself, demanding that they should be there where He was going to be, at the same time owning His personal glory. He demanded that they should see His glory, the

glory that He had as loved of the Father before the world existed. It is the precious truth, which is like a thread uniting all the chapter; but here, that which is put more forward, is His Person as Son of the Father, and Man, and the association of the disciples with Him. But what grace is presented to us here! We shall be with Christ, like Christ; we shall see His glory, the glory of Him who has been humbled for us; a glory that He had with the Father before the foundation of the world— but Man for ever and ever.

This is not yet all. There is our relationship with the Father, the same as that of Christ: “I go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”; that is to say, where Christ is still as Son, and as Man. We enjoy this relationship already. When Christ shall come again, the world will know that we have been loved, as Christ has been loved; but we have the enjoyment of it already, down here. The Father’s name has been already declared to us when Christ was upon earth, although little understood by the disciples. But from the descent of the Holy Ghost, come down in virtue of the presence of the Man Christ in heaven, this name is declared again, and the Spirit is the Spirit of adoption.

What immense, perfect, and intimate grace! Love, which is the love with which God loves, infinite, perfect, in its nature shutting out all that is not itself; intimate, it is the Father’s love for the Son Himself, and Christ in us to draw it into our hearts, and make us capable of enjoying it, and that in its perfect intimacy, for it is Christ in us, to give it its proper character in us.

The world will know objectively the love wherewith we have been loved, when we shall appear in the same

glory as Christ; we ourselves know it, as being the conscious objects of it; knowing this love in the Father, in the Son as being its worthy and infinite object, and we —He being in us—participating in it in the manner in which He enjoys it as Man. God alone could have such thoughts.

## Chapter 18

We have been through the wonderful chapter, in which is presented to us the touching development of the communion of the Son with the Father with regard to the object of their common interest, the children, believers put into relationship with the Father by His revelation in the Son. The more we think of it, the more we feel how marvellous it is to be admitted to hear such communications.

But let us continue our study of the Gospel. That which follows, is the account of the last events of the life of Christ, as also of His death, of His resurrection and all that belongs to them. The sufferings of Christ are not the subject of John's Gospel, but His divine Person, and this character is found again here. We do not find suffering either in Gethsemane or upon the cross, but a direct testimony borne to His divinity, as to His perfect human obedience. There is another element less important, but which comes out in a clear light; it is, the moral setting aside of the Jews, a subject of sorrow for the Saviour Himself and for us, for which the sovereign grace of God will provide a remedy; but here they fall into marked contempt, even from the Gentiles.

The sufferings of Christ not being related, there is far less detail. It is great principles, great facts, that are put in the foreground in the account, or at least spring out

of it. I hope it will not be hazarding too much for souls, to pass in review the different accounts found in the Gospels of what took place in Gethsemane and upon the cross.

In Matthew, Christ is the Victim; there is neither comforter nor consolation, but the sleep of His own, and betrayal with kisses in Gethsemane; and upon the cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Mark gives very much the same facts in this respect. In John, we shall soon see, it is not a question of sufferings, either in Gethsemane, or upon the cross; it is the Son of God who gives Himself. In Luke we have more human anguish in Gethsemane, but none upon the cross. We will speak further on of what is related in John’s Gospel. In Matthew’s Gospel it is simple: it is the Lamb led to the slaughter, the Lamb that opened not His mouth, except to own Himself such, and forsaken of God for us. In Luke, I see the Son of man, and each circumstance answers to the character of the Gospel. Thus, as Man, His genealogy goes up to Adam; He is the Man who is always praying; in Gethsemane, in sight of the terrible cup that He had to drink, He is the Man realising beforehand that which He would have to suffer, as being made sin. He was in an agony (which is in Luke alone) but that only served to shew His perfection; He prayed the more earnestly; He was as a man with God; He went through all the anguish in His soul. Upon the cross, no sufferings at all. All the rest (that which we see in the other Gospels) remains true, but it is seen from another side; it is in another aspect that the precious Saviour is presented. The sufferings are past; He asks forgiveness for the Jews; He promises paradise to the thief; then, when all is finished, He gives up His spirit to His Father.

It is grace and peace in His soul, when He has realised all. The forsaking of God had taken place, but this is not the side of the history that Luke presents.

It is well to remark too, that the three other Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) relate His controversy with the different classes of the Jews at His last entrance into Jerusalem, the unbelief of whom is set in clear light. In John, when this unbelief as to His word (chap. 8), as to His works (chap. 9), has been made manifest, and He has declared that He is come to seek His sheep, Jews or Gentiles, and God has borne witness to Him as being Son of God, Son of David, and Son of man (but as such He must die), then it is not controversy with the Jews, a matter already settled, but communications to His disciples about the privileges and the position they should enjoy when He would be away. This brings us back to the history.

The few verses that tell us of Gethsemane, present to us the Saviour in His divine power, then giving Himself for His own, and finally perfect in obedience as man. Nothing is said of what passed before the arrival of Judas, but then the whole band, upon His voluntary avowal that He was Jesus of Nazareth, fall to the earth, confounded by the divine power which was revealed in Him. He could go away, to escape from them; but He was not come for that, and declaring again that He was the One whom they sought, He adds: “If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way”; that that word, so precious for us also, might be fulfilled; “Of those whom thou hast given me, I have lost none.” He puts Himself in the breach, that His own may be sheltered from harm.

Peter draws his sword, strikes the servant of the high priest, and cuts off his ear. Jesus heals him, but saying these words: “The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” Perfect submission to His Father’s will, while shewing that by a word from Him they were rendered powerless, and He free.

In that which follows, we find, it seems to me, that Jesus hardly takes account of the high priest. He does not give account of His teaching to him, but refers him to those who had heard Him: what He had spoken was in public. In the other Gospels, we see indeed that Jesus replied, when He was asked who He was. But here the high priest’s authority disappeared.

Peter’s fall is stated carefully, then left. In the examination that he makes Him undergo, Pilate receives a fuller answer from Him. His reticence before the high priest is not found here, which is striking. With Caiaphas, He refers to what he could have known from the multitude who had heard Him. With Pilate, He enters into conversation; He recognises the governor’s authority, but the Jews are set aside, placed in the position of false accusers, and, when their enmity is rendered evident, He explains to Pilate, that, King though He was, His kingdom was not of this world, and never will be, even when it shall be established here below. The heavens shall reign; the world will acknowledge it; Dan. 4:26.

Pilate would have liked to have left the matter to the Jews; he saw well that it was only envy and hatred without cause; but the Jews were to be the instrument of Christ’s being treated as a malefactor, and not even stoned as a blasphemer, as Stephen was. In God’s

wonderful counsels, His Son was to be put to death as a malefactor among the Gentiles—cast out of the vineyard, but the guilty ones, those who were the authors of it, were the Jews (v. 29-32, 35). What terrible blindness was theirs! They did not want to defile themselves that they might eat the passover (ver. 28), at the very moment that they were giving up the true Passover Lamb to be sacrificed. Scruples are not conscience. We must not violate scruples, if we have them, but conscience looks to God and to His word. Conscience did not prevent the Jews buying the blood of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver; but a scruple forbade their putting into the treasury of God in the temple, the money rejected by Judas, because it was the price of blood. (Compare Rom. 14.)

Pilate asks Jesus if He was the King of the Jews. The Lord explains that His kingdom is not of this world, otherwise He would have made good His claims as the world does. But in every sense, His kingdom, at this moment, was not established in this world as a kingdom of the world. His presence as accused before Pilate was the proof of it. Jesus does not fail to confess openly that He is King, when Pilate asks Him. He will establish, later ori, a power which nothing will be able to resist, but the time was not yet come. According to the truth, He was King, and He bears witness to the truth. According to the work of God in that moment, He was numbered amongst the transgressors. For Pilate, an infidel and a rationalist, what was truth? He was very guilty in yielding to the urgent demands of the Jews, but it was the Jews who were the instigators of the death of Jesus. They were accomplishing, without knowing it, the counsels of God, and Jesus was there in His perfect obedience. We have before us the truth, the King, the

propitiatory Victim, accomplishing a work far deeper and more important than even royalty; we see there also the head of the Gentiles, representing the emperor, then the furious hatred of this poor people against God manifested in goodness, their Saviour. Everything assumes its true character, God's counsels are accomplished, and every actor in this scene takes his true place. But the actors, Jews and Gentiles, are to disappear condemned, but for grace; and the condemned malefactor, who, humanly speaking, disappears, leaves the scene to be Lord over all, to sit upon the Father's throne.

Thus things go on even on a small scale, in this world. It is striking to see these poor Jews make use of, at the cross, the very words that, in their own scriptures, are put into the mouths of atheists and of the enemies of God. (Compare Psalm 22 and Matthew 27.) But wisdom is justified of her children.

Every one's position is clearly established. Pilate, the judge, convinced of the Lord's innocence, wished to rid himself of the Jews' importunity, and to avoid enmity without profit. The Jews are enraged against the Son of God come in grace into this world, and prefer to Him a robber guilty of murder. Jesus submits to everything: condemned on His own testimony, He was to be cast out of the camp, and undergo the kind of death of which He had spoken, and the Gentiles were to be guilty of it. But the acts of Pilate and of the Jews were to bring out still more in relief the spirit that animated them. Pilate without conscience; the Jews full of hatred—they wished, at all cost, to put Him to death. This is what follows, and that we find at the beginning of chapter 19.

## Chapter 19

In reality the judgment of the Saviour has been pronounced. He had been give up to the outrages of the Roman soldiers. The details of this part of the history are found in Matthew 26:24-31. The Jews, notwithstanding Pilate's timid resistance, had chosen Barabbas the robber and rejected the Son of God; and Pilate, yielding to their solicitation, had given up in an unprecedented way his position as judge, to please a turbulent people.

But he was not easy. The majesty of the ways of Jesus gave the accused ascendency over the judge. There was in Christ something superhuman that made Pilate afraid; besides, we know that he had received warnings that God had sent to him in a way such as a Gentile could receive them; Matt.

27:19. But the relations of the Jews, not with Christ—that is found more clearly and in a more terrible manner in Matthew —but with Gentiles, and those of the Gentiles with God, were to be manifested with more evidence. Pilate brings Jesus back, and He is presented to us hated and rejected of the Jews, and condemned solely by Pilate upon words known to all: "Behold the Man."

It is God who presents Him to us thus. There was the Son of God as He was in this world. The world did not know Him, although it had seen Him, and His own received Him not. He was the despised and the rejected of men.

Pilate, ill at ease from a mingling of fear and of a bad conscience, and at the same time full of a feverish anxiety to maintain his authority, and to throw upon the

Jews the guilt of the condemnation of Jesus, presents Him again to the Jews to tell them that he finds no fault in Him. This excites the Jews to demand with loud cries His crucifixion. Pilate wishes them to do it, as he finds no fault in Him. Then the Jews, to whom the Romans had left their own laws (except the right of putting to death), insist that Jesus deserved death because He made Himself the Son of God, which increases Pilate's uneasiness.

He goes again into the judgment-hall and asks Jesus whence He was. Where was now the judge? Jesus does not answer him, Pilate having publicly owned that Jesus was not guilty. It was not a question of instructing Pilate; who, moreover, did not seek instruction, and who, in presence of the silence of Jesus, appeals to his authority and to his power over Him. Jesus declares to Pilate that he would have none if it had not been given him from above—for the crucifixion of the Saviour was in the counsels of God, and Jesus was now giving Himself to accomplish them; but that only increased the sin of Judas, who, witness of the divine power of Christ, had delivered Him up, as though there were none.

From that moment, Pilate seeks to deliver Jesus; but to avoid a tumult amongst the Jews who reproach him with being unfaithful to Caesar, since Jesus called Himself King, he resists no longer, but irritated, he derides the Jews whom he despised, and not concerning himself as to either the truth or as to Jesus, says, "Shall I crucify your King?" —hiding thus his uneasiness, his vexation, his weakness, and want of conscience. This is the occasion of the public apostasy of the Jews, who declare, "We have no king but Caesar! "The counsels of God are being fulfilled; Pilate's hands are stained with the blood

of the Son of God; the Gentiles who had the authority, are guilty of His death; the Jews abandon all the privileges that they had from God, and Jesus, with His innocence judicially owned, occupies alone the place of truth and faithfulness, and gives Himself up (for He might have escaped as in the garden, or indeed at any moment) to fulfil the counsels of grace. The Gentiles are compromised without resource, the Jews lost for ever upon the ground of their own responsibility, and that not only as to the law, but as having renounced all right to the enjoyment of the promises; and if God fulfil them later on for His own glory, they will be compelled to receive the enjoyment of them as poor lost sinners from among the Gentiles. Jesus, condemned purely and simply for the testimony that He bore to the truth, as had also been the case before the high priest, stands alone in His dignity and integrity in the midst of a world that ruined itself in running counter to Him, to the grace and truth come from God by Him who was in His bosom.

Here, Jesus recognises no authority among the Jews—they were adversaries—nor in the head of the Gentiles, except for the accomplishment of God's counsels. He explains to him first the position, but denies his power, if it is not for that. To see His condemnation by the Jews we must go to the other evangelists, as Matthew 26:63-66, where we see Him condemned for the witness He had borne that He was the Son of God; and Luke 22 where they take upon themselves the terrible responsibility of His blood. Here, in the Gospel of John, it is only the adversaries that the Lord does not recognise. Jews and Gentiles, they disappear in the darkness of hatred, and of an act of injustice proceeding from feebleness of soul and want of conscience, and

Jesus is there, having borne witness to the truth, alone, accepting the consequences from God, in order to accomplish the unspeakable work of divine love for the one and the other. Oh! that we may know better how to meditate on and realise these things!

In the history of the crucifixion of Jesus, as we have seen in Gethsemane, the sufferings are not found. If He is placed between the malefactors, it is to throw contempt on the poor Jews. But if Pilate had yielded without conscience to their violence, he by no means concerned himself with the honour of their nation, and he insolently maintains what he has written. The will of God was, that this testimony should be borne to the state of the Jews and to the rights of His Son, rejected of the people, but King of the Jews. Prophecy is accomplished with regard to them in the smallest details.

After that, we find One who has completed His blessed course; it is the Son of God. During His service here below, He did not recognise His mother. In reality His human relationships were not in question; He was the bearer of the divine word in this world, the expression of this word in His Person, and nothing else; separated from everything for this. Now that His divine ministry is ended, He recognises this relationship, not as a link with the Jews, this was over, but as human affection. He commits her to John, the disciple He loved. To have always repelled her was not a lack of natural affection, but faithfulness, whether in His position outside the Jews (Matt. 12:46), or in absolute devotedness. Now that His service is finished, His affection is free, and He shews it.

Then, the last little circumstance which was to be found in His death, according to the Scriptures, being accomplished, in perfect peace declaring that all was finished, He gives up His spirit Himself. No one takes it from Him; it is He Himself who gives it up. A divine act: after having suffered everything in His soul by the forsaking of God, in perfect calmness He owns that all is accomplished; He Himself separates His spirit from His body, and gives it up to God, His Father; a divine act that He had the power to accomplish. In Luke's Gospel, we have the human side of man's faith: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Here it is the divine side, where He lays down His human life.

The Jews, full of zeal for the ordinances, whilst neglecting the mercy, righteousness, and love of God, desire that the bodies may not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, and a centurion is sent to put the crucified ones to death. He breaks the legs of the two malefactors; but Jesus was dead already; not one of His bones was to be broken; but to assure himself that he was not mistaken, and that (although he understood nothing of it) the world had got rid of the Son of God, he pierces His side with a spear. It was the last outrage the world inflicted upon Him, to make sure that they had done with the Son of God. The answer of grace was the water and the blood that purifies and saves. Man and God met; the insolence and indifference of hatred, and sovereign grace that rises above all the sin of man. Wonderful scene, wonderful testimony! There, where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. The thrust of the soldier's spear brought out the divine testimony of salvation and of life.

Notice also how opportune this circumstance was. If they had pierced Jesus before His death, and had killed Him, He would not Himself have given up His spirit: if they had pierced Him without putting Him to death, His blood shed thus would not have had the value of His death. But He gives His life Himself; He is dead, and all the value of His death, in its two aspects of purification and expiation, was manifested, when His side was pierced and the water and the blood came forth; 1 John 5.

How little the outside of what goes on in the world corresponds with the reality! Scruples and brutality hasten to take away the life of the thieves: they little thought that thus they were sending the poor believer straight into paradise! The Scriptures were being accomplished on every point. Not one of the bones of Jesus was broken, but His side had been pierced, and now God provides the rich man with whom Jesus was to be in His death. Joseph of Arimathsea has obtained the Saviour's body from Pilate, and he and Nicodemus place it with aromatic spices in a new sepulchre that had never been used for an interment. The sabbath being about to begin (at six o'clock in the evening), they placed the body there, so as to arrange everything becomingly when the sabbath should be passed. What a solemn moment when the earth received the dead body of the Son of God, and the world had no more of Him down here!

Remark here, in passing, how iniquity carried out to its full height, leads the weak to shew themselves faithful. These two men who believed in Jesus, but whose position and riches hindered them from shewing themselves openly, or only allowed one of them to do so,

but in a timid and indirect way— now that all are afraid, except a few women—come out boldly. This evil in the midst of the Jews had become intolerable to them, and their position was of real service to them in their devotedness. It was the patient grace of God and His providence that brought out the rich at this moment for this service.

In the invisible world, Jesus was in paradise; as to this world, an interrupted funeral, that was all He had. Sin, death, Satan, the judgment of God, had done all that they severally could do: His earthly life was ended, and with it all His relations with this world, and with man as belonging to this world. Death reigned outwardly, even over the Son of God; serious souls who were aware of it were perplexed. But the world went on just the same; the Passover was celebrated with its usual ceremonies; Jerusalem was what it had been before. They had got rid of the two thieves; what had become of them, one or the other, did not concern society. Its selfishness was delivered from them, and from Another that troubled it by telling too much about it. But it is not the outside of things that is the truth. One of the thieves was in paradise with Christ; the other, far away from all hope; the soul at least of the Third was in the repose of perfect blessing, in the bosom of the Deity. And as to the world, it had lost its Saviour, and was to see Him again no more.

But it was impossible, on account of His Person, that Jesus could remain under the power of death, although He submitted to it for us. On account of divine righteousness He was not to remain there. True Son of God, the Father’s glory was concerned in His not being holden by it; He could not suffer His Holy One to see

corruption. The absolute darkness that had come down upon the world, spoke on God's part of the dawn of a new and eternal day that was going to rise beyond death, for God's glory, upon those who, attached to Jesus, saw in Him the Sun of Righteousness. Sorrow, where there is faith, may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. For the righteous, light arises in the midst of darkness. Man has to be condemned, but God is sovereign in grace, glorious in righteousness. Christ, a man, had to die, according to that grace, and according to righteousness against sin; but He had to be raised according to the unfailing righteousness of God. It is the basis of the truth as regards Christ's work, but it is the principle of all God's ways with us. We must die with Him and rise with Him. If we always appropriate to ourselves this truth, for it is our privilege (Col. 2, 3) we enjoy a life that is not in this world, bearing about always in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. If, in anything, this life of the flesh is not mortified, death must be applied to it: we experience this in the ways of God. It is the history of our Christian life down here. As to the efficacious accomplishment of the thing, it was done, once for all, on the cross.

## Chapter 20

In this chapter, the history of the resurrection, or rather of the manifestations of the Lord to His own, is full of interest and of important principles. The first person who is presented to us is not even the Christ: it is those who were to surround Him spiritually, and who had in fact surrounded Him down here. It was good and suitable that the state of their affections— and affections nourish faith—that this state, I say, as confidence in Him

and attachment to His Person should be manifested, and that then He, revealed in resurrection, should be the answer to this state, and should lead them on further.

The first person that presents herself, and whose history is of profound and touching interest, is Mary Magdalene. Her name has become the expression of a bad life, or at least that of a woman come out of licentiousness, but there is nothing to justify the tradition. But that she had been completely under the power of the demon is no tradition; the Lord had cast seven demons out of her. Her state therefore had been most miserable, and she loved much. We find her with a woman constantly called “the other Mary” (Matt. 23:1), accompanying the Lord with others, and rendering Him the assiduous services of a devoted affection. But sincere as the affection of these women was for the Saviour, it was more so for the heart of Mary Magdalene than for all the others. They were fully prepared, buying aromatic spices and perfumes to embalm Him, to do all that was necessary to honour their Master; but Mary Magdalene thought of Him. They waited therefore the suitable time, and arrived at the sepulchre at sunrise. But Mary Magdalene’s heart was devoid of everything save the grief of having lost Him whom she loved so much, and she was at the sepulchre whilst it was still night.

The Lord was already risen, and the great stone rolled away from before the entrance into the sepulchre. She did not seize the import of what she saw, but went to Peter and John. These, to see what had happened, ran to the sepulchre that was supposed to be carefully guarded. John looks into the sepulchre and sees the linen clothes in which Jesus had been wrapped, left there upon the ground. Peter, arriving directly after,

enters in and sees the linen clothes also, and the napkin in which the Lord's head had been wrapped, folded apart. All bespoke tranquillity; nothing indicated haste or precipitation. It seems that Peter was astonished at what he saw (Luke 24:12), and hardly knew what to think of it. Then John, in his turn, entered; he saw and believed, but his faith rested upon what he saw, and not upon the word. They knew not the scriptures which declared that thus it must be. Alas! Jesus did not possess their heart, nor the word their understanding. They go to their own home; they look no further; they are astonished, John at least convinced; divine intelligence did not enlighten them, affection for Christ did not move them; they went to their own home.

It is not thus with Mary Magdalene. For her without Jesus the whole world was nothing but an empty sepulchre; her heart was more empty still. She stays there at the sepulchre, where the Lord whom she loved had been. As it is said of Rachel; she could not be comforted, because He was no more. Stooping down into the sepulchre hewn in the rock, she sees two angels, who ask her: "Why weepest thou?" God allows the full expression of this strong affection. It is no longer, "They have taken away the Lord," as she said to the apostles, but, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." But Jesus was not far from a heart thus attached to His Person. Mary hears someone moving behind her. She turns and sees a man whom she takes for the gardener. He asks again: "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" Then we see the affection that appropriates to itself the lost Saviour, as if He belonged to her, and that does not imagine that the gardener can think of any other object than that which

occupies it. “Lord,” she says, “if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” If I had a sick friend, I should ask at his house, “How is he?” and all would understand what I meant, of whom I was speaking. Mary supposes that everybody thinks of the Lord, as she does herself, and that her affection gives her full right to dispose of Him. It was not intelligence; He had said that He would rise again, and she sought among the dead Him who was living. But the Lord was everything for her heart. It is what Jesus seeks, and He makes Himself found as living. He acts in His divine and human affection, and calls His sheep by her name; “Mary,” He says. This was enough, and a single word from a satisfied heart answers to the call. His sheep hears His voice, and mistakes it not. “Rabboni!” she says. That was all; Mary had found Him, and found Him living, and He had brought out in Mary’s heart all the affection which His love would satisfy.

Now intelligence comes, and it is Mary, she who sought the living among the dead, but with a heart that belonged to Him, a heart attached to His Person, she it is whom the Lord employs to communicate to the apostles themselves the knowledge of the highest privileges that belong to Christians. We see clearly the importance of this devotedness. It was not knowledge that characterised Mary, but her affection brought her spiritually near to the Lord, and made her the fitting vessel for communicating what He Himself had in His heart. She possessed, as a vessel, this knowledge, but better still, she possessed the Lord.

As to her position, Mary Magdalene represented the Jewish remnant attached to the Person of the Lord, but ignorant of the glorious counsels of God. She thought to

have found Jesus again, risen no doubt, but come again into this world to take the place that was due to Him, and satisfy the affections of those who had left everything for Him in the days of His humiliation, despised of the world, and denied by His people. But she could not have Him thus now. A glory far more excellent, of far greater extent, was in the thoughts of God, and blessing for us far more precious. In receiving Christ, she could not rightly receive Him, but according to the thoughts of God with regard to the Saviour. Only her attachment to the Lord opened this blessed path to her. "Touch me not," the Lord says, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." She could not have the Lord, even when risen, as come again as Messiah upon earth. He must first of all ascend to His Father and receive the kingdom, then return: but there was much more. A work had been accomplished that placed Him, as Man and Son always, with the Father in glory, Man in this blessed relationship; but it was a work of redemption that set His own, redeemed according to the value of that work, in the same glory and in the same relationships as Himself. And this was based upon the sure foundation of that work, in which God Himself and the Father had been fully glorified, and had made themselves known according to all their perfections. (Compare John 13:31, 32 and chap. 17:4, 5.) According to these perfections, the disciples are introduced into the position and according to the relationship of Jesus Himself with God. This was the necessary fruit of the work of Jesus; without this, He would not have seen of the travail of His soul.

For the first time Christ calls His disciples His brethren, and places them thus in His own relationships with God His Father. Judaism has disappeared for the moment, and as far as the old covenant is concerned; and the full effect of Christ's work, according to the settled purpose of grace, is revealed; believers are placed there by faith, and we possess the knowledge and power of it by the Holy Ghost which has been given to us, consequent upon Jesus having entered personally, as Son of Man, into the glory that resulted from His work.

The resurrection of Jesus has left behind man, death, sin, the power of Satan, and the judgment of God, and has brought heavenly glory into view; although, in order to bear witness to the reality of His resurrection, Jesus did not yet Himself enter into this glory. But as far as concerns the basis of the thing, that is to say, the relationship, it was established and revealed. The Jewish remnant, attached to Christ, becomes the company of the Son associated with Him in the power of the privileges into which He has entered, as risen from amongst the dead.

Mary having communicated these things to the apostles, the course of the outward development founded upon this revelation, is related. The disciples met that same day in the evening, and Jesus, the doors being shut because of their fear of the Jews, appeared personally, but in a spiritual body, in their midst, bringing them the peace that He had made by His blood. Divine peace, the gathering together, and the presence of the Lord, characterised their meeting. The apostles were to be eye-witnesses, and He shews them His hands and His side, irrefutable evidence that it was truly the same Jesus they had known, and they rejoice when they see

Him. Then they were to be His missionaries or apostles (sent ones), and He lays down divine peace as the point of departure: “Peace be to you,” He says to them; “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Then, as God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, the divine Son, the same God—here a risen Man—breathes upon them, communicating to them the Holy Ghost. Although symbolising the gift of the Holy Ghost, He was not yet sent, for Jesus was not yet ascended on high; but He was communicated as power of life by the risen Saviour, divine life—life according to the position in which He was, and which was its power. They lived by the divine life of the Saviour, and according to the state He had taken in rising. The Holy Ghost, descended from heaven, was to reveal to them the objects of faith, and lead them. Here, that which they receive is the spiritual and subjective capacity to enjoy them, making them personally capable of running the race in which the Holy Ghost was to lead them. They were fit for the service of their mission: He who should guide them was the Holy Ghost, who was going to descend from heaven.

This difference is found in Romans 8. Up to verse 11, the Holy Ghost in the believer, is the. spirit of life and of liberty, of moral power in Christ. After that (from verse 11) it is the Holy Ghost personally, acting as a divine Person. This goes on to verse 27.

Nevertheless, in this picture, which is the summing-up of the whole position, this fact (the Lord breathing on them) points to the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now their mission, the salvation that Jesus had just accomplished, was characterised in its first application by the remission of sins, the first need of the sinner, if he is to be reconciled with God; Luke 1:77; Matt. 9:2. It is not

here the eternal efficacy of Christ's work in itself, but the application of its efficacy here below, as a present, actual thing. In examining the bearing of this work, we find that the worshippers, once purged, have no more conscience of sins; but here it is the present application in this purification. The eternal efficacy of the work is not the subject of John's Gospel, which does not speak of it; but it is its administrative application.

Verses 19-23 of our chapter resume the position of service, in which the Lord places His disciples, as well as the gathering together of the children of God. Notice here that He said, in His life upon earth before resurrection, "Fear not": and if, as Immanuel, the Messiah, He disposed of everything in favour of His own when He sent out His disciples, here, on the contrary, they fear the Jews, and the Lord does not take away that fear, but replaces the power of His presence as Emmanuel the Messiah, by His presence in their midst, and by the peace He had made and that He conferred.

Thomas was not there. Eight days after, that is to say, on the following Lord's day, Thomas was with the others, and Jesus came into their midst. Responding to the doubts that Thomas had expressed before Jesus came, the Lord convinced him, by shewing him and making him touch His hands and His side. Thomas's doubts disappear. It is the expression, in this remarkable resume or sketch of the dispensations of God, of the position of the Jewish remnant in the last days. They will believe when they see Him, and Jesus makes the difference between believers who have not seen Him—our position—and those who will believe when they see Him. The blessing rests upon us. Thomas's confession, true and just as it was, shews, it seems to me, the Jewish

position. It is not the glorified Son of man, Jesus on high, but it is what the Jews will own when He returns; that is to say, that the Jesus whom they had rejected was their Lord and their God, their Deliverer and Saviour, the Jehovah who was to deliver them. The testimony of the others will not have convinced them. They will see and look upon Him whom they have pierced. Thus we find, in this chapter, besides the resurrection of Jesus, the epitome of the dispensation of grace from that event up to the Saviour's return: first of all the Jewish remnant, represented by Mary Magdalene, but introduced by a risen Christ into the knowledge of the Christian position and privileges—privileges that she announces to the disciples. Following upon this communication, the assembled disciples find the Lord Jesus in their midst, pronouncing upon them the peace that He had just made: then He sends them forth, founding their mission on the peace given, and putting in their hands the administration of the forgiveness of sins, communicating the Holy Ghost to them. Finally, the Jewish remnant at the end, which believes when it sees, but which does not enjoy the same privileges as those who believe during His absence, at a time when we do not see. Thomas (the remnant) would not receive the testimony that had been borne to him of the resurrection of Jesus.

## Chapter 21

This last chapter is purposely mysterious, and it presents to us what will take place when Jesus returns; but besides, the restoration of Peter's soul after his fall. Verses 1-14 shew what follows the return of Jesus, the third time He shews Himself. The first time is the day of His resurrection; the second time, a week after, when

Thomas was there; these two occasions present the remnant become the church, and the remnant at the end. Here, in this chapter, it is what is called the millennium. It is the third time that Jesus shews Himself to them, when they are together; in figure it was first of all for Christians, then for the Jewish remnant, and finally for the Gentile world. This is why Jesus had already here some fish on the fire, that is to say, the Jewish remnant. But, throwing the net into the sea of nations, the disciples gather together a mass of fish, without however, the net breaking. In the beginning (Luke 5) they had taken a mass of people, but then the net gets broken. The administrative order that contained the fish could not keep them according to that order, but here the presence of the risen Saviour changes everything. Nothing breaks, and He is again associated with His own, and in the power of the fruit of His work.

After this mysterious scene, He restores Peter, but it is by probing his heart, in making him known to himself. This is what the Lord always does. Peter had said, that if all denied Him, he would not. The Saviour asks him if he loved Him more than the others loved Him. Peter appeals to the knowledge that the Saviour had; Jesus confides His lambs to him. Once humbled, and having lost all confidence in ourselves, the Lord can confide to us that which is most dear to His heart: “Feed my lambs,” He says to him. Note well that Jesus does not reproach Peter with anything that he had done, but that He goes, for his good, to the very bottom of his soul, even to that false confidence in himself that had brought about his fall. Then, repeating His question even to the third time, which should have recalled to Peter his denial, three times repeated, He widens the sphere of

His confidence, and says to him, “Take care of my sheep.” Peter had strengthened the expression of his affection,52 saying, “Thou knowest that thou art dear to me.” The Lord takes up the word, and says, “Am I dear to thee?” Peter was troubled because the Lord again called in question his affection, and said to Him: “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that thou art dear to me.” He appeals to that knowledge that sounds all hearts, but this was to confess that it needed that in order to know it; for, according to all appearances, when put to the proof, he shewed himself unfaithful at the moment that demanded devotedness on his part, and men might have said that Peter had proved a hypocrite. But, thank God, notwithstanding all our weaknesses, there is One who knows what He Himself has put at the bottom of our hearts, and if He searches us and compels us to know both ourselves, and the root of evil in us, He recognises still deeper down that which He has created there; blessed be His name; and He overwhelms with grace that which His grace has put there, and trusts, once we are humbled enough, this grace in us, maintained, however, by the continual flow of His grace.

We see further in this passage, how dear His sheep are to Jesus. It is of them He thinks in going away, to provide their food and the care they need. But there is more in His grace towards poor Peter. He had lost the fine opportunity he had had. To save his life he had denied the Saviour, and that which the want of faith had lost is not always given back, even if something better be given us. If we cross the Jordan,53 we cannot go up the mountain of the Amorites any more, we wander in the barren desert. Only, God accomplishes His counsels. But here, the strength of Peter’s will having been proved

to be weakness before the power of the enemy, the immense blessing of suffering and even of dying for the Lord is granted to him; and that should take place, when it should no longer be a question of his will, but of submission to the power of others, where his faithfulness should be set in a clear light. Another should bind him, and carry him whither he would not. He should die, after all, for the Lord. It is then, when there is no more will of our own, no more strength, that we can follow the Lord.

Afterwards, in terms purposely mysterious, John's ministry and work are stated. The lambs and sheep of Jesus were the Jewish believers confided thus to Peter. The testimony was to be rejected by the nation, and terminated by Peter's death. But it should be otherwise with that of John. Peter, who sees him also following Jesus, asks the Lord what would happen to him. "If I will," says the Saviour, "that he remain till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me!" He did not say, as was supposed, that he would not die; but in fact his ministry makes known the ways of God to the end. All is left in suspense after him, until Jesus come, whilst the sphere of Peter's ministry has disappeared from off the earth.

Remark, too, that it is no question here of Paul's ministry. Peter had the ministry of the circumcision; the earth was the scene of it, and the promises its object, leading at the same time individually to heaven. John, whilst revealing the Person of the Son and eternal life come down from heaven, occupies himself also with that which is upon earth, then with the government and the judgment of God at the Saviour's manifestation down here. Paul treats of God's counsels in Christ, and of His work, to introduce us into the same heavenly glory, like

Him before the Father, His brethren already down here. This is not the subject of our Gospel.

32 Having come as a Man, Jesus never leaves the place of obedience, and receives everything from His Father's hand.

33 Compare 1 John 4:12, where the difficulty, that "No one hath seen God at any time," is resolved in another way; this comparison furnishes the most profound instruction as to the Christian state.

34 As to the earth, see Psalm 80:17, where it is in relation with Israel.

35 The final result is, that sin will be taken away from heaven and earth, as we have already remarked. Three other motives are given in Hebrews 2 for the sufferings of Christ. (See verse 9.) The destruction of Satan's power; the expiation of sins; the ability to sympathise with us.

36 We may except the first four verses of the first chapter. Compare for what is said in the text, 1 John 1; there, too, we find again the difference between the names of God and of Father.

37 This doctrine is fully developed in chapter 5.

38 This is not our subject here.

39 I have no doubt that the Old Testament saints were quickened; but we are speaking here of the work upon which their blessing, as ours also, was founded.

40 This title of Son of man, which Jesus always takes, goes a great way further than that of Messiah. It is taken from Psalm 8 and Daniel 7; Jesus always takes it in contrast with that of "Christ," which He only gives

Himself once, that is, at Sychar, in chapter 4; but He constantly adds to it His death upon the cross. (See Luke 9:21, 22.) It is the second Psalm that regards Jesus as Messiah, and shews Him to us rejected as suoh, but established in glory and authority later on by God.

41 The word, “seizes,” in the sentence, “the wolf seizes them,” is the same word as that used by the Lord, when He says: “No one shall seize them out of my hand.” The wolf scatters the sheep, but does not pluck them out of Christ’s hand, nor deprive them of everlasting life.

42 Literally “the believer,” it is his character.

43 The expression here used is a very strong one.

44 John does not speak of the church, either in his gospel or in his epistles; but that which is said in the text is as true of our individual place in Christ, as of the church.

45 If we examine with spiritual intelligence the different accounts of the gospels, we perceive at once a purpose that is not expressed in so many words, but by means of the circumstances themselves, although in relation with men. For instance, John does not speak of the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, although he was nearer to Him, and of the number of those that Jesus awakened from their sleep. It is, that in John, the Holy Ghost gives the divine side of this touching history. Thus here also the band of men is spoken of, who, coming to take Jesus, were thrown down at His presence. Matthew, who, nevertheless, saw it, does not speak of it. For him, Christ is the Victim, suffering and put to death; for John, He is the One who offers Himself without spot to God. It is the same everywhere.

46 See John 13:31, 32; ch. 17:4, 5.

47 It is universal, that is, it extends to everything; but here man only is in question.

48 “I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world.”

49 For indeed, the world has both seen, and hated both Him and His Father.

50 This is the best reading: the Received Text has, “those whom thou hast given me.”

51 The Holy Ghost is not the subject here, but He is nevertheless the power that was to produce this life in the disciples.

52 The two first times, Jesus says to Peter: “Lovest thou me?” using the Greek word agapao. Peter answers always, using the word Phileo: “Thou art dear to me”; and the latter is the word that Jesus employs the third time.

53 Read and compare Numbers 13 and Deuteronomy 1.

# On The Epistle To The Romans

## Introduction

In the Epistle to the Romans, Christians are looked at as men living and walking on the earth, but possessing the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit, so that they are in Christ. Their sins are forgiven; they are justified by the work of Christ. Their duty is to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, as they have been transformed by the renewing of their mind, that they may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (chap. 12:1, 2).

The epistle begins with the responsibility of man, proving all to be guilty on the ground of what they have done, and then shewing the result of the death of Christ in the forgiveness of sins and the justification of the believer. Afterwards the apostle considers the condition in which man is found consequent on Adam’s sin, and shews how he is delivered from the power of sin.

In Romans it is not a question of the counsels of God, except in three or four verses of chapter 8, and then only to prove that the work of His grace is unchangeable, and that, when once it has been appropriated by the call of grace, it is stable and sure, and is carried on until the glory. The work of Christ is accomplished, and those who believe in Him will be conformed to His image. Thus all is perfectly secure. Possessing the life of Christ, so that we suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified with Him. The epistle contains nothing more relative to the counsels of God. If we want to learn about them we must turn to the Epistle to the

Ephesians; while the Epistle to the Colossians instructs us as to the life of a man who to faith is risen. But in Romans we find the work of God in grace for the justification of the ungodly by the death and resurrection of Christ, and their acceptance in Christ, believers being looked at as in Him.

As already intimated above, the doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans divides into two parts, the first of which, up to chapter 5:11, treats of sins, the putting away of these, and the grace of God therein unfolded. From thence up to the end of chapter 8, the second part is taken up; namely, sin in the flesh, the condition in which we are found consequent on Adam's sin, as well as our deliverance from the same, and our new condition in Christ. Then follow as an appendix three chapters explaining how the doctrine of the universal condition of sin in which man is found, and of the reconciliation by faith of all with God, can be compatible with the special promises made to the Jews. The conclusion is made up of exhortations and the rehearsal of certain important principles. The exposition of the doctrine of the reconciliation of man with God by faith, contained in the first part of the epistle is introduced by a preface in which the gospel is founded on the Person of Christ, and is presented as the revelation of the righteousness of God.

We see then in this epistle how God has met us in perfect grace, when, according to our responsibility as men and according to His righteousness, we were totally lost; how out of pure grace He has provided for us salvation and eternal life, when we were alienated from Him by sin; yea, when, according to the flesh, we were in enmity against Him.

But before considering more closely the doctrine of the epistle, and the order and contents of its different parts, we may say a word about the apostle himself. He had never been at Rome; but, endued with divine authority, he was the apostle of all the Gentiles, and for this reason he could write to the Romans, although he had not been the instrument of their conversion. Some of them, indeed, he knew, for Rome itself being the metropolis of the known world, people from all countries met there. This, however, gives a special character to the epistle, different from that of most of his other writings. It is more of a treatise than a letter from the apostle to one of the assemblies founded by himself. Personal relations are omitted to leave room for positive doctrine, although at the close of the epistle Paul salutes many saints whom he knew, as at its commencement he sought to establish a link of affection with the Christians at Rome; still his apostleship is primarily the basis of his communications to the believers at Rome. No apostle had founded the assembly at Rome. Paul had not yet been there; and if later on Peter went there to offer up his life in testimony for the Lord, until then he had had nothing to do with Rome, being the apostle of the circumcision.

## Chapters 1 and 2

Paul begins the epistle with a reference to his office. He was the servant of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God; that is, so to speak, his title. He served the Lord, and to this end he had been called and separated, in quite a special way; he was hot amongst those who had followed the Lord on earth; he did not know Him thus. On the contrary, he had been the most violent enemy to the name of Jesus

on earth, and sought to exterminate this new doctrine—that is, faith in Jesus—from the midst of Israel, and to punish every adherent of it. This path was put a stop to by the Lord, who revealed Himself to him in glory, and now this very glory became the starting-point of Paul's service. It was the most signal proof of the work of reconciliation being accomplished, that He who had suffered for sins was now in glory; and not only that, but the persecuted Christians were acknowledged by the Lord, not as disciples, but as united to Him—the glorified Man, the Son of God in heaven. Thus Paul was called in an entirely special way; but he was separated also in a special way. The revelation of the Lord in glory separated him first of all from Judaism, yet not that he should turn to paganism; but, acknowledging Christ in divine glory as Lord, he was taken out "from amongst the people and the Gentiles" (Acts 26:17), and was sent into the world by the glorified Man, the Lord of glory, to proclaim an accomplished redemption, to deliver from sin all who should believe in Him, and the Jews from the yoke of the law. Therefore, henceforth, he knew no one after the flesh, not even the Lord Jesus; that is, not as the carnally-minded Jews desired to have Him here in the world, as Son of David, although fully recognising that He had come as such, and that He had a perfect right to this title. But the Lord had been rejected as Son of David, and now all should be pure grace, as well for the Jews as for the Gentiles, since the first had lost every title to the promises through their rejection of Him in whom they should have their fulfilment. God will assuredly make good His promises; but now all is of pure grace, and, through the risen Man, whom Paul had seen in glory. This point is clearly established further on in the epistle.

For the better understanding of the epistle, it may be well to remark, that Paul, although the Lord Jesus in glory was the starting-point and foundation of his ministry, goes no further in the doctrine of this epistle than the resurrection of the Lord. It is quite true that the position of the Lord in glory is assumed, and in the few verses which set forth the order of the counsels of God, the glory of the children of God is also not wanting; it is part of these counsels that the elect should be conformed to the image of His Son (chap. 8:29, 30). Nevertheless, when the apostle speaks of the groundwork of salvation, how one is justified and saved, he goes no farther than the Lord's resurrection; for what Christ has acquired for us is another thing from the answer to the question, How can a sinner be accepted by God, and how is he brought into the position of an heir of God?

In the Epistle to the Romans we find precisely this position of the heir, as made fit in Christ to stand before God, and to inherit with Christ as man, according to righteousness, as a new quickened man accepted by God; but the glory and the inheritance itself are mentioned but briefly. As soon as Christ, as a dead man, had been raised, man was brought into an entirely new condition, quickened according to the power of the Spirit and of resurrection. The work which abolished sin had been accomplished; our sins had been borne and made an end of by death; God had been glorified in the place where sin was; the strength of him who had the power of death had been annulled, even as death itself. There was a new man over whom death had no power. I do not speak here of the Person of Christ, of what He was in His nature, but of the new position of men into

which we are brought by the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus—of man in his new condition according to the counsels of God. It is there that we see the proof of the acceptance of the finished work of Christ according to the righteousness of God, as well as the pattern, if not yet of the glory, still of the normal condition of every believer in Christ. They are, so to speak, on the other side of death—of Satan's power, sin, and the judgment of God—because God had been perfectly glorified in Christ: they stand in the favour of God according to righteousness. That is the importance of the resurrection of Christ as the fundamental doctrine of this epistle, His death being presented as the basis of His resurrection, and that which gives to the latter its value— "Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

Thus Paul was called and separated from all men to preach the glad tidings of God, the message of this work of His love. This gospel had already been promised beforehand by the prophets in holy scripture, but now the announcement was no longer a promise. We have, it is true, precious promises for the path we must tread through this world, but the gospel is no promise. It is rather the fulfilment of the promises of God, in so far as they relate to the Lord's incarnation, His finished work, His resurrection (i Peter i: n, 12), and to His being glorified, although this last point is. not treated in the Epistle to the Romans. It should be observed here that the "holy scriptures "are the promises of God, and that the prophets by whom they were given are prophets of God.

In what, then, do these glad tidings consist? They are "concerning his Son "(the Son of God), "Jesus Christ our Lord." The Person of Christ is the primary subject of the

gospel; it announces His having come into the world. But here we have two things: First, the promises are fulfilled; inasmuch as He is Son of David according to the flesh; secondly, He is “marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead.” These are the two great accomplished facts which constitute for man the value of the coming of the Lord into the world. The promises are fulfilled; the Son of David was there. The Jews would not receive Him, and have thus lost the fruit of the promises, although these had their accomplishment, inasmuch as the Lord had come. But then the power of God has been revealed in the fact that the Lord, after having submitted Himself to death, has by resurrection been proved to be Son of God. Although the strongest proof of the power of God has been given in Christ’s resurrection, yet we see already in the raising of Lazarus a manifestation of this divine power, as well as later on in the resurrection of all saints. “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby,” John 11:4. He was, and is, the resurrection and the life. The power of resurrection is the proof that He is Son of God. This is not a fulfilment of promises, but the power of God there, where death had intervened as the consequence of sin.

With regard to the expression, “the Spirit of holiness,” I would notice that the Holy Spirit is, so to speak, the operative power in the resurrection as in everything that God has created or done. Thus Peter says, with regard to the Lord’s resurrection, “Put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18); and of the believer it is said, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up

Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Rom. 8:11. But why is it spoken of as "according to the Spirit of holiness"? Because the Holy Spirit is, as it were, the operative power of God for producing in man all that is well-pleasing to Him. This power is, of course, always in God. By it He created the world; by it He wrought in the instruments of the Old Testament and in the prophets. But now He had been acting in the human life of Christ, and in the production of the new form of humanity, according to this divine power. The prophets uttered what was given them to say, and with that the divine inspiration ceased; besides, what they announced was not for themselves. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. But Christ as Man was born of the Holy Spirit; His life, though human in every respect, was the expression of the power of the Holy Spirit. He cast out devils by the Holy Spirit. His words were spirit and life. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily, but His humanity was the expression of that which was divine by the Holy Spirit, in love, in power, and specially in holiness. He was the Holy One of God. By the Holy Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. In all things He served His Father; but His service was the perfect presentation of what was divine, of the Father Himself, in the midst of men—He, as to His humanity, by the Spirit, at every moment answering to the Godhead, the expression and effulgence of it without spot or blemish. All the offerings of the Old Testament are types of Christ; but in this connection the meat-offering is the corresponding and most striking type. Cakes of fine flour, unleavened, mingled with oil, anointed with oil, parted in pieces, and oil poured upon them. What a striking type, of the

humanity of Christ, which, as to its nature, was of the Spirit, and anointed with the Spirit, every part being characterised by the outpoured Spirit, and by which all the incense of His perfections was offered up to God as a sweet-smelling savour! So He had to be tried by fire, in death, to shew that all was a sweet savour, and nothing else. Finally, the power of the Holy Spirit was shewn in the greatest and most perfect way in the Lord's resurrection. Being put to death in the flesh, He was quickened by the Spirit. The Spirit, who in divine power had been energetic in His birth, and in His whole life, and by whom He at length offered Himself to God, manifested all His power in quickening Jesus from death. It is true indeed that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; also that He Himself raised up His body, the temple of God (John 2:19); but the Holy Spirit was the immediate agent in His resurrection (1 Peter 3:18); the body also of the risen One is a spiritual body.

Thus man has been brought by resurrection in the Person of Christ into an entirely new condition, beyond death, sin, judgment, and the power of Satan; and it was thus that Christ was proved to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection. This Spirit was the power of holiness throughout His whole life; for "by the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God," and according to this Spirit He is proved to be Son of God, and by Him was, even on earth, justified. As all was accomplished for God's glory by a man, who was the Son of God, and who, as man, had manifested His perfect obedience and love to His Father, man, according to the value of this accomplished work and the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, has been

brought into an entirely new position in the Person of the Son of God, so that by faith we are accepted and are sons. Christ, who, as Son of David, was the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, being rejected on earth, after He had accomplished the work entrusted to Him by the Father, entered as the risen One, beyond death which He endured as the fruit of sin, into the position of the second Man, the last Adam.

Thus we have here presented in the Person of Christ the two main points in the ways of God—the fulfilment of promise (although the Jews by His rejection have lost all right to it), and the revelation of the Son of God, proved to be such according to the quickening power of the Holy Spirit in a risen Man. Thus the power of God is manifested, not in the fulfilment of a promise, but in the present life and position of the second Man in connection with an accomplished redemption. But here the divine power of life and the new position brought about by resurrection are specially connected with the relationship of man to God, as put into this position, yet in the Person of the Lord Himself in power.

How blessed is the thought, that the eternal Son of God, become Man, has taken up this new position of which we have spoken, and that, as pattern and Firstborn among many brethren, who will be perfectly like Him according to the living power of the Holy Spirit, and in the glory itself. “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,” Heb. 2:11. The subject here, indeed, is not the glory; but the Lord could say, after His resurrection, when all was accomplished (not before), “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I

ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and unto my God, and your God," John 20:17.

Thus the subject of the gospel, to which Paul was separated, is Jesus Christ our Lord as Son of David for the fulfilment of the promises, and declared to be Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead. It is true, the apostle speaks in this epistle of righteousness, and sets forth all clearly and fully; but the principal object which he has in view is the Person of Christ Himself, and what He is as the fulfilment of the promises and as Son of God in power and in resurrection—that which the Holy Spirit presents as God's own object in the gospel. From Him, as already glorified, Paul had received grace and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations for His name. The Romans were amongst these nations. He does not address them as an assembly, as he usually did when writing to an assembly he had founded, but he addresses his epistle to all the beloved of God, called saints, which are in Rome. As apostle of the Gentiles, he could write to all with the authority of Christ.

In his epistles, he always gives the salutation of grace and peace from the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, names to which we often pay too little heed. In the one we have God Himself as Father, known as such in grace; in the other, the glorified Man, the Son of God, who is invested (and that officially) with presidency over the house and people of God. With the one we stand in the relation of children, with the other as servants.

The apostle would have wished to visit the Christians at Rome sooner, but had been hindered by Satan; for the work of the Lord is always pursued in presence of the

enemy, who seeks to stay its progress, be it through persecution, or through stirring up evil in the assemblies, with which the labourer must be occupied; be it through heresies, which absorb his time, or through all sorts of other devices. It is important for the labourer to observe this. He thereby learns dependence, and that the strength and energy of the Lord are absolutely needed. Therefore Paul, while giving thanks to God for the faith of the believers at Rome, which was spoken of in all the world, besought in his prayers that God would open his way to them. He longed to see them, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end that they might be established; but in the same breath he takes his place in love among them, by saying, “That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.” He was an apostle, and should act in love; as an apostle then, he should come down to the weakest, to raise them up to divine confidence. Often he had purposed coming to them, that he might have some fruit among them also. He was under obligation to all nations to bring the grace of God to them; and so, as far as depended on him, he was ready to preach the gospel to them also that were at Rome.

How anxious he is to express himself suitably! He could not call them Greeks, nor yet barbarians, for that would have been an offence to the inhabitants of the imperial city. He thinks thus of everything, so as to be useful to all.

This leads the apostle to the doctrine of the epistle. He was ready to preach to those who were at Rome because he was not ashamed of the gospel; “for,” said he, “it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that

believeth." Power of man it is not—this he explains afterwards still more distinctly and fully—not even for acquiring human righteousness. It is a salvation brought to man—a holy, a righteous salvation—but a salvation from God, by the power of God, and this, because the righteousness of God was therein revealed, in contrast to human righteousness. It is God's own righteousness in which we participate by faith; His righteousness on the principle of faith. All as to it is already perfect, before we believe in it. By faith we have part in it. This righteousness is not by the works of man, nor by the law, else it would be only for the Jews, who alone had the law. It avails rather for all men, because it is by faith, and so the Gentiles, if they believe, have part in it.

It will perhaps be of use to say a word as to the meaning of the expression, "Righteousness of God." Although it is quite simple, much misapprehension prevails as to its meaning. The Lutheran translation has instead, "The righteousness which avails before God." Now man's righteousness, according to the law, avails before God; none such may be found, it is true, but it avails before God; but it is not the righteousness of God, were it ever so perfect. In John 16:10 we see wherein the righteousness of God has been shewn; namely, that God has set Christ at His right hand in His own glory, because Christ has perfectly glorified Him. The righteousness consists in this, that the Father has exalted Christ as Man to His own glory—the glory which He had with Him before the world was; and God, as a righteous God, has glorified Him because He has been glorified in Christ on the cross; John 17:5; ch. 13:31, 32. In the above-cited passage (John 16:10), the Lord says: The Spirit "will convince the world of righteousness,

because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." By the rejection of Christ, the world has for ever lost Him as come in grace; but God has accepted and glorified Him. When the Lord speaks of the world, in John 17:25, He says, "Righteous Father!" on the other hand, in His prayer for His own, He says, "Holy Father! "(v. 11). Thus the proof of the righteousness of God lies in His having glorified Christ. When God was in Christ in the world, it had either to accept or reject Him. It has rejected Him, and is thereby judged, and will see Him no more until He come in judgment; but Christ, as Man, has perfectly, glorified God in all that He is, and God according to His righteousness has glorified Him. Now the gospel announces this righteousness of God; namely, that Christ, in what He has done for us, having glorified God, has been glorified as Man, and is seated at God's right hand, clothed with divine glory; moreover, that our position before God is the consequence of what Christ has accomplished. Our justification and being glorified are a part of the righteousness of God; because what Christ has done to glorify God, has been done/or us. We are the righteousness of God in Him; 2 Cor. 5:21. Christ would lose the fruit of His work if we should not be with Him in glory as the fruit of the travail of His soul, after He has glorified all that is in God, although in ourselves we are absolutely unworthy.

The apostle then sets forth why such a righteousness, the righteousness of God Himself, was necessary, if man was to be saved. Human righteousness was not to be found on earth, and yet righteousness was necessary. But since it is God's righteousness, and certainly not by our works, it must be reckoned to us through faith, on the principle of faith; for if the works of man contributed

towards it, it would not be the righteousness of God. But if it is through faith man participates in this righteousness, then believers from amongst the nations had part in it just as much as the Jews.

We see, then, that as the Person of Christ was placed in the foreground as the first, the second main subject of the epistle is the righteousness of God revealed upon the principle of faith, so that it is for all, and to be received through faith, and thus appropriated by the soul. What made this righteousness necessary is the universal sinfulness of man, for the wrath of God has been revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who possess the truth in unrighteousness. With regard to the heathen, the apostle gives two reasons for this wrath. First, the testimony of creation (vers. 19, 20); and, secondly, that, knowing God, they did not wish to retain Him in their knowledge but preferred idolatry (v. 21-24). For the invisible things of Him are seen, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, perceived by the things that are made from the creation of the world; so that what can be known of God is manifested among them, and consequently they are without excuse (v. 20). This does not imply that they know God according to His nature, but that they should have known Him as Creator; unless one is blind, a Creator is seen in the creation.

But God has not only revealed Himself as Creator. Noah did not only know Him as such, but also as a God with whom man as a responsible being had to do, as a God who had judged the world for its wickedness, who took note of man’s ways, and who would not have unrighteousness and violence. At the building of the tower of Babel they had learnt to know Him as a God

who had scattered them, because they desired to become independent in their own wisdom, and powerful in their own strength. Such a God, however, the heathen would not retain in their knowledge or acknowledge; they made themselves gods such as man could make, gods which favoured their passions; and instead of glorifying the true God, or being thankful to Him, they relapsed into the darkness of their own hearts. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." And because they would not maintain the glory of God, but gave it up for their lusts, God gave them over to these lusts. He gave them up to shameful passions in which they did things unbecoming nature itself, and filled with all ungodliness and controlled by their passions, they not only did such things themselves, but with deliberate wickedness they found pleasure in those that did them. There were, it is true, some who judged these infamous ways (chap. 2:1), but they did the same, and thus condemned themselves, and became subject to the just judgment of God, while also they despised the riches of His goodness and patience, not perceiving that this goodness led them to repentance. Instead of yielding to this leading, with a stubborn and impenitent heart, they treasured up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

The apostle comes now to an important principle, simple indeed, but throwing clear light upon the whole subject. Now that God is revealed, He deals with man according to his actions. In the day of judgment He will render to every one according to his deeds, be he Jew or Greek;

for there is no respect of persons with God. He had indeed chosen a people, and brought them near to Himself, to put man to the test, and to maintain the truth that there is but one God; but fundamentally there was no difference amongst men. All were sinners by nature, and all had sinned. We see also that God with regard to His people, although He had given them a law, always remained behind the veil without revealing Himself. But now the veil is rent, and man—first the Jew and then the Greek—must be manifested before Him, each one according to what he is in his walk and actual moral condition; and here there is no question whether his position be that of Jew or Greek. God, according to His righteousness, takes into account only the measure of light which each possesses. The apostle when he speaks of those who seek for glory and honour and immortality, supposes Christianity; for the knowledge of these things depends upon a revelation. God will give eternal life, without distinction between Jew or Greek, to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek these things. God would have the reality of divine life, not a mere external form. Those who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, must expect "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." All will be judged, every one according to his works, according to the light which he has possessed, without respect of persons. "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law… In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the

doers of the law shall be justified." If one from the Gentiles does what the law requires, he is accepted, and has the advantage over one who possesses the law and does not observe it. As we have said, it is no longer a question, now that God has been revealed, of external relationships, according to which some are "near" and others "afar off," but of what is just in the sight of God. In reality, one of the Gentiles who in spirit walked in love, did that which the law commanded; while a Jew, who had the law and walked in sin, could not be accepted of God. It is no longer a question of outward relationship with God, of His government of the world and of His people—in a word, of the government of God upon earth— but of the condition of the soul before God, and of the day of judgment, when the secrets of the heart will be brought to light, and man will be judged according to his works.

After the apostle has clearly laid down these great and important principles, he goes on to describe the actual condition of the Jews, as he had done with regard to the Gentiles in chapter 1. The Jews boasted of the law, and of the privileges they possessed; they knew the will of God, and were able to teach the ignorant; yea, they even boasted of God. But did they also teach themselves? On the contrary; they did all that which in their wisdom they taught others not to do. They dishonoured God whilst bearing His name. The one true God was blasphemed amongst the Gentiles through them, as it is written. They possessed privileges, but if the law to which those privileges belonged was broken, their circumcision became uncircumcision. And the Gentiles, if they observed the law, condemned those who, possessing the letter and circumcision, transgressed the

law. For he was not a true Jew who was one outwardly, but he whose heart was circumcised, who was a Jew in heart and spirit, not in the letter; “whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

## Chapter 3

The apostle now begins to meet the Jews on their own ground. Their advantage was great; the profit of the circumcision was “much every way,” chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. The apostle certainly believed this, and rightly. It is not a question, in this respect, of their all being individually converted; they enjoyed the privileges of the people of God which were nowhere else to be found; and if they did not believe, their unbelief could not set aside the faithfulness of God. (It is just the same now with professing Christianity.) The promises of God will be fulfilled through His faithfulness to His people Israel, although they have lost every right to them. But the apostle does not speak of this until later on (chap. 11).

But, it might be said, man’s unbelief, then, brings out only the more conspicuously the infallible faithfulness of God. And does not this fact of man’s unbelief, causing the faithfulness of God to come out more plainly, do away with God’s right to judge man? By no means; for according to this principle He could judge no one, because the wickedness of the nations also brings out His faithfulness all the more clearly. The Jews are just as responsible as the others for their unbelief, and that these would be judged the Jew did not in any way doubt. Thus, in spite of their privileges, the Jews also have fallen under the judgment of God. The apostle does not stoop to reply to the wicked insinuation of some— “Let

us do evil that good may come" —but merely says, "Whose damnation is just." Christians were, indeed, accused by the world of speaking thus. Grace is always the occasion of accusation, as long as the soul is not convinced of sin; but as soon as the conscience comes to the knowledge of sin, grace becomes the occasion of heartfelt gratitude.

If, then, the Jew had such privileges, was he not better than the Gentiles. No, in nowise. The apostle had before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they were all under sin. And now he cites a number of passages to prove that the Jews in their own scriptures are considered as being under the guilt and power of sin. With regard to the heathen there could be no doubt of it; they were entirely alienated from God, sunk in idolatry and the service of false gods, and living in lawlessness. But the Jew thought quite otherwise of himself. He had been brought near, and made to participate in all privileges. The apostle had himself acknowledged it as the greatest privilege of the Jews, that to them were committed the word of God, the oracles of God. But now what said these oracles, which related to the Jews, and in which they boasted as belonging solely to them? They said, "There is none righteous, no, not one." A whole series of passages, quoted by the apostle from the Psalms and Isaiah, demonstrate the thoroughly sinful condition in every respect of those of whom they speak. And that they speak of the Jews, they themselves must allow, according to their universal principle; for "we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." Thus every mouth is stopped, and the whole world guilty before God. The Gentiles are wholly without God; but the Jews are condemned by this

very word of God in which they boast. So that by works of law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The law, that they accepted as the rule of righteousness, proved that man was a sinner; it convicted and condemned him, and that expressly in his conscience, producing at the same time the consciousness of sin in him.

When the apostle had in this way proved that all men are sinners, he returns to what he had already laid down in chapter 1:17, as the principle of the gospel; namely, the revelation of the righteousness of God. All that comes between chapters 1:18 and 3:21 forms a parenthesis to shew that the righteousness of God is necessary because there is none in man. After this is done, the apostle enters more closely into the subject of the righteousness of God and its application to man. This righteousness stands in no relation to the law, which was only the perfect rule for man. But God cannot measure His righteousness by the standard of man’s righteousness, or his responsibility. It is according to this standard that He judges those who have had the law. His righteousness must be measured according to His own nature, and His nature is revealed in what He does. He must glorify Himself; that is to say, manifest Himself; for with God to be manifested is also to be glorified. If He judges, He judges man according to his human responsibility; if He acts, it is in accordance with His own nature. The law knows nothing of this nature; it says we ought to love God, but what is He? The law is adapted to man and his relationship towards God. The righteousness of God stands entirely outside all question of the law, of every description of law, unless the nature of God be regarded as such. He is a law for Himself,

perfect in His nature. His righteousness is now shewn in what He has done with regard to the Person of Christ, by having set Him at His right hand as the result of His finished work. The law and the prophets testified of it. The righteousness of God has been exercised in the acceptance and glorifying of Christ in virtue of His work, and in this acceptance we share by faith, because He accomplished this work for us. Precisely because it is the righteousness of God founded on the work of Christ, in that He died for a//, it has to do with the whole world and with all men. All who believe on Christ, whether Jews or heathen, have part in it, and in all the privileges which flow from it. Were it human righteousness it would have to be according to the law; were it according to the law only the Jews would have had part in it, because they alone had the law. But as it is the righteousness of God it is manifested for all, and righteousness is reckoned to all who believe. Thus the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is manifested for all sinners; it rests on all who believe in Him. “For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

By nature, then, all are found in the same condition, because all alike are in sin; but likewise grace also is the same for all, because the righteousness is God’s righteousness, and is the same for all believers, and, in consequence, all believers stand accepted in this righteousness on the same ground before God. God has openly set forth Jesus Christ as a mercy-seat, through faith in His blood, and has thereby shewn His righteousness in regard to the sins of the Old Testament

saints, which in His forbearance He had passed over. But now, inasmuch as Christ has died for them, His righteousness in thus passing over is shewn. By reason of this expiatory death which God had in view He could pass over those sins. Further righteousness is also declared at this present time. It not only throws light upon the ways of God in the past, but is also, for the present time, the manifestation of the ground of justification of believers through an accomplished work; it is therefore a present thing realised in the justification of all believers, according to the righteousness of a righteous God. God is just, and justifies in virtue of the work of Christ; yea, He shews His righteousness in doing so. Not as though we deserved it; but in justifying us God recognises the value of the work of Christ. Thus justification is a manifest known thing, because the work is accomplished.

There is, then, no room for man to boast, not even for the Jew, in spite of all his privileges. All boasting is excluded. On what principle? By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Man, whoever he may be, occupies the place of a sinner. Grace, and grace only, avails for all in the same way; for the conclusion has been reached, that one is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.” Such He must be, and such He was even in the Old Testament; although when all races of the earth were sunk in idolatry, He chose Israel out of their midst, in the person of Abraham, to preserve on the earth the knowledge of the one God; but now in grace He has taken His place as God over all men according to the truth of His immutable prerogative, inasmuch as it is

one and the same God who justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. The difference between the expressions here used— “by faith” (or “on the principle of faith”) and “through faith”—is explained by the fact that the Jews did indeed seek after righteousness, only on a false principle; namely, that of works. They must have righteousness, a divine righteousness surely, but on another principle—that of faith; and because it depends on the principle of faith, the believing Gentile participates in this divine righteousness through faith which is wrought in him by grace. Does this principle, then, make void the law? By no means. The authority of the law is fully established and confirmed, but to the condemnation of all those who are found under its authority. Nothing could so completely establish its authority as the fact, that the Lord took upon Himself the curse of the law.

## Chapter 4

But there was yet another proof that righteousness does not come from works of the law; namely, the example of Abraham, who had the promises before the law was given or promulgated. The apostle makes use of this part of Israel’s history and privileges in order to establish his main principle. “What shall we then say of Abraham?” he asks. “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Thus the principle of justification by faith is fully established in the example of Abraham. It is not of works; were it so, then the reward would have to be regarded, not as of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but

believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, faith is reckoned for righteousness. And it was with David as with Abraham. (The apostle adduces the example of these two men, because they form the chief sources of Israel's blessing.) David also describes the blessedness of the man whom God justifies without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute sin." Acceptance in Christ goes farther, it is true; but here, with regard to man's responsibility, we have the truth expressed, that for those who believe in Christ all is accomplished. Sin is not imputed to them at all; they are free from all guilt; there is no more any charge against them for ever. Of our position in Christ the apostle speaks later on. To be accepted in a new position in Christ, according to the value and acceptance of Christ before God, goes farther than justification. But this justification is perfect for us as responsible men.

But now arises the question, Is this blessing only for Israel? The example of Abraham decides this also. Faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. But when? Was it when he was in circumcision or when still in uncircumcision? In uncircumcision. We see, then, in this old decisive example of Abraham that, according to the will and declaration of God, the faith of an uncircumcised man is reckoned to him for righteousness. Circumcision was given afterwards to Abraham as seal of the righteousness of faith which he had being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, as well of the uncircumcised (that after his example righteousness might be imputed to them also) as of the circumcised, so that he is the father

of a true circumcision, not only of those who are of the circumcision, but also of all believers, who, in separation to God, walk in the footsteps of Abraham's faith which he had in uncircumcision.

Moreover, the promise that Abraham should be the heir of the world was not given through the law either to him or to his seed, but through the righteousness of faith; for the law came much later. Thus the whole history of Israel proves that it is not through the law that one participates in the blessing, but through faith. For if they which are of the law, as such, are heirs, then the promise is annulled, and faith by which Abraham received it is in vain and without result. More than this, the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression; sin indeed exists, but one cannot transgress what is not commanded or forbidden. But the apostle further develops from the Scriptures this fundamental principle of the blessing of believers from the Gentiles. He says, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all" (believers of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews), "before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (v. 16, 17). These words contain a new truth. They point to the power of resurrection, to the power of giving life where all lies in death, to creative power. This power admitted the Gentiles also. Abraham counted upon it when his body was in a manner already dead, and Sarah's womb likewise. All depends for faith upon the activity of this power which brings about what God wills. It is not only

that there is presented a mercy-seat for all those who draw nigh through faith in the blood of Christ to the place where God meets with the sinner, but there is a power which there, where there was nothing, creates children for itself out of dead souls. Still there is a difference between Abraham's faith and ours. He believed, and rightly so, that God could raise the dead; we believe that God has done it. And this is a very important difference. Abraham was right in believing God's own word; we have the same faith, but it is founded upon a finished work, and there the soul finds rest. Christ is risen. He, who was once offered for our offences, has been raised again that we may believe and be justified.

## Chapter 5

We are then justified by faith. With this the doctrine of Christ's work, in so far as it is a question of His blood and of the putting away of our sins through the shedding thereof, in a manner closes. The resurrection of Christ is the proof, that God has accepted this work as satisfaction for our sins, and assuredly for His own glory. What a blessed thought! The righteousness of God rests in the value of the work of Christ. This righteousness has been displayed therein by His having raised up His Son from among the dead, and justified us on account of Him; our sins are forgiven, we are washed clean in His blood. We have contributed nothing to our justification, and can contribute nothing; we are justified solely by the work of Christ. Our sins are the only part we have in the sufferings of Christ, by which we are cleansed before God. The value of this work has become our portion by faith, which, however, can add nothing to it. This work is

our highest motive for serving Him and for praising Him unceasingly for ever, but neither by it do we add aught to the work of Christ in the sight of God; it is complete, and not only that, but it is accepted and owned as fully sufficient before God. How blessed it is to know that all our sins are put away by God Himself, and this conformably to His own righteousness; inasmuch as He has raised Christ, on account of the work done by Him for us, an ever subsisting proof that God has accepted this work as fully satisfying His glory. This would be enough for our justification, but God has done yet more. He has raised Christ to His own right hand; there He sits now as Man at the right hand of God, until His enemies be made His footstool. “By one offering he has perfected for ever “(as regards the conscience) “them that are sanctified.” If they are not perfected by this offering, they never can be, nor can their sins ever be put away. For without shedding of blood is no remission, and Christ cannot shed His blood for us afresh; the work is done, or it carunever be done at all.

The first part of chapter 5 (vers. 1-11) summarises all the features of this infinite grace of God. Let us briefly consider the contents of these precious verses. The work is accomplished; faith knows that God has accepted it, because He has raised up Christ and seated Him at His right hand. Nothing remains between the man, born again and sanctified, and God, but the value of the work of Christ, and the acceptance of His Person. The blood of Christ is ever before the eye of God, and He Himself appears in the presence of God for us. This gives us, in the present, the most blessed privileges, as well as the hope of glory for the future which we shall enjoy with Him. We will not, however, go outside our chapter, but

confine ourselves to the consideration of the perfection of the grace of God, so wondrously developed in it. We find here what God is for us, whilst our position before Him in Christ is only taken up later on.

The first eleven verses contain the development of grace and the ways of God in grace; they speak first of what grace gives, and then of the experiences of those that are the subjects of grace. Christ having been delivered for our sins, and raised again for our justification, we are justified by faith; it is a complete justification; our sins are blotted out, our conscience is purged, and since the value of this work is immutable and for ever before the eye of God, so our justification is valid for ever. Consequently we are in possession of unalterable peace with God. No sins can be imputed to us, for they have been already borne, so that we can have no more conscience of sins. We are, it is true, conscious of the presence of sin in the flesh, but there can be no question of sins that Christ has already borne for us. We have indeed to humble ourselves, when anything occurs to remind us that we were guilty of the hateful fruits of sin, and have brought the load of them upon the beloved Saviour; but in the presence of God, where Christ and His blood are for ever present, we can never question whether all is forgiven. It is important that I should not confound the state of my soul with the value of a work accomplished outside me, with the accomplishment of which I had nothing to do, unless by my sins. But if my sins were laid there on Christ, they cannot any longer be before God. Christ has not got them on Him in heaven. If I come before God, I find there, on the one hand, because Christ is there, infinite, unchangeable love; and, on the other, nothing but perfect and divine

righteousness in Him, also because He is there. Infinite love, perfect and divine righteousness, and unchangeable favour, have become the believer's portion in Christ before God.

This leads us a step farther in the consideration of the fruits of grace. Not only are our sins put away through grace, so that we have peace with God, but we can also enjoy the grace of God by which peace is made, grace which is now ever in the heart of God for us. Grace has not only set aside every obstacle through the work of Christ, but it remains unchangeably the same in the heart of God. His eye rests on us with the same love as on Christ. Through Christ we have peace, through Him also access by faith into the grace and favour in which we stand in Him before God. We enjoy this favour in the presence of God. Not only does the heavenly Judge justify us, but a heavenly Father receives us; the light of His gracious countenance, beaming with a Father's love, illumines and gladdens our souls, and comforts our hearts, so that with perfectly restful hearts we are in His presence and walk in His ways; we have the precious consciousness of standing in favour. As regards our sins, they are all put away; as regards our present condition before God, all is love and favour in the bright light of His countenance; as regards the future, glory awaits us; it is our portion, although we do not yet enjoy it. Peace, divine favour, the glory in expectation, such is the portion of the believer, the blessed fruit of God's love.

Here it might, then, be said, We have all, for past, present, and future. The apostle has still, however, something to add. The glory being still a thing of the future for us, we have yet a path to trace to reach it, and God does not forget us in the path also. Therefore the

apostle says, “Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.” The wilderness is the place where the experiences of the redeemed are gone through with regard to their actual condition and the ways of God in government. Redemption is accomplished; we have been brought to God, as it is written: “I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” This is a fact, determined beforehand in the counsels of God, and now accomplished. The glory forms part of the counsels of God, and this also must have its fulfilment for those who are justified. The wilderness forms no part of these counsels, but it is the place where we learn His ways with us. Assuredly the thief on the cross went the same day to be with Christ in paradise, to dwell with Him there. His condition was fit for such a position. If on the part of man he has to suffer the consequences of his misdeeds, on the part of God Christ bore for him all that he was guilty of before God, and the justified sinner follows Him the same day into the mansions of bliss, but had not therefore to enter upon a long pathway of experiences. But in general, the believer has to tread his pilgrim way through a world where difficulties and temptations encounter and surround him on every hand. Christ has gone before us through this world, and we are called to walk in His footsteps; but our condition is thereby tested. Redemption does not here come in question, for it is just that which brought us into the wilderness. But we are responsible according to the calling and position in which redemption has placed us, to walk “worthy of God who has called us to his own kingdom and glory.”

The soul is tested by afflictions as to how far self-will is active; they make manifest the working of sin in us, that

we may be able to detect it. God searches us. By this means we learn on the one hand what we are, and on the other what God is for us in His faithfulness and daily care. We are weaned from the world, and our eyes become better able to discern and appreciate what is heavenly. Thus the hope that is already in the heart becomes more lively and clearer. It is in this light we can view all our afflictions, because we possess the key to everything— “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” The providential care of God in this respect is wonderful. “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” He thinks of everything that concerns His children, their characters, their circumstances, their trials; He does all that is necessary to bring them to the blessed end of their pilgrimage. After forty years’ wandering in the desert, the feet of the children of Israel did not swell, neither did their clothes wear out. He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

But we have yet to consider some other and very important points. We find the Holy Spirit mentioned here for the first time. The Holy Ghost shed abroad in the heart is quite another thing from the new birth. We must, of course, be born again to be able to receive the Holy Ghost, but the sinner needs something more than the new birth. In this passage the Holy Ghost is looked upon as the seal given to the believer of the value of the blood of Christ, and of the perfect purification in which he participates by the application of this blood. Washed from his sins, he becomes the habitation of the Holy Spirit. He is the unction, the believer’s seal, and the earnest of glory. By Him we cry, “Abba, Father,” Gal. 4:6. By Him we know that we are in Christ, and Christ in us;

John 14:16-20. And here, in this passage, we learn that by Him also the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. The ordinance of God for the purification of the leper (Lev. 14) furnishes us with a striking type of what takes place now with the believer. The leper was first washed with water, then sprinkled with blood, and finally anointed with oil. So now, also, a man is first converted, then made a partaker of the perfect purification wrought by the blood of Christ, and finally he receives the seal of the Holy Ghost. It is by Him we have the full assurance of our participation in an accomplished redemption by virtue of our blessed relationship with God and with Christ, and He is the earnest of the future glory. But all is the result of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ.

Thus we know God, we are made partakers of the divine nature, we have apprehension of our redemption and justification, and experience His faithfulness. He reveals Himself to our souls, and reveals to us also the glory which lies before us. We know that we are in Him, and that God dwells in us. Thus we glory, not only in what He has given us—not only in our salvation—but also in God Himself. A grateful child is not merely happy to have received much from his father, but his heart rejoices in having such a father as he has shewn himself to be by his loving ways. He is happy because his father is all that his heart could desire; he rejoices in what he personally finds his father to be, and glories in him. What a privilege for us to be able to boast in God Himself! That enhances the joy, and the enjoyment of grace. The highest character of our eternal joy is thus already realised here below, and profound peace accompanies this joy. What God is in Himself is the

infinite yet present object for a nature that is capable of enjoying Him, the Holy Ghost revealing Him to the soul.

With this ends the first part of the epistle, and the doctrine of the whole epistle. What follows is our standing in Christ, as well as the experiences which the soul goes through in entering upon this position. Then follow exhortations to those who are delivered. Our position is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, or in Christ. But to be truly delivered we must learn what the flesh is, and that by experience; then, and then only, do we pass from the legal condition of the soul into the spiritual in Christ, by virtue of the death and the life of Jesus Christ. But we shall return to this later on. We must first consider the position itself, or rather the two positions, and the doctrine relating thereto. It is of importance to remark here, that for deliverance it is a question of experience, by which alone it can be known. It is quite otherwise as to the forgiveness of sins. It is indeed true that God must teach us in all; but to believe that something is done, or has taken place, outside me, is entirely different from believing something about myself of which I do not find the practical realisation in myself. The work of Christ on the cross, by which I obtain forgiveness and peace, in so far as it has to do with forgiveness, is a thing accomplished outside me, and I am called to believe that God has accepted it in satisfaction for my sins. It is indeed the work of God in my heart that I believe this, but the thing in itself is simple.

A child who has to be punished understands perfectly what is meant by receiving forgiveness. But if it be said, If you believe, you are dead to sin; I reply, and all the more that I am in earnest and sincere, That is not true,

for I feel the activity of sin in my heart. The question, then, of our condition, is treated in the second part of the Epistle to the Romans. Are we in the flesh or in the Spirit? Are we in Christ, and Christ in us? Have we thus died to sin, or are we merely children of Adam, so that sin exercises its power in us even when we would not have it so?

The consideration of this question begins with chapter 5:12. The apostle speaks no longer of what we have done, as in the first part of the epistle, but of what we are, and that in consequence of Adam's sin. By the disobedience of one, the many (that is, all who are by birth connected with him as their father) were made sinners. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (v. 12). The continuation of this statement is found in verse 18. Verses 13-17 form a parenthesis, the object of which is to shew in what relation the law stands to this question, and to prove that man, without having received a law from God, is under the yoke of sin, and subject to judgment. Death is the proof that sin reigns over all men. Adam was under a law; he was forbidden to eat of a certain tree. The Jews, as we all know, were placed as a people under the law of Moses. Now, if Adam did not observe the original commandment, nor the Jews the law of God, they were definitely guilty in those points wherein they had disobeyed. They had done that which the law had forbidden. Verse 14 refers to what is said of Israel in Hosea 6:7: "They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Adam, like Israel, stood in relation with God by a positive law. With the heathen it was otherwise, they possessed no law. They had conscience, indeed, and

obedience to God was obligatory, but one could not say that in this or-that point they had transgressed a known commandment of God, because there was none. No law existed for them, so what they had done could not be reckoned to them as transgression. But sin was there; conscience took cognisance of everything that was done against its voice, and death reigned over them. The reign of death accordingly demonstrated the existence of sin, of which it was the consequence. Each one, even if not placed under law, had defiled his conscience, and death was the constant proof of the existence of sin. The Gentiles, who had no law, died just as much as the Jews.

Were the operations of grace to be limited, then, to the narrow circle of Judaism, because the Jews alone possessed the promises and all the privileges of a revelation, specially the word of God? On the contrary. Christianity was the revelation of God Himself, not merely of the will of God with regard to man; therefore this revelation necessarily reached far beyond the limits of Judaism. In Christianity there is no nation singled out with a law given to them. To Israel a law was given which taught what man ought to be, but it did not reveal God. It was accompanied, it is true, by promises, but promises which were not yet fulfilled; and at the same time it precluded man from approach to God. But Christianity brought in a revelation of God in love in the Person of His Son; it announced an accomplished redemption through His death, a perfect, present, justification by faith, in virtue of His death. It testified that the veil which precluded access to God was rent, so that access became perfectly free, and the believer can draw near with boldness by this new and living way. Thus eternal blessing is not in the first and sinful man,

nor yet through the law. For this, as applied to him, could not do otherwise than condemn him, because it formed the perfect, divine, rule of conduct for man; and since man is a sinner, it puts all under the curse who were placed under the law. The blessing of God is in the last Adam, the second Man and that as glorified, after having been previously made sin for us— in Him who met the power of Satan and subjected Himself to death, although He could not be holden of it; who underwent in His soul the curse and the forsaking of God, and whom God, having been perfectly glorified by His work, raised from the dead and seated as Man at His own right hand. A God who has revealed Himself in such a way could not be God of the Jews only.

In verses 15-17 the apostle shews that grace far surpasses sin. If (ver. 15) the consequences of Adam's sin did not remain limited to him, but extended also to his descendants, how much more the consequences of the work of Christ extend to those who are His! According to verse 16, by Adam's sin all his descendants are lost; but grace, the free gift, is not merely efficacious for the lost condition, but also for many offences. The superabounding of grace comes out in special relief in verse 17, where it says, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one" —one would expect the corresponding thought to be "much more life will reign"; but no, "much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

The parenthesis closes with verse 17, and the apostle resumes in verse 18 the train of thought interrupted at verse 12. The consequences of Adam's fall concern all; in the same way the free gift through the work of Christ

concerns all. The gospel can thus be applied to all; it addresses the whole world, all sinners. In verse 19 we have the actual application. By the disobedience of one man, the many connected with him, that is to say all men are found in the condition of this one, which is a sinful condition. By the obedience of one man, all who are connected with him, that is, all Christians, are found in the position of this One, namely, in a position of righteousness before God. Adam was the figure of the Man that was to come. In the one we were lost, in the other all those who are connected with Him are saved, righteous before God. The guilt of a man depends upon what he has done; his actual condition, on the contrary, on what Adam has done. Adam and Christ are the heads of two races; the one of a sinful, and the other of a race righteous before God, and here life and standing are inseparable. The law came in by the way between the first and second Adam. The root of the fallen human race was Adam, the first man. The Head and the root of life of the blessed and saved race is Christ.

But “the law came in by the way,” as the measure of what fallen humanity should have been, but never actually was. The law was never the means of life or of salvation, but the rule of what man ought to have been down here, connected with a promise of life: “the man that doeth them shall live in them” (Gal. 3:12); but it commanded sinful man not to sin. Its object was, as the apostle here says, to make the offence abound, not sinsfor God can do nothing to augment sin; but when sin was already there, He could give a rule to bring the fruits of it to light. Thus, although the law formed the perfect rule of conduct for a child of Adam, yet as a matter of fact it was always something by the way. Man

was already a lost sinner, and the law brought out the fruit of the rotten and corrupt tree. We shall see, further on, that it did more than this. In this passage we are only told that it made the offence to abound.

We get a glimpse, indeed, of the ways of God in the first, as in the second Adam. Man was a sinner, a lost sinner; Christ, a Saviour. The law was of use as a proof of what man was, because it required righteousness from man, according to the measure of his responsibility. The object of the law in the government of God was to manifest man's self-will in disobedience and transgressions, for without law there is no transgression. Now that supposes sin, as may be seen in the law itself. The judgment of God is exercised according to man's responsibility according to what he has done, whether without law or under law. His lost condition is another thing. He was lost in Adam; the world furnishes a proof of it in a terrible way, and our own hearts even more if indeed we know them. The disobedience of the one has alone brought in the condition. This condition is not a future judgment, but a present fact; we are constituted sinners. The whole family is, through its father, in the same condition with himself; separated from God, yea, driven out in enmity against Him, shut out from His presence, and without even a desire to enter into it. Man prefers pleasure, money, vanity, worldly power, fine apparel, in short, everything, to God, even when he professes to be one who believes that the Son of God has died for him in love. There is but one subject which in the world is intolerable; namely, Christ, and the revelation of God in Him, although it be a revelation of love. By the

disobedience of one the many have been brought into the position of sinners.

Thus the important truth here set before us is not the guilt brought about by wicked works, and the grace by which it has been put away, but the condition of the fallen children of Adam, as a general principle. (This is why the law is set aside as a secondary thing, although it was valid for the conscience of the Jew, and remains always a perfect rule of human righteousness, and also represented that rule wherever, supported by the authority of God, it was applied.) In connection with this there is the introduction of a new or second root of saved men, and this in the risen One, just as Adam is the root of fallen man. Adam did not become the head of a race till he became sinful, and Christ was not in fact the head of a new creation (although God from the beginning had wrought by His Spirit) until divine righteousness had been manifested in His being glorified. Now when the righteousness of God had been revealed, and indeed become applicable to us, in that Christ was glorified after He had borne our sins, and perfectly glorified God when He had been made sin—not till then did Christ become the fife-giving Head of the new race, accepted of God; and all, from first to last, is the fruit of the unfathomable, infinite, and unutterable grace of God. Grace reigns, but being founded on the work of Christ, reigns through righteousness. The end is eternal life, and that in its full and true character, according to the counsels of God, in the glory where Christ, according to this righteousness, has already entered as Man. Righteousness does not yet reign; it will reign in the day of judgment. But then human righteousness, namely, that which was due from man,

will form the measure of judgment; man will then be judged according to the duties towards God and towards his neighbour, which were imposed upon him by the righteous claims of God. But the original source of salvation for man is grace, because God is love and we are sinners; for grace is the exercise of love towards those who have no desert, no merit. And love has therein been manifested, so that the angels learn to know it by God's ways towards us. But God is also righteous, and must maintain righteousness, and His holiness cannot for ever tolerate sin in His presence. He has proved that all men lie under sin and are guilty, and then He has acted in His infinite love, not merely in forgiving sins (of which we have already spoken), but in providing an entirely new position according to His eternal counsels, and for His eternal glory, according to what He is in His own nature. The carrying out of this counsel, and that too in virtue of the work of Christ according to His perfect righteousness, is the expression and the manifestation of His infinite love. Love is therein manifested, in that He sent His Son and gave Him up for us to death and the curse. Righteousness is manifested therein, in that He has set Christ, who had glorified Him perfectly, at His right hand in divine glory—in that glory which as Son of God He had already with the Father before the world was, but to which He had won His title as Son of man, so that divine righteousness must of necessity give Him this place. And we have part in this glory of God, because the work by which God has been perfectly glorified was at the same time accomplished for us. We form part of the glory of Christ for eternity. He would not see of the fruit of the travail of His soul, if He had not His redeemed people with Him in glory.

## Chapter 6

But here the flesh, which wants to have its own righteousness, and the world, which affects to be the guardian of morality, brings forward an objection in order to resist the truth and grace which shew man to be lost on account of sin. They say, if by the obedience of one we are constituted righteous, it is then just the same whether we be obedient or disobedient. This objection only proves that he who makes it knows nothing of the truth, that he has no apprehension whatever of his own lost condition, nor of the new life which the believer has received, and which, because it is of God, cannot tolerate sin.

Let us observe here what important truths are involved in the change of ground on which man's relation with God rests. The turning-point is the cross, the death of Christ. The old man, Adam's race, has been tested without law, under law, and then under the revelation of grace and truth when the Son of God was in this world as Man. God Himself was come, manifest in the flesh, not to impute sins, but "reconciling the world unto himself"; and if the blessing of the race of the first Adam had been possible it ought to have taken place then; but it was impossible. Much is said of a connecting link found between God and man, but even God manifested in grace and truth found none. On the contrary, the death of Christ is the positive, definitive, and absolute breach between man and God. It was not only that man without law was under sin, nor that under law he was openly disobedient to it, but in rejecting Christ he refused the grace of God which shone forth in Him. The Lord said (John 12:31), in speaking of His death, "Now is the judgment of this world"; and in John 15:24, "They

have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Therefore it says, in Hebrews 9:26, "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared." The cross was morally the end of man; but at the same time, and by the same fact in the death of Christ, was laid the foundation of the new creation according to the righteousness of God. The same fact which on God's part has made an end of the first Adam, inasmuch as his race rejected the Son of God, has also laid the foundation of the new condition of man in the second Adam. Christ was made sin on the cross; sin was there judged, and the old man for ever set aside. Now access to God through faith has been made possible; in the resurrection, the new life, even for the body, has been actually brought to light, and the second Man has taken His place in glory. Just as the first man was driven out of the garden, to become the root of a sinful and lost race, so the second Man has entered the heavenly paradise as root and head of the saved race, as the righteousness of God which is valid for man; and so life and righteousness have become inseparable. Forgiveness through the blood of Christ is the most powerful motive for an upright walk; the resurrection of Christ in itself unites righteousness and life; it is a "justification of life" (chap. 5:18).

The truth that we are risen with Christ is not further developed in the Epistle to the Romans. As to the part we have in His death and resurrection, it only says that by faith we reckon ourselves dead to sin, that the glorified Christ is our life, and the Holy Spirit is given to us.

If, then, by the obedience of the One we are constituted righteous, and if there, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, "shall we continue in sin, that grace

may abound?" "Far be the thought," says the apostle. But in his answer to this question, he does not place us again under law. That would be nothing short of recognising the old man, the flesh, and, when we are already lost, to introduce afresh responsibility and condemnation; for the flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The answer of the Spirit points, on the contrary, to the death of Christ; but all that He has done is valid for us. The old man has proved itself irremediably bad, and this was, in fact, shewn in the death of Christ. It is impossible for me now, who am crucified with Him, to recognise the very man that put Christ to death— I am come to Christ, because man (I myself in my old condition) was such—and because I have now received a new life, Christ risen from amongst the dead. But we must consider this somewhat more closely.

In having been baptised unto Christ Jesus (our true confession of faith), we were not baptised to a Christ whom the world has received, or who found a connecting link with the first Adam. On the contrary, the world, man, rejected Him, and drove Him out of the earth; and in this way, as already said, it was shewn that a union between God and man as a child of Adam was perfectly impossible. Therefore God has begun afresh; we are born anew; Christ has, thanks be to God, as the rejected One, accomplished the work of atonement; He has acquired for those who believe on Him, justification, forgiveness, and glory. But He is the second Man, and in Him man is found in an entirely new position before God, as well as in an entirely new condition. A risen Christ is our life, a risen Christ our righteousness; the old man is for ever condemned. He who possesses Christ

as his life shares in all this, because he has part in His death and resurrection. In Romans the first part only is developed—we are dead with Him, have died with Him. He is indeed presented also as our life; but our resurrection with Him is not treated of, because the Holy Spirit here looks at Christians as men living on the earth. Christ is dead and risen; we are baptised unto His death. We have part in His death, inasmuch as He is our life. He, who is my life, died, and He died to sin. I recognise Him alone as my "I," and as this new "I," I reckon my old "I" as dead. According to this new life I am alive to God; but as regards my old man I have died with Christ. How could I still live the life of the old man, if as such I have died? Therefore, buried with Christ by baptism unto death, it behoves us to walk in newness of life. If we have part in His position, as dead to sin, we shall also have part in His resurrection. The apostle does not say that we have part in it, but that we shall have part in it. This resurrection life will be perfect in glory; but it expresses itself now already in a new walk; just as the power of the life of Christ, which, in a positive way, came out in His resurrection, was also actually manifested in His walk on earth. "Knowing this," says the apostle, "that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (that is to say, that sin in us as a whole might be annulled), "that henceforth we should not serve sin" (ver. 6); "for he that is dead is freed [or justified] from sin." But this requires fuller explanation.

First it is important to seize clearly that the Christian has not yet to die to sin, but that he has died inasmuch as he is crucified with Christ; now that he has received Christ as his life, he reckons the old man dead. It is not

only particular sins or lusts from which he has been delivered, but the old man as a whole is set aside, dead, and to be held for dead by faith which acts according to the new man. It is true that the nature of the old man is still present in us; our having died with Christ does not result in its having no longer any existence in us, but it has no more dominion— “that henceforth we should not serve sin.” There is no necessity to have even a single evil thought, although the nature which produces them still exists; but we do not in any way serve this nature, not even in thought, when the new life and the power of the Holy Spirit are active in us. The Christian is made free, not because his sins are for ever pardoned, but because he is dead to sin, crucified with Christ. As dead with Christ he is justified from sin, just because he is dead; but he is also alive in Christ. It is not only true that sin has no longer dominion, but the Christian is also free to yield himself up; he possesses a new nature, a new holy life. But to whom shall he now yield himself? — to righteousness and to God. This yielding of oneself is not the act of the sinner, as is very often falsely affirmed, but that of the delivered soul. The Christian, because he is purified, justified, assured of the love and favour of God, and in possession of a conscience made perfect through the blood of Christ, in that no sin can any more be reckoned to him, is free, has boldness before God. The same blow that rent the veil removed also all his sin. Now through the rent veil the light of God shines openly upon him, to shew that his garments are white as snow. He is set free from the power of sin, because Christ is his life, and, crucified with Christ, and now living by Him alone, he reckons himself dead as regards the flesh. He is free before God, and also freed from sin. In this liberty he yields himself to God.

Thus the new life, walking with God, gains already something along the way. We have fruits, even before we reach the glory, and this fruit is holiness. Blessed fruit! Beginning with being made partakers of the divine nature, we grow also in practical communion with God, by the growth of holiness in us. This growth does not set aside the truth that the new nature which we have received is perfect in itself. We belong absolutely to God, are bought with a price, separated from sin and the world. We belong to God, according to the value of the sacrifice of Christ, according to the new nature, and the power of the Holy Spirit. After the inward man we already belong to the new creation, although "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." We are in Christ, and in Him we are perfectly accepted. He is our righteousness, a righteousness which is fit for the glory; for He is in the glory according to this righteousness. But He is also in us as our life, and according to the power of the Spirit. This life in itself is perfect, and cannot sin; but we must also have a sanctifying object before us. Therefore the Holy Spirit takes what is in Christ and reveals it to us; yea, He reveals to us all that is up there where Christ is, and where the Father is also. By this we grow objectively in that which is heavenly; we are weaned from the world, live in spirit in the heavenly places, enjoy the Father's love, and become thus holy in practical ways.

We are sanctified according to the counsels of God the Father, through the sacrifice of Christ, by His blood; we are so, as to our being, because we possess a new nature, a new life; we are so by the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit; and we may add, by the word of God. The sanctification of the Spirit is brought

about by our being born of God. But we must, as I have said, have an object, and the divine nature, the life which we have received, is capable of enjoying this object, God Himself. By the word the Holy Spirit communicates to us the objects that are holy and divine. We are first born anew by the word through faith; then we are nourished by the same, and the heart is purified also by faith; and, indeed the one as well as the other by the revelation of Christ in the heart— "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," John 17:17-19.

If we would be accurate, we could not say that the new man, the life which we have received from God, is being sanctified; for the new life itself is holy, and inasmuch as we have received it, we are sanctified for God; therefore it is that in the apostolic epistles believers are called saints. But holiness in us is relative; that is to say, it refers to God, because we cannot be independent. No doubt an actual condition is thereby produced in us; but we are not holy as independent; for it is sin for a creature to be independent, nor is it possible to be really independent. Thus holiness in us is objective; this is an important principle. All that the Holy Spirit has revealed to us—the love of the Father and of Christ, the holiness of God, the perfection of Christ, His Person which has been given to us and delivered up for us, His being glorified now in heaven— all this operates in us, and forms the heart, the thoughts, the inward and thereby also the outward man, according to the object that we contemplate. All that Christ has done and suffered is concerned in it, not only because His walk and His ways are a pattern for us, but because they engage the heart

with Him. The affections of the heart are occupied with Christ and with His perfection, and He fills our hearts. That is sanctification; for this also fills the Father's heart. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life," John 10:17. The Father appreciates what Christ has done, and what He was in doing it, and it was done for us. We have holy thoughts in loving and appreciating what He has done, and what He was. Thus we have in us the mind which was in Christ. It is one side of the Christian character.

But the power of sanctification is wrought in us especially by the contemplation of the glory of Christ. The heart is indeed nourished by all that He was down here; we eat His flesh and drink His blood, enjoy also the bread which came down from heaven; but what transforms us into His image (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2, 3) is the glory in which He now dwells. Beholding this glory we are changed into the same image. The glory of Christ produces in us the energy of life, because we count all else for loss. The life and the sufferings of Christ engage the heart with Him. (See Philippians 2 and 3.)

He has for our sakes sanctified Himself, so that we might be sanctified by the word. Wondrous grace! wondrous association! This separates us from the world, associates us with what is heavenly, and conforms us to the heavenly. The end is eternal fife in this very glory, when our earthly vessels also shall have been transformed into the likeness of this glory.

With regard to holiness we learn further, in Hebrews 12:10, that the discipline of God has for its object to make us partakers of His holiness. In this passage we discover not only the unceasing care of God, but we

learn also the precious character of this holiness. We have deserved death as the mournful wages of our sad work; eternal life, the gift of God, has become ours through Jesus Christ our Lord; and this is pure grace. Who else could give us life—eternal life, divine life, but God Himself? Christ Himself is this life, sent from the Father into the world, and here revealed in manhood. Now “he that hath the Son hath life”; “he that believeth on him hath everlasting life,” 1 John 1:2; ch. 5:12; John 3:36. Although in the last verse (of our chapter) the reference is more to the result in glory, because in the counsels of God eternal life means perfect conformity to Christ in glory; yet it is none the less given to us now as life, although we are not yet in the glory. It is important for us to remark that it is the gift of God. Man had through sin earned death for himself; life, eternal life, in which we are capable of having fellowship with God, must be given of God. This life is Christ Himself; 1 John 1. He is the life which was with the Father, and came down here. In Him was life; he that hath the Son hath life, and this life will be fully manifested in glory. That is the principle of the new standing. We have died with Christ to the old standing, and Christ is become our life.

## Chapter 7

The apostle treats a new question in this chapter: What is the effect of the law in relation to our new position? The principle is simple. We have died with Christ; but law has dominion over a man only so long as he lives. If a murderer is condemned to death, and suffers death according to the sentence, the judicial authority has nothing more to do with him. Now we have died; yet if it were only by the law that we were put to death, we

should be not only dead but condemned also. But now we have died with Christ, and He has borne for us the consequences of sin, as guilt. Thus we are dead, and the law, therefore, exercises no more authority over us. Christ has taken the place of the law. Instead of a law which forbade sins and lusts, and must of necessity condemn us (because the flesh, to which the law addressed its claims, was not subject to it, nor could be), we possess a new life in Christ; while by faith we reckon the flesh dead, which is disposed to sin. The apostle makes use of marriage as an illustration; death dissolves the tie between husband and wife. Thus we are dead with respect to the law, and are connected with another husband; namely, the risen Christ. The figure is employed here inversely. Not the law, but we, as having had our life in the flesh, have died. Such is the doctrine. In what follows, the apostle speaks of experience. This in no wise annuls the important principle, but rather confirms the deliverance of the soul from the law by having died with Christ, who is now become our new life. According to the figure of marriage employed by the apostle, we are connected as by marriage with Christ, and thereby are brought into an entirely new position—that of relationship. Therefore it says, “When we were in the flesh.” Being “in the flesh” means standing on the ground or in the position of the first Adam before God, and being responsible to Him according to this position. It is not a question here of guilt, but of the deliverance of the soul from the yoke of sin. When one is lawless, and seeking nothing but pleasure, the conscience can indeed be awakened for a time, but the power of sin is not felt. He goes with the stream, and is not aware that he is under the dominion of sin. When one is converted one is first occupied with guilt, with the burden of sins.

Even when one has learnt to know the forgiveness of sins, and to believe that one is a child of God, the form of experience may indeed be changed because it is no longer a question of justification; but the soul is none the less troubled so long as, in the path of experience, it is not delivered from the power of indwelling sin. The question ever afresh arises, “How can God accept me, or how can He delight in me, when sin, which I cannot overcome, is still present?” As long as forgiveness is not known, the question is, “How can I obtain forgiveness?” If it has been found, the question still remains, “What am I before God? How can such an one as I be accepted? May I not really have deceived myself?” In a word, the eye is solely directed to that which we are in ourselves before God. We see that sin is still there, and yet a Christian ought to obtain the victory over sin. Such an one is in fact, or in the condition of his mind and thoughts, still in the flesh. We have already remarked that the position is found in the first four verses. The fifth and sixth verses lead us on to experience. In the flesh we were connected as by marriage with the law. This gave neither life, nor strength, nor confidence in God; it forbade sins, and imputed them to me. Not only that, but it gave occasion to sin in the flesh to become active so as to bring forth fruit unto death. It brought sins and lusts before the heart by forbidding them. If a heap of money lie on the table, and I am told not to take any of it, immediately the desire to do so is awakened in me. Or if I say, “I have something here in this drawer, but no one must know what it is,” instantly every one, small and great, feels a desire to open it. The passions of sins are in no way of the law, but by it. It supposes, however, the existence of the flesh, and that we do not possess the strength of Christ. But now (in Christ) we

are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held. In the flesh we were under the yoke of the law; the flesh was the source of sins, and now for faith it is dead, that we may serve in newness of spirit. The death of the flesh, of the old man, forms the basis of the transition from bondage in the flesh to liberty in the Spirit. At the same time this death stands in connection with redemption.

But how is this end to be attained? This is quite another thing from desiring it. The doctrine is presented very clearly and simply in the word of God. But there are many who, according to this doctrine, know that the Christian is dead with Christ, and even raised with Him; who believe also that they have died with Him, because the word of God so plainly declares it; who do not doubt that they are children of God, and that such a position belongs to the child of God, and who, in spite of all this, are not delivered. There are even upright souls, who, seeing that they do not walk as they would wish, begin to doubt, and to ask if they are not hypocrites, if they have not deceived themselves. They believe, and rightly, that God looks for something in them other than He sees. They make everything depend on what they are in themselves before God. But that is law, and not grace. The answer to the question, how the condition of liberty is reached, is developed from verse 7 onwards.

In order to be truly delivered, one must learn, and that by experience, that one is captive to the power of sin, and has no power to deliver oneself, even when desiring to be free. To this end God makes use of the law, and the desire of the new man to be free from the yoke of sin that he hates. Thus the Christian learns, not that he has sinned—this is not here the subject under consideration

—but that while he would like to attain to holiness, a principle of sin is at work in his flesh. The law teaches him that God cannot permit this; his renewed mind recognises that God could not allow it; neither does he himself desire it. And yet this principle of sin exists, powerfully active, too strong for him to be able to free himself from it.

On this account the law has not only established with divine authority, the duties for all human relationships, but has also added, “Thou shalt not lust.” That is a touchstone for man, bringing clearly to light what his state is, even if he has not outwardly sinned, even when through conversion his will is directed to holiness. This holiness after which he seeks he cannot attain. When he was without law, the sentence of death was not felt, if he had not done anything against the voice of his conscience. He lived on at ease, not carrying about with him the sense of condemnation. But the law came, and pronounced condemnation on lust. Experience teaches that this lust exists in the heart, and now conscience feels the sentence of condemnation; lust itself is awakened, and all comes to light. Conscience feels the sentence. One would like to do good, but finds that evil is constantly present.

The law says, “This do and thou shalt live.” The converted man, over whose conscience the law exercises its power, regards it as the law of God. The fear of God is in his heart, and he would fain do what the law says. We speak here of the condition of one who is converted, not of a delivered soul. Since the law promised life to the one who kept it, it was accordingly given for life; but since the flesh is not subject to the law, it was found to be in reality for man unto death. The upright converted

soul makes experience of this. It is well to remark here the difference between a natural man who has only conscience, and the condition of a man as here presented to us. The conscience discerns between good and evil. God has taken care that man, become a sinner, should bring conscience with him into the world. It condemns according to its nature what is evil; man none the less practises evil. A heathen, whose will is not changed, might say, 'I approve indeed what is better, but I do not desire what is good, and follow what is evil.' But it is not thus with the man of whom the apostle here speaks. His will is renewed; he delights in the law of God. That is the mind of Christ Himself, and proves that the man in whom this mind is found is converted, and in the bottom of his heart has received a new life. Conscience in the unconverted man leads him to acknowledge what is good; but the will of the flesh remains ever the same. He lives even in the flesh, has indeed a conscience, but not a new will. The will, on the contrary, is not lacking in the man described in Romans 7, but the power to do what he would. It is the condition of a soul which desires good which is in question here.

In verse 13, the apostle goes on to describe the effect of the law on the experience of the soul who thus desires what is good. In the previous verse it is recognised that the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. The question now naturally arises, "Was then that which is good made death unto me?" In nowise. But sin worked death by that which is good (the law) in order that sin might be fully manifested, might assume its true character, and become exceeding sinful, in that it has made use of what is good to bring about death. The evil does not manifest itself only as evil in itself, but also as

disobedience, because it is forbidden, and thus through the prohibition becomes exceeding sinful. Sin in man has a strong will; in that he wills to do what is evil, even when God has forbidden it. If my child runs out to amuse himself instead of doing his tasks, it is a bad habit; but if I forbid him to run out, and he still goes on with the bad habit, it is disobedience besides. By the commandment sin has become exceeding sinful. It shews that in me not only were there evil lusts, but that self-will which commits the evil, in spite of God's prohibition, is also there; God and His word are despised.

But we learn yet more from the law; namely, our weakness, even when we would do good. The converted but undelivered man does not find it in him to do what he desires to do; he lacks the power. He finds that he is carnal, sold under sin; that is to say, a slave to it. He knows that the law is spiritual; but he is in the flesh, carnal, under the yoke of sin, to which he is sold as a slave. Conscience is active in so far as by the law he knows the will of God, and he sees indeed in the law not only external precepts, but something which condemns the springs of evil in the heart. He may be outwardly blameless; Saul and many others were; but they were thereby full of self-righteousness. But the law in forbidding lust might as well forbid us to be men; therefore God has added the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet."

It is not here, then, a question of what I have done, but of what I am, and thus for the first time I discover that in me there is no good thing. I would do good, but I do it not. I am under the yoke of sin in the flesh. I acknowledge that the law is good; I hate sin, and yet I do it. But what I hate, I am not myself; I do, indeed, hate

it. Thus taught of God, I learn to distinguish between myself and what I do. As the apostle says, “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” Yet this is not liberty; that requires power. But it is none the less a very real comfort, by the way, to have learnt not only that in me dwells no good thing, but also to distinguish between me and the sin that dwells in me. I delight in the law after the inward man; the conscience is in activity, and the will is controlled. What is still wanting is power, and that is not there because of redemption not being fully known. We learn, experimentally, not only that we do nothing good, but also that we are unable to do it; the yoke of sin is ever there. And this is precisely what has to be learnt; viz., that one has “no strength” to do the will of God.

Up to this, then, three truths have been spoken of, which have to be learnt experimentally:

1. In the flesh dwells no good thing.

2. We have to distinguish between the self, that would do good, and the sin that dwells in us.

3. There is no power in us to overcome sin in the flesh as long as we are not delivered; we are rather overcome by it.

We cannot then deliver ourselves; on the contrary, we have to be delivered; and the soul must be brought to the knowledge of this. “Who shall deliver me?” is the expression of the consciousness that we cannot do it ourselves; we look round for another. That is what we have to learn, not our guilt, but our weakness—our utter powerlessness, our dependence upon God. But here there are several things for us to notice.

Only one who has been in this condition, and has come out of it, can describe it. It is impossible for a man, who has got into a bog, quietly to describe his situation as long as he is in it. He only feels that he is sinking and perishing, so that he can do nothing but call for help. But after he is delivered, he can calmly describe it all. One who has never been in such a situation might perhaps say to him, “Why did you not go on until you found a firm footing?” “Well,” may the other reply, “that is easily said, but in the bog when I lifted up one foot the other sank in all the deeper.” That is just the state of the soul in Romans 7, described, it is true, by a Christian who had himself been in it, but is now delivered. I say, “by a Christian”; for when the apostle says “we know” (ver. 14), this is Christian knowledge. But the experience is that of individual consciousness. Thus, when he says, “I am,” it is experience and not doctrine. Everything in the experiences communicated to us here is legal throughout. The person concerned consents to the law that it is good; yea, he delights in the law. The conscience and the will are right in divine things; but both have the law as object and measure. We do not hear a word of Christ or of the Spirit; the law is the only object before the soul. But in verse 25 true liberty is reached, and the delivered Christian thanks God. Conflict, it is true, continues; we find this in Galatians 5:16-18. But there it is said that the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, but the Spirit against the flesh. If, however, we are led by the Spirit we are not under the law; that is, not in the state described in Romans 7.

## Chapter 8

This deliverance stands in the closest connection with redemption, not so much with regard to forgiveness as with regard to our having died with Christ. We have already seen that there are two main points in redemption: namely, the forgiveness of sins, or justification, and deliverance: liberty before God, and liberty from the yoke of sin in the flesh. Now if we have died with Christ, we have died to sin, and are no longer in the flesh before God. Life in the flesh is no more our position, because Christ, after having died, has become our life. Sin in the flesh is judged, condemned—not forgiven— and that in the death of Christ on the cross. The power of the life of Christ is in me, is my life; yet not only that. Sin in the.flesh, which was my torment, is already judged, but in another; so that there is for me no more condemnation on account of the flesh. Death has entered in where this condemnation, the judgment of the flesh, has been executed, and those who are in Christ Jesus have died with Him, so that there is no more condemnation for them. What has happened to Him has happened to us; He died to sin, and the condemnation is passed. This is our condition with respect to sin in the flesh. If the first part of the epistle has shewn clearly how sins are taken away, we find here as clearly how sin in the flesh and condemnation are taken away; yea, for faith the flesh itself is done away with, since we are dead.

This condition is described in the first three verses of chapter 8. The Christian is in an entirely new position: he is in Christ. Not only has the grace of God been manifested in the sins of the old man being forgiven, but his position also is an entirely new one; we are

redeemed. It does not say, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those whose sins are forgiven,” but “to them which are in Christ Jesus.” This position is the result of the work of Christ, of redemption. The Christian is delivered with Christ from his position in the flesh because he has died with Him, and has part in the life of the risen and glorified Christ. Thus he no longer stands before God as a child of Adam responsible in the flesh, but as one who has actually, by death, left this position, and who is alive in Christ. The flesh is considered as dead, as condemned, as no more to be seen, but as vanquished in the death of Christ. The Christian is alive in Christ; he is no longer in the flesh. (Compare Galatians 2:19, 20.)

The expression, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” in the second verse of our chapter, may appear strange to many readers. It means, I believe, that the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus operates constantly, unceasingly, according to one and the same principle, in order that, since the flesh has been condemned in another, it should be dead in the believer. Through the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit the believer is in Christ. How could there be any more condemnation there? God has already occupied Himself with sin in the flesh at the cross, and now, if one may say so, is done with it. The new life and the Holy Spirit give to the quickened believer his place in Christ; he is redeemed and alive before God in Christ. It is not a question here, as already said, of forgiveness of the sins of the old man, but of a new living position in Christ. This is what is presented in the first three verses of chapter 8.

After that, in chapter 7, the experience of the first position, as well as deliverance through redemption in

Christ, and the continuance of the two natures as an actual fact, have been described, the first three verses of chapter 8 give us the new position in Christ in contrast with the position in the flesh, or in the first Adam. In the first verse, no condemnation; in the second, the power of life; in the third, the judgment of sin in the flesh in Christ on the cross. The second verse is characterised by life in Christ according to the power of the Holy Spirit, and that as a principle unceasingly in operation. The judgment of sin in the flesh in the sin-offering of Christ marks the third verse. Sin is, indeed, still there, and, if we are not faithful, if we do not practically bear about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, it is active in us; we lose communion with God, and dishonour the Lord by our behaviour, in not walking, according to the Spirit of life, worthy of the Lord. But we are no longer under the law of sin, but, having died with Christ, and become partakers of a new life in Him and of the Holy Spirit, we are delivered from this law. We are in a new position, in the second Adam before God, and our normal walk is according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. Thus the law of God and its requirements are fulfilled in us. The doctrine does not go beyond that, because it is a question of one who desired the law.

But the law is not the measure of Christian walk; it only says that he who walks according to the Spirit fulfils it. When I was in the flesh I could not fulfil it, because the flesh is not subject to the law, nor can be, but only follows its own will. But the Spirit will assuredly not lead us into that which is contrary to the law of God. The law is practically fulfilled, while we are not under the law, but under the guidance of the Spirit. We are under the influence of the Spirit and it is not a question of a law

outside us, but of a nature in us, which possesses an object suitable to it. They who live after the Spirit, according to the new man, desire the things of the Spirit; but they that are after the flesh set their minds on the objects of their fleshly lusts. We have not to do with an imposed law, but a new mind, the mind of a nature which is born of the Spirit, and which seeks what is spiritual; a holy liberty, in that the man, as having died with Christ, is delivered from the yoke of sin, possesses a holy nature born of God, has holy objects before him, and is the habitation of the Holy Spirit, who produces holy thoughts in the heart, and reveals the things that are above. The minding of the flesh is death to the soul; it bears no fruit, and separates the soul from God, now and for eternity. But the minding of the Spirit is life, a well in us which springs up into everlasting life, and fills the soul with peace. The mind of the flesh rebels against the authority of God. Inasmuch as it makes up the activity of the natural man, it has to do with the law, which is the expression of this authority of God over man, and the rule of his responsibility as a creature of God. But it is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be, because self-will will go its own way; besides it has no love whatever for what pleases God. Thus they that are in the flesh, who are found before God in the position of the first Adam, and walk according to the life of the first Adam, cannot please God.

In verse 9 we find a very important principle. When can one say, “I am not in the flesh”? The answer is: When the Holy Spirit dwells in him. A man may be converted, and yet be found in the condition described in chapter 7; as, for example, the prodigal son before he met his father. He was converted and in the right way, yet he desired

only to become a hired servant of his father. But as soon as he had met his father we hear nothing more of that, but only of what his father was and what he did for him. Deliverance comes through the personal knowledge of what the Father is, known in Jesus Christ, through the knowledge of redemption. And this knowledge is only found in a soul in which the Holy Spirit dwells. A converted man, as such, is only in the Christian position when he has been anointed. When the prodigal son was on the way to his father's house, his conscience and heart were reached by grace and rightly directed; but he was not yet clad in the best robe, nor did he yet know the father's heart. He first entered upon the Christian position when he reached the father; and from that moment we hear no more of him, but only of the father. Before that, his condition was not fit for the house.

In verse 10 we see the other side of the Christian relationship. At the beginning of the chapter it says, "Which are in Christ Jesus"; and here, "If Christ be in you." Thus on the one hand the Christian is in Christ; and on the other, Christ is in him. We are in Christ, according to His perfection before God; Christ in us is the ground and measure of our responsibility, but in which He is the source of our strength, and that according to what has been said in the beginning of the chapter. A Christian is a man who has not only been born again (which is absolutely necessary), but in whom also the Holy Spirit dwells. He directs the eye of the believer to the work of Christ, and teaches him to appreciate its worth. He it is who gives him the consciousness that he is in Christ, and Christ in him (John 14), and fills his heart with the hope of glory, with the certainty that he will be like Christ and with Christ

for ever and ever. When the converted man knows that his sins are forgiven; when he can cry, “Abba, Father”; when he has the knowledge that for him there is no more condemnation, he is delivered; he stands in liberty before God, and is freed from the law of sin and death. But he is a full Christian, “perfect,” only when he understands by the Holy Spirit that he occupies the position of Christ, that God is his Father and God in the same manner as He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—when he understands that he has passed out of the position of Adam into the position of Christ, that he has died with Christ, and thus that it is no more he who lives, but Christ in him; Gal. 2:20.

This liberty is presented and developed very clearly in the Epistle to the Romans, but only so far as that the believer is there looked at as having died with Christ, and possessing Christ as his life, whereby he has been delivered from the law of sin, as well as from the law of Moses, because this has dominion over a man so long as he lives, and cannot go further. The epistle, however, does not take up the counsels of God and the glory of our new position, though this doctrine is approached in chapter 8:29, 30. But in general the epistle treats of man’s responsibility, as well as of what God has done to cleanse and to justify us from our guilt, teaching us at the same time how we have been delivered from the law of sin and death by our death with Christ. The above-mentioned verses open out a somewhat more extended view; but the new position is not further developed. The epistle does not go beyond the truth that we have been quickened by Christ; it does not speak of our resurrection with Him. This, the starting-point of our new position, we must look for in the Epistle to the

Colossians. That to the Ephesians develops this doctrine yet further, from another point of view, however. There we do not find that a child of Adam must die, and rise again, and that the believer has died, although he is represented as risen with Christ. The unconverted man in the Ephesians, is looked at rather as dead in sins, and all is a new creation. We find there all the counsels of God, both as to believers raised with Christ, as to Christ Himself, as to the children of God, and our union with Christ as His body.

It is well to remark, that while the first three verses of chapter 8 give us the principles of deliverance, so the following eight verses describe the practical character and the result of deliverance. The Holy Spirit acts in the new life, instead of a law given outside it to which the flesh opposes an insuperable resistance. The Spirit furnishes the new life with heavenly objects, in which it finds its joy and sustenance. “The mind of the Spirit is life and peace.” All this depends on the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” We have already said that the condition of such an one is similar to that of the prodigal son before he had found his father. If, on the other hand, the Spirit of Christ dwells in one who is converted, the body for him is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the body lives by virtue of its own life, it brings forth nothing but sin; the spiritual man, according to chapter 6, reckons it dead.

The Spirit is not to be separated from the new life. He is the source of the life, and characterises it. Now if the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus dwells in us, He who raised up Christ from the dead will also quicken our mortal bodies on account of His Spirit which dwelleth in

us. That is the blessed end of the life of the Spirit in Christ Jesus, or rather the beginning of it in its true perfection. The Spirit is God's Spirit. God has raised up Jesus as Man—Jesus is His personal name. But it was not for Himself that He lay in death; Christ is His name, as come for others. If, then, the Spirit of God dwells in us, He who raised up the First-Begotten, will raise up also the sheep He has redeemed.

Three characteristic names are here attributed to the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God (ver. 9) in contrast with the flesh; the Spirit of Christ as the formative power of the new man; and the Spirit of Him who raised up Christ from among the dead, because He is in us the pledge of our resurrection.

The glorious end of delivering grace is reached; the circumstances by which we are surrounded remain indeed the same; and the following verses of the chapter give us our position before God in connection with these circumstances.

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (v. 12). That brought us into a bad condition and a bad position; nor are we any longer in the flesh, but are delivered from it through redemption; through the Redeemer's death we have been brought into a new position, of which we have also the consciousness by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The two lives, the two principles, are directly opposed to each other; and it is important to observe (what has already been set forth as a principle in chapter 2) that where these natures act, they bring forth their natural results. I can overcome the flesh by the Spirit; I have the right and the duty to reckon it dead.

But if the flesh lives, it brings forth death; and if I live according to the flesh, death is my lot. The nature, and the working of this nature—its result—are ever the same. God can give me a new nature, and—His name be praised for it—He gives it to me in Christ; and that in such a way that I have part in redemption, and in the power of the Spirit can overcome the old nature, and walk according to the Spirit. But the nature of the flesh is not changed essentially, any more than its consequences. If I live after the flesh I must die. Grace redeems; gives me a new life in which I walk after the Spirit and reckon the flesh dead; and, finally, it gives me the glory. But this new life does not live after the flesh; nay, it cannot do so. If I live after the flesh, I die, alienated from God; for the fruit and wages of the life of the flesh is death. But if through the Spirit I mortify the deeds of the body, I live, and shall live for ever with God from whom this life of my soul flows, and whose Spirit is its strength and guide.

This gives the apostle occasion to speak of the position of those led by the Spirit of God, and in the first place of their relationship to God. The Spirit that they have received is the Spirit of adoption; they possess Him because they are children. But extensive results in blessing flow from this relationship; if they are children, they are also heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Meanwhile the condition of the creation around us here below, and particularly that of our own bodies, is not yet restored. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, just as also the friendship of the world is enmity against Him. The principles of the flesh, as of the world, are opposed to us; both are subject to the bondage of corruption. Moreover the world through which we have

to pass as pilgrims, being alienated from God, and under the dominion of Satan, furnishes us with innumerable sources of sorrow and pain. The Lord Jesus was in this world “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” A world of sin in contrast with His holiness, a world of sorrow and suffering in contrast with His love, could not but be for His heart a source of sorrow and pain. He found Himself isolated and alone in such a world, and not even His disciples understood Him. Full of sympathy for all, He found sympathy nowhere for Himself. If such did once break through the darkness of man’s heart, it was something so wonderful that the Lord says, “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her,” Mark 14:9.

Could we, if we have the Spirit of Christ, go through such a world without feeling its condition? Should not our hearts be sad when at every step we see the dominion of sin, and have daily before our eyes the sorrows of sinful man, when we see that all is subject to the bondage of corruption? The time will come when we shall behold the universal blessing of the world, and when we shall rejoice with God Himself in it. But now, as those that are renewed in heart, and delivered, we can but suffer in the midst of an undelivered creation.

Let us remark, however, that this is suffering with Christ, not for Him. To suffer for Christ is a privilege, a special gift of God; Phil. 1:29. One cannot be a Christian without suffering with Christ; for how could the Spirit of Christ produce in us a different mind from that which was in Christ as He passed through this poor world? The glory of the children of God is a subject of hope; now the sufferings of Christ in weakness are reproduced in a

heart in which Christ dwells. We suffer here, where Christ suffered, as joint-heirs of the kingdom of love, where all will be joy and gladness. Although we are already, as a present thing, children, or rather sons, and therefore heirs also, we do not yet possess the inheritance; indeed, we cannot yet possess it, for it is still corrupt, defiled, and in this condition would not be suitable for us. Christ is seated at the right hand of God until His enemies be made His footstool. Then shall we reign with Him and be like Him.

Therefore the apostle, who knew well what suffering was, could say, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” We possess the relationship of sons, and have besides the consciousness of it, and therefore no longer fear. Where there is fear, the heart has not the knowledge of this position. The Spirit in us cries, “Abba, Father!” and it cannot be otherwise, for He only came after all was accomplished which has placed us in this relationship. Christ has given us His own position before God. After accomplishing all that was requisite, as well for the glory of God as for our redemption, and, indeed, where it was necessary for both—namely, in the place of sin— “made sin,” as Man He has gone up into heaven. In Him a Man has entered into the glory of God, beyond sin, death, the power of Satan, the judgment of God against sin, so that He could send the message by Mary Magdalene— “Say to my brethren, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Thereupon He sent down the Holy Spirit as the blessed result of His ascension as Man into heaven, after having accomplished all for our redemption. This Spirit dwells in believers who rest in

the value of His blood, so that their body is a temple of the Holy Ghost; 1 Cor. 6. They are sealed by the Spirit and have the earnest of the inheritance, the consciousness that they are the children of God. He makes present to us Christ who is in heaven, and causes us to enjoy unseen things. It would therefore be impossible that He should be a Spirit of fear or of bondage.

But the operation of the Spirit in us is two-fold. He leads us to appreciate the glory that lies before us, and gives us the sense that the sufferings into which we are brought in endeavouring to reach this glory, and in faithfulness to Christ, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, so that we can pursue the path of God with fresh courage and endurance. He helps our weakness likewise, that we may take part, according to God, in these sufferings; and that, by the Spirit, our hearts may be vessels of sympathy answering to the heart of Christ, while by our groans we give expression before God to the groans of a suffering creation. What a precious position, to be able thus to realise His glory and love, who came down into the midst of a suffering creation, so that, while by our bodies having part in a fallen creation, our hearts by the Spirit can be the mouth-piece of the whole creation, and can express according to God its groans before Him. Into this feeling the heart of Christ entered to the full, in perfect love and perfection. Inasmuch as He, though truly Man, was in Himself absolutely free from sin, which had brought this suffering upon the creature, His sympathy with the consequences of sin for us was all the more perfect. “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,” Matt. 8:17. At the grave of Lazarus, seeing

Mary and all the Jews weeping, He groaned in His spirit, and was troubled.54 To us also, though as fallen creatures, weak and imperfect, is given by the indwelling Spirit to take part in the sufferings of creation, and that not with selfish impatience, because we suffer ourselves, but according to God. The way the apostle presents the condition of creation around us will make this experience clearer; although we have already considered some points of it, we can nevertheless begin afresh at verse 19.

It has been already observed that we have to suffer in the world because it is all lying in sin and disorder, while we have been brought back to God; and further, that we have also to suffer in hearty because we dwell in the midst of an undelivered creation. But the eye of faith is directed to the glory which lies before us, and this joyful prospect, together with the fellowship which we enjoy with God, already down here, makes us realise that all around us is unreconciled.

This creation awaits its redemption; but it cannot be delivered and restored until the children of God, in the glory of the kingdom, are ready to take possession of it as joint-heirs with Christ. Christ sits at the right hand of God until these joint-heirs are gathered. It is a blessed thought, that as we have brought the earthly creation under the bondage of corruption, so now it must wait for our being glorified, to be restored and delivered from this bondage (v. 19). It is not the will of the creature that subjected it to this bondage; we have done it— but in hope; for this condition will not continue always: the creation will be restored. God, however, in the counsels of His grace, begins with the guilty, with those who are most alienated, with those in whom He will, in the ages

to come, shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus; Eph 2:7; compare Colossians 1:20, 21.

Creation, inasmuch as it is only physical, could not enter into the liberty of grace; it must await the liberty of the glory of the children of God. When they are delivered, and their bodies which belong to this creation are changed and glorified, and when Satan is bound, then the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption in which it lies enthralled. For we know, we that are instructed in Christian doctrine—that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. We know it yet more because we have the firstfruits of the Spirit; and "we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Thus we wait to possess that which is saved in hope; not only to possess eternal life as life—that we have already— but to be glorified, by our bodies, which belong to this creation, being changed, and we made like unto Christ the Lord, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:21).

Thus peace is made; our sins are put away, we have a new life, possess the earnest of the Spirit, the glory lies before us in hope, and we shall be like the Lord. But as long as we have not reached the glory, we groan with the creation. For while realising our glorious hope, we feel the sad condition of the whole creation being connected with it as fallen, by our bodies. Free before God, free from the law of sin and death, filled with the hope of glory, we are led, through the knowledge of this glory, and of the full deliverance of the creature, to groan, which is the expression of its groan to God. But

our groaning is not a complaint, the fruit of discontent, but the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The Spirit directs our eye to the glory, where we shall have no more occasion to groan; and leads us to feel according to the love of God, the suffering of a creation under bondage; we at the same time feel it, because by our bodies we still belong to it. The Spirit of God which dwells in us forms these feelings according to God. God searches the human heart, and He finds this operation of the Spirit in the heart of the delivered Christian. The Spirit Himself is there, the source of divine sympathy with a groaning creation (v. 27). The eye of the Christian will be, by the indwelling Holy Spirit, directed above, to the glory and the rest of God, where all is blessing. With joy he realises what is before him. But, as he is still in the body, he feels so much the more the condition of a fallen creation, shares its groans, and thereby becomes the voice of a creation groaning before God. But his groaning is in the spirit of love, according to God, because in his relationship with God he is perfectly free. With regard to his condition, he is saved in hope; but before God his heart is free in the consciousness of His love. He can rejoice in hope—the hope of glory; his conscience is perfect; the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. And thus according to this love he can sympathise with the universal misery around him. He knows not, it is true, what remedy he ought to look for in his prayers; perhaps there is none. But love can express the needs, and does it according to the operation of the Spirit; and although the Christian does not know what he should ask for, He who searches the hearts finds the mind of the Spirit in his groans; for it is the Spirit that in the depths of the heart gives expression to the feelings of need. Being ourselves still

in the body, and as to our own condition forming part of the groaning creation and awaiting the redemption of our bodies, our sympathy is the more heartfelt.

But although we know not what we ought to pray for, yet there is what we know with perfect certainty, namely, that God makes all things work together for good to them that love Him, whom He has called according to His purpose.

What privilege is ours through grace—privilege that we enjoy by the Holy Ghost! We are children of God, we know our relationship with God, and can realise it by the Holy Ghost; we cry, “Abba, Father!” are children, therefore heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The Spirit reveals to us our inheritance, and gives us to understand what it is. We shall be like Christ in the rest of God, and in His own rest—perfectly to the glory of Christ, and shall reign with Him over all things. As men upon earth we lift our eyes to the glory of God which is our hope, and which we shall share with Christ, there where all is pure conformably to the purity of God. Looking at this poor world, our hearts are filled with the love of God, in which we share the sufferings of an undelivered creation, and that according to God; so that He who searches the hearts finds therein the mind of the Spirit, who produces in us this sympathy with the sufferings of the fallen creation in order that we in our groans may become the mouthpiece of the creation before God. And as from our lack of intelligence we do not always know what we should pray for, the word of God comforts us with the assurance that God, according to His own will and love, makes all things work together for our good.

This leads the apostle to say a few words as to the counsels of God, although this is not the subject of the epistle. He does so only to shew the foundation of all blessing. Otherwise the epistle treats, as already remarked, of man's responsibility, as well as of the grace and the work of God to deliver us from the consequences of this responsibility.

God acts constantly in behalf of those who are called, for they are foreknown; and whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. Moreover, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." All is grace, and therefore all is secure. Thus also God does not terminate the course of the manifestations of His grace until the object is attained; the activity of God's grace does not cease until they that are called are glorified. The whole teaching of the gospel leads us back to God and to His thoughts, which cannot fail, and cannot be hindered. And there we find, His name be praised for it, that God is for us. The apostle develops this doctrine in verses 31-39. We see the proof of God's being for us, first, in what He gives, then in His justifying us, and, finally, in that nothing can separate us from His love. Such is the blessed consequence of the whole teaching of the Epistle, "God is for us"; that is the source of blessing; that is the conclusion the heart draws from all that is here revealed of Him. Not only has the righteousness of God been glorified and satisfied in the work of Christ, but we see also that the love of God is the source of all; and that changes all our thoughts as to God. It was just on this point that the doctrine of the reformers of the sixteenth century was defective. Far be

it from me to depreciate the value of these men. No one could be more thankful for the deliverance from superstition which we gained by the Reformation; no one can more highly appreciate than, I do the faith of those who even sacrificed their lives for the truth. It would be impossible for me now quietly to write of what was wanting in their doctrine, if they had not joyfully given up their lives for the maintenance of the truth. Nevertheless, the truth remains ever the same in the word of God. The reformers taught, it is true, that Christ had done all that was requisite to satisfy the righteousness of God, but not that it was the love of God that gave the Lamb, His own Son, to accomplish the work. According to them, God was ever the Judge, reconciled indeed to us through the work of Christ, but not known as the One who loved us when we were yet sinners. In John 3:14 the Lord says, “The Son of man must be lifted up,” for God is a holy and righteous God. Then in verse 16 follows the motive of all: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son.” The practical consequence of the teaching of the reformers was—not that they thought of or perhaps desired it—that the love is in Christy and that God sits on the judgment-seat as a cold Judge. But “grace reigns through righteousness,” Rom. 5:21. In the day of judgment righteousness will reign. Love has established the righteousness of God in our favour in Christ. Righteousness was needed; love has provided it.

Thus we know that God is for us according to His infinite love, and according to His eternal and immutable righteousness. The first proof of it is that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us; “how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Yes, we can

count on Him to give us every good thing; but how can He, the Holy One, be for us in view of our sins? It is just in that, that we have seen how fully He is for us, for He has given His Son even for our sins. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? “God Himself justifies us, who shall condemn us? Let us observe that all is here attributed to God. It does not say, we are justified before God, but “It is God that justifieth”; so that the apostle may well exclaim, “Who is he that condemneth,” whoever he may be?

Then he changes somewhat the form of the sentence. He must think of Christ, and then through Him he sees also all the difficulties of the way disappear. Not as though they did not exist; they are there; but they disappear because Christ Himself has passed through every difficulty. Become man, in His love, He has experienced all the trials of the way, all human sorrow, all that in which the enemy has sought to oppose the faithful servant of God in the path of holiness, even unto death. Accordingly, not only do we overcome, by His assured power, but we make experience of His love in a special manner. The sufferings are the pledge of a better glory; and while as Man He has passed through everything, as God He has thereby proved His infinite love, and we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

In every respect God is for us. Precious truth! He has given His own Son, He will give us all things. He Himself justifies us, who shall condemn us? And nothing can separate us from the love that has been thus proved. All that is against us on the way to glory cannot, as the creature, be greater than He who is above all. God is for us in Christ, in Him who overcame all. Not only is the

path which He trod—as Man so as to suffer, and as God to manifest all love in the sufferings— the proof of His love, but, following Him in this path, we also experience His love. Nothing can separate us from this love.

## Chapter 9

The doctrine of the epistle closes with chapter 8. The two principal questions which concern man as a sinner—his guilt and his sinful condition; in other words, what he has done and what he is—have been fully treated. Christ died for our sins, so that we (believers) are justified; and we have died with Christ, so that we are delivered from the power of sin and the flesh. All the deeds of the flesh are forgiven us, and we are no more in the flesh, but in Christ. There is, therefore, no more condemnation for us, and no more separation from God.

But this doctrine, complete in itself, still left a difficult question unanswered; that is, in respect to the condition of the Jews. The apostle has clearly demonstrated that the Jew is guilty because he has transgressed the law, and that consequently there is no difference between the Jews and the heathen; all have sinned, are guilty before God, and subject to His judgment. The Jews could not deny that they had transgressed the law; but they could appeal to the unconditional promises made to them in Abraham and their other forefathers. Now chapters 9-11 meet these difficulties.

There are undoubtedly unconditional promises made to the Jewish nation. But, in the first place, they are not all Israel that are of the stock of Israel; and what is still more important, they have rejected Him in whom these promises were to be fulfilled, and in whom their fulfilment was offered to them, thereby losing all right to

such fulfilment; “they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.” But then, after that all blessing, for them no less than for the heathen, is become a matter of pure mercy, the apostle shews that God, who is unchangeably faithful, will in grace accomplish all that He has promised. We find the proof of these principles in chapters 9-11.

In the first place, the apostle gives expression to his unalterable love for his people. His heart was filled with sorrow at their rejection; yea, so far was he from being indifferent as to this, that he would rather have seen himself accursed, separated from Christ, than the beloved people. As Christ Himself, when from the summit of the Mount of Olives He saw Jerusalem stretched out before His eyes, wept over it on account of the hardness of heart of the people, or as Moses once (Exod. 32:32) interceded for the idolatrous people, so here we find the apostle giving expression to the same feelings of love and sorrow. This wish was not the expression of serious and calm deliberation, neither did it belong to the moment then present; but it had arisen from a heart deeply oppressed by the thought of the rejection of the people beloved of God—his kinsmen according to the flesh. It was the exclamation of a heart unable to repress its overwhelming feelings. He enumerates their privileges up to the Messiah descended from them according to the flesh, for his heart was yet full of all that appertained to them in connection with God. Moreover, he does not speak as if the word of God had failed in its object, “For they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children.” In Isaac only had the seed the children’s place before God. The children of the flesh are not on that account children of

God, but the children according to the promise are alone counted for the seed. Ishmael did not belong to this seed of God; for the word, “At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son,” is a word of promise, and does not refer to Ishmael. If it be objected, “But Hagar was only a bondwoman, a concubine,” such, however, was not the case with Rebekah; and to her it was said concerning the children which should be born of her—of her only, and at the same time, and that before they were born, or had done either good or evil (that the purpose of God according to the election of grace might stand)— “The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written: Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” If, then, the Jews would not recognise God’s sovereignty, but desired to take their stand upon their descent from Abraham after the flesh, they must also allow the Edomites and Ishmaelites to have part in the promises; this, however, they would not tolerate.

However, important as this may be, it is not all that the apostle has to bring forward as proof of his position. He asks, “Is there unrighteousness with God? Far be the thought.” According to His divine title He can without doubt shew mercy to whom He will, as He says also to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” And what was the occasion on which God spoke thus to Moses? When Israel had made the golden calf, at a time when God, if He had not retreated into His own sovereignty in which He was free to shew grace, must have destroyed the whole nation except Moses and Joshua; so that then, according to the carnal Jewish principle, the Ishmaelites and Edomites must have become heirs of the promises,

while Israel would have been shut out. We find the same principle in Israel's deliverance out of bondage in Egypt. God had not made Pharaoh's heart bad, it was so already; but He hardened it, that He might glorify His name and power in all the earth. Thus He shews mercy to whom He will, and whom He will He hardens. His ways with Israel were a clear and indisputable proof of it; for otherwise their enemies would have become heirs of the promises, but they themselves would have been excluded, and the glorious beginning of their history would have been falsified.

Further, the apostle proceeds to consider the doctrine which is connected with this exposition, and applies the whole to the ways of God with Israel and with the heathen of that time, anticipating the objections of the flesh. What becomes, then, of man's responsibility? Why does God still impute sin to man? Who hath resisted His will? The apostle answers these questions in a threefold manner. First, as creatures of God we have not the right to judge His actions; that which is formed cannot say to Him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? This absolute right of God forms the foundation of the apostle's argument. If the rights of the creature must be maintained, how much more then must the Almighty God have His own? He judges men, but men are not competent to judge Him. The apostle here comes to facts, and shews how God had endured the wicked with much long-suffering, in order to make known His power despised by them, and has revealed His wrath against hardened wickedness in them; how, on the other hand, He makes known the riches of His glory in the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory. God is not subject to the opinions of men; but the order of His

revealed ways is, that He endures the wicked for whom judgment is meet, and prepares the vessels of mercy for glory, that is to say, Christians from among the Jews and Gentiles. The force and bearing, thus, of the apostle's argument is this: If God is not entirely free to act according to His election and His determinate^, purpose, and the Jews would rely upon their natural descent (as they actually did), then they must admit the Ishmaelites; but if they refuse their admittance on the pretext that Ishmael was the son of a slave, on no pretext can they reject the Edomites. Not only so, but with the single exception of the family of Moses, and perhaps that of Joshua, the Jews themselves would have had to be excluded, because it was only by the will of God that they were spared at Sinai. Since, however, God does what He wills, He also saves souls from amongst the Gentiles, as it is written in Hosea. The apostle says, in verse 24, "Us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Accordingly verse 25 has its application to the people of Israel; verse 26, however, to the Gentiles, who are not called His people, but "sons of the living God." Peter, writing to the Jews, quotes only the first passage. Paul brings forward besides a passage from the prophet Isaiah, in proof of God's having foreseen and predicted the setting aside of Israel. A remnant only should be spared; had this not been the case they would have "been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrha."

The Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, had then attained to righteousness, but the righteousness which is of faith; whilst Israel, following after the law of righteousness, missed the mark. And why? Because they sought righteousness by means of the law, and not by

faith. “For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

## Chapter 10

The apostle then enters more fully into this subject—the difference between legal righteousness, and that which is by faith, the righteousness of God. This is of the utmost importance. Legal righteousness is human righteousness. True, there is no such thing; but conscience feels, and rightly so, that man must have righteousness. Where there is confidence in self, one presumes to accomplish this righteousness, and to be able to offer it for God’s acceptance. That man is responsible is perfectly true; but not only has he never fulfilled his responsibility, but he has not even made a beginning, because the flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The carnal man is contrary to God. The righteousness of God is in God Himself, in His being; it is exercised in grace towards men, and imputed to them through Christ. One’s own righteousness is nothing but pride and want of conscience; it is only found where the heart is not divinely enlightened. For the light of God gives us clearly to know that we are sinners, and brings this upon the conscience before God. In this light the law also, applied by the Holy Spirit, can convince of sin, but it cannot produce righteousness for us; for the ministry of the law is the ministry of death and condemnation; 2 Cor. 3.

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:17); and we have become this righteousness in Christ;

2 Cor. 5:21. Let us examine how this has taken place. On the cross Christ was made sin for us, and there bore all the believer's sins. In this position He perfectly glorified God— His majesty, truth, righteousness against sin, His love to sinners, yea, all that He is; and that by having proved His obedience unto death, and His love to His Father in perfect self-sacrifice. The proof of the righteousness of God, and that with regard to what He is in Himself, to what sin is, and what it is in relation to Him, is now shewn in God's having glorified Christ, who perfectly glorified Him in all that He is, in this place of sin, where by man's sin, all this had been dishonoured; and His having set at His own right hand the Man who died—His own Son—and crowned Him with divine glory. This is what the Lord says in view of His death after Satan had entered into Judas. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him," John 13:31, 32. The Son of man has glorified God on the cross, and God has glorified Him with Himself. A man is ascended into the glory of God. (See John 17:4, 5; Phil. 2:5-11.) The righteousness of God has been revealed in that He has given Christ, who glorified Him, a place with Himself in divine glory. In John 16:10 this is expressly declared. The descent and presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth is the proof of righteousness, because, since it did not believe on the Son, but had rejected Him, there was none in the world. The presence of the Saviour in heaven at the right hand of God is, likewise, the proof of the righteousness of God: the same Person who was rejected by the world, has been accepted by God, and is now, as come in grace, for ever separated from the world.

But now the question arises, How can we have part in this? It is because the work which placed Him in the glory was accomplished for us. Through it He has glorified God. If we, who believe on Him, were not justified and made like Him, He would not see of “the fruit and travail of his soul.” It forms part of the righteousness of God to give Him this fruit. Individually, of course, He is glorified; but a Redeemer without the redeemed would have lost the reward of His work and sufferings. We form part of the glory of Christ; and it is a deep source of joy to our souls that we, by our likeness to Him, in eternity shall be the proof of the value of the work of Christ. God only manifests His righteousness towards Christ in giving us the same glory with Him. How sure is our hope! We shall be with Him in the righteousness of God throughout eternity.

The Jews wanted to have their own righteousness according to the law—a human righteousness, had such a thing existed, which, however, was not the case; therefore they stumbled at Christ, the stone of stumbling, because for this purpose He had to be abased. His death was necessary to redeem us, and to acquire righteousness for us, and even glory, according to the counsels of God. Thus Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to every believer. It was impossible for the law to be maintained any longer as the rule and measure of righteousness for man, after divine righteousness had been revealed in Christ, and bestowed on believers. The righteousness of the law was human, and besides, did not exist at all; the righteousness imputed in grace to the believer was divine and perfect. The law has not lost its validity for those who were under it, for they who have sinned

under the law shall be judged according to the law. But we have died with and in Christ, and the law has dominion over a man only so long as he lives. Whoever wants human righteousness must accomplish it for himself, for the man which doeth the requirements of the law shall live by them.

The apostle then quotes a passage from the Book of Deuteronomy (chap. 30:12-14), on which I would say a word. Moses had in this book declared the commandments of God, to the observance of which was attached the possession of the land into which Israel should be introduced. He had presented the blessings as consequent upon obedience, and the curse as consequent upon disobedience. Then in the chapter quoted (ch. 30) it is presupposed that Israel, in consequence of their disobedience, would lose the land; and a promise is given as to what the mercy of the Lord would do, after the people, languishing in captivity, are through grace brought to repentance. As this promise will be fulfilled in Christ, the apostle applies verses 12-14 to Christ. It is impossible for Israel to fulfil the law in a strange land; but when the people return in heart and in obedience to Jehovah, then God will bless them, although the law could not be observed. And since the doing of the law was impossible, this blessing will take place on the ground of a righteousness which is of faith, as Paul shews in verse 6. Therefore Christ, being Himself for the Jew the object of hope, is here introduced as the restorer of the nation. The apostle says it is not necessary to go far, to ascend or descend, to find Christ. If the word, which, according to the power of the Holy Ghost, reveals Christ as risen from among the dead, is in the heart; if in sincerity of heart

one confesses Him, one is saved. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth [that is to say openly] confession is made unto salvation.” And this applies to the Gentiles quite as much as to the Jews, for “whosoever believeth on him [whoever he may be] shall not be ashamed.” There is no difference between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich in grace towards all that call upon Him. How beautiful this verse is when one compares it with chapter 3:22, 23. There, there is no difference, for all have sinned; here, no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich in grace towards all that call upon Him. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 13). But to be able to call upon Him one must believe on Him; and to be able to believe on Him, one must have heard of Him; but to hear of Him, He must be preached, and for that there must be a preacher. As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (ver. 15); that is to say, divine blessings. But all have not obeyed the gospel, as Isaiah says: “Lord, who hath believed our report?” So then, faith is by a report, the report is by the word of God.

The apostle then alludes to the relative position of the Jews and Gentiles, with regard to this report. Of the Jews Isaiah says, “Who hath believed our report?” But it was the purpose of God that the testimony should sound forth to the ends of the earth, and be heard by the heathen. For Moses says that God would provoke Israel to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation would anger them. “But Esaias was very bold and saith: I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to

Israel he saith: All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Israel accordingly fell under God's judgment, was excluded from His presence, and, on the ground of responsibility, had lost all claim to the promises. Was he then rejected for ever? By no means. Such is the answer, the teaching of the following chapter.

## Chapter 11

Israel is the subject of God's counsels. God does not cast away what He has foreknown and appointed to blessing. This rests upon positive grace; God does not change His counsels though Israel have no righteousness. The righteousness of God will save him. God is faithful, if all men are liars. "I say then," says the apostle, "God hath not cast away his people." The apostle gives three proofs of this truth. First, there was a remnant according to election; next, salvation is come unto the Gentiles to provoke the Jews to jealousy: thirdly, the Deliverer shall come out of Zion to turn away the ungodliness of Israel.

We have here much to consider. The first proof was that there was a remnant. The apostle gives the instance of Elijah. The faithful prophet believed that he alone remained of godly men. Faithful though he was, this was pure unbelief. God had reserved for Himself seven thousand that had not bowed down to Baal. The eye of God better knew how to discern His own, was more faithful in taking account of them, than was the faith of the prophet, dismayed by the threats of Jezebel, to seek them out and find them. And so at the time of the apostle there was a remnant according to the election of grace. But if it was according to grace, it was not according to works, otherwise grace was no more grace.

Thus Israel had not obtained what he sought for. The election had obtained it. The others were blinded, and that according to the words of the prophet; Isa. 29:10. What David had said was confirmed by the words of the prophet. Their table would become a snare and a trap unto them. Did they then stumble that they should fall? By no means. Rather through their fall salvation had come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now, if their fall had become the riches of the Gentiles and of the world, how much more their fulness! Consequently the apostle of the Gentiles magnified his office, because it served to provoke Israel to jealousy. He sought thereby to constrain some of them to this jealousy. For if the casting away of them were the reconciling of the world, what would the receiving of them be? For they shall certainly be brought back. But this gives occasion to the statement of the relation borne to the Jews by the Gentiles that were accepted, and of the responsibility of the latter in the position in which they were placed: a statement covering principles of the highest importance.55 54 Both the words employed here in the original Greek are very strongly expressive of inward emotion.

55 The above (in German, from which this is a translation) was broken off by the last illness of the writer.

## Romans 7 and 8

To understand well any part of Scripture we must not take an isolated passage (though, when understood, such may be rich in edification) but read, as we should in every writing, each passage with its context, and in its place. It is with this view that, in treating of Romans 7 and 8, I take a rapid survey of the structure of the whole Epistle.

After an introduction, stating what the Gospel of God is about, and his interest in the Romans, the apostle proves and dissects the sinful state of Gentiles, philosophising moralists, and, finally, Jews; admitting the external advantages possessed by the latter, but using even these to bring them in guilty, and thus have every mouth stopped, and all the world guilty before God. This guilt he shews to be met by the blood of Christ. All that the old man is or has done, Jew or Gentile, lawless or under law, is met by the work of the Redeemer on the cross, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood; accounting thus, in righteousness, for the remission of past sins, and setting forth, as a present standing, the righteousness of God thus declared. The great roots of Jewish hope and glory, Abraham and David, testified to the same truth of justification by faith. But another principle is now brought in: faith, not in a dying Saviour, but in God that raises the dead—not the meeting the sins of the old man by propitiation through blood, but God coming in, as perfectly glorified by that work, to deliver completely from that state, and shew us Christ raised from the dead. Abraham believed that God could so perform His

promise; we believe He has raised up Christ, who was delivered for our offences and raised up again for our justification (chap. 1-4).

The resurrection of Christ, His being raised by the power of God after being delivered for our offences, forms the ground of the following chapters. It is not only atonement for sin, but bringing man into- a new state by the power of God, perfectly accepted, consequent on Christ's being delivered for our offences. But in this Epistle the apostle only sees the fact in Christ, not our being raised with Him. Thus, however, we have peace with God through faith, and have our portion in the glory of God, being reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. The blessing flows to men from the Second Adam through faith, as the judgment from the first through sin. The law came in by the bye, that the offence, might abound; chap. 5.

Chapter 6 applies the same principle to Christian life. The flesh pretended, being (it would make us believe) very jealous for God's holiness, that if Christ's obedience was the one means of righteousness before God, we might continue in sin. This, while pretending to care for holiness, is the confession, that, if not restrained by fear, and if God shews man grace, man is so irreparably bad that he will only seek evil. I admit it; but God would have hearts; and the spirit of bondage again to fear is not His way of sanctifying. What then is the answer? You are dead with Christ; but one who is, cannot be alive in that to which he is dead. "In that Christ died, he died unto sin once; in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus Christ's resurrection had been applied to justifying and

to newness of life, we being accounted, and to account ourselves, dead unto sin.

Chapter 7 applies this principle to the case of law. It is that we have now to consider. Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives; but we have died in Christ, and its dominion is closed with our life. We are to another, Christ raised from the dead. This is the principle. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first is the great principle we have just stated (vers. 1-3); the second is its actual application to those under law (vers. 4-6); the operation of law on a man under it, man having lusts (vers. 7-12); the experience of a man under law, though renewed in the desires of his mind, viewed in the light of Christian knowledge, that is, by a person out of that condition (v. 13-24). The last verse arrives at the deliverance, and the abstract principle brought to light by all this.

Nothing, after all, can be simpler than the principle the apostle lays down, and which he exemplifies under the figure of marriage. Law has power over a man as long as he lives; has he died? the law binds him no longer. Thus, a woman is bound by the law under which she is to her husband, as long as he lives; but if death comes in, the bond has ceased, and she is free. Now we have died in Christ, that is the theme of chapters 6 and 7. We have died therefore to the law by the body of Christ (that is, in Christ's death), that we should have another husband, Christ raised from the dead. The two— law and a risen Christ—cannot have authority over us together, and this second marriage is alone fruitful. The Christian, then, is distinctly held to have died, and thus to have ceased to be under the law, and that by the body of Christ; and to be to another, the risen Christ.

Consequently he is not in the flesh—in the first Adam—and the responsibilities which attach to him; nor under law, even if he had been, because the bond of the law ceased with the life it had its claim over. Hence the next paragraph turns back as to a past time, when it speaks of the state of man under the law, and still alive in the bond of the first husband. “My brethren, ye are become dead to the law… for when we were in the flesh the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members.” When we were in that condition, as alive in the first Adam state and under law, the motions of sin were working, set in activity, as an occasion, by the law. Flesh and law are correlatives, save, in the case of mere wicked lawlessness. But now we are delivered from the law, having died in that (not that being dead) in which we were held. We were, as thus alive, under the bond of our first husband—law. But we have died and the bond has ceased—cannot exist, for we are to another. Thus we have the doctrine and its application to us, the cessation of relationship with the law, its bond and authority over us, by our having died in Christ, and this state brought more strongly out by our being to another, Christ risen from the dead; but hereby the character of our service changed, it is in newness of Spirit, not in oldness of the letter.

The apostle now proceeds to discuss the operation of law on man in the flesh. Is the law to be charged with being sin because the motions of sin, as he had said, were by it? That is not it all; but this is true, he would not have known sin but for the law. No doubt, if he had been a criminal, natural conscience might have pressed on him. But he would not have known lust unless the law had said, “Thou shalt not lust.” Crimes, sins against

natural conscience, he might have felt; but sin would have been hidden from him—inward sin, lust, his state of sin. For of this the apostle specially speaks as the real question. In his own case he was blameless. Often the work is much deeper and more painful when there is only inward sin. A wicked sinner stops at the outward fruits, sees his guilt, and that it is gone. The man in whom evil is more refined sees it more twisted round his heart and difficult to overcome. The wicked man, no doubt, will have to judge lust; but often, if he is tempted by it and resists, he is happy in victory: the other is desolate because he finds it there. The inward man is far more exercised than in the case of positive wickedness. However, to have solid peace, the principle and root must be judged, and with this especially we have to do here.

Chapter 3 had judged sins and applied the blood; we have now the discovering of sin in the flesh, a still more terrible enemy, one which presses on the spirit more than past sins, where the heart is in earnest. Through the precious blood of Christ we can understand that a God of love has forgiven the sins that are bygone and now not loved; but to have it still there as a principle, working in the shape of lust, this is a burden and a grief. How am I forgiven, how accepted, if this be so? Yet the flesh lusts. Natural conscience takes little heed of this. But the law comes and says, “Thou shalt not lust.” Sin profits by this prohibition, attacks the conscience; it says to us, There, you have broken the law, you are under the curse. And so, as far as that goes, we are. The conscience was easy, felt no judgment of death on it, till the law came; but when the commandment came, sin took fresh vigour—took the commandment as a base of

attack against the conscience, and brought the sentence of death upon the soul. And the law which was to life—for it said, Do this and live—the soul finds to be to death. These two, then, are the effects of law upon living man, man in the flesh. It provokes concupiscence, it brings death on the conscience. Sin profits by the commandment, which, by restraining, rouses the will and suggests the lust, to deceive and slay the soul. Was it then the fault of the law? No; the law was holy, just, and good. Was that which was good the cause of death? No; but it brought out into evidence the true character of sin, that turned what was good into death; and sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful. Such is the operation of law on a man having lusts and self-will, that is, on every child of Adam who comes under it. Such is man in the flesh under law.

The apostle now turns to the way the actual experience of one in this condition presents itself to him who, being free, can calmly estimate the working of a soul in that state; can read aright what passes in it; who knows what law is, being partaker of divine teaching in a spiritual nature; and can judge what flesh is, because he is not under its influence. We, we Christians, know that the law is spiritual, but he does not say “we” (that would be saying Christians were carnal, as such, whereas they are spiritual men), but “I am carnal [he puts the case], sold under sin.” That is the man in the flesh under law. What the reader has to remark here is, that the whole subject is the law, and that Christ and the Spirit are not mentioned. He consents to the law that it is good, delights in it after the inner man, but knows nothing of redemption or the Spirit. His husband is the first one—the law; not the second —the risen Christ.

But we have fuller detail than this, experimental discovery of the truth of his state by the conflict that was going on. First of all, he has found a carnal “I,” sold under sin; that is, captive to it as a slave, for he did not allow what he did, nor do what he would, but did what he hated. But if he would not do it, it was consenting in his will to the law that it was good; but if he did so consent, it was not that he was doing it, for he would not do it though he did. It was sin dwelling in him. Here the apostle teaches him the meaning of his experience. There is an “I” distinct from the sinful principle: an “I “that was not his flesh; and he could look at the sinful working of the flesh as being from sin that dwelt in him, not from the “I,” which he was conscious was his own inmost will.

But he learnt another truth. In him as born of Adam, that is, in his flesh, there dwelt no good thing at all; for even when he willed to do good, the other was only a hindrance. To will was present with him, but how to perform that which was good he found not. But this brought out a second truth: he had no strength to do good when he willed to do it. For the good he willed he did not do, and the evil he hated that he did. In verse 20, the “I,” in “I would not,” is emphatic. So it is in “no more I that do it.” He now sees he does more than consent to the law in his conscience, he delights in it after the inward man, but another law in his members brings him into captivity.

But in all this he only thinks of law and self (I would, I do not; I hate, I do), not of Christ at all. But this serves, under the divine teaching which the apostle here gives us, to lead him to the discovery of, first the two natures; then that he is without strength, led captive by a law of

sin which is in his members. There all his efforts end. But it is a great deal to learn: to get the knowledge of self, one's total want of strength, of the effect of being under law; to know enough of "I" to be glad to get rid of it. This is the process of Romans 7. Peace, by progress or by victory, so as to be content with self, is found to be impossible. One has to own one's sinfulness, and submit to the righteousness of God. It is not contentedness with one's state, but the discovery that one needs deliverance, the work of another. "O wretched man that I am! "Man is here emphatic—such is the condition of man. If he be renewed in will and heart, with the sense of what he as man ought to be by the law, he is a man, and that is a being with evil lusts, under sin, led captive by it; one without strength for victory. But if our God has brought us to this consciousness of what we are—has wrought this work of truth in us, the grace which has wrought it will not fail in completing its work, to give peace and rest of spirit in confidence and communion with God.

In the following chapter the way of deliverance is unfolded: here only the Deliverer is named, and this truth is brought out that the deliverance is complete and immediate, and only thankfulness remains for us. Moreover, God is looked to instead of self. It is not what we are for God, and satisfaction in that, but what God is for us. Not, I am now what I would be; but, I thank God: a deep and wonderful change, the true and deepest result of all this humbling exercise, the soul occupied with God instead of self, and occupied with Him in thanksgiving. But the soul sees something more definite than this. It knows divine love and goodness, as the source of deliverance, but it knows Christ and His work

as the deliverance itself; and, as to the work, the Deliverer. It is “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The moment, in this self-knowledge (that is, the consciousness of an evil nature, and no strength), we seek, not to be better, saying, How shall I do to gain rest? but deliverance, Who shall deliver? the soul finds it, and its expression is, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The apostle has thus celebrated deliverance with thanksgiving, but the great deep truth learned in the conflict, that of the two natures, abides, and their character in view of the claim of God. With the mind he himself serves the law of God (this alone he really owns to be himself), but with the flesh the law of sin. This is not a question of deliverance, or success, or of failure; but the natural and characteristic tendency of the new and of the old man. In heaven we shall not have the old nature, the flesh; in Christ we are delivered from its power and are no longer under law, having died in Him. But that does not alter the fact, that the disposition of the new nature in itself is to serve the law of God, when it has to say to it or the thought of it, of the old, the law of sin. Nor is strength to fulfil the law in question, nor whether I am under it, but the character and disposition of the new nature.

The eighth chapter states the principle of deliverance and describes the state and security of the delivered. The law is only noticed as incapable of delivering. Even the seventh chapter comes in only indirectly, as the law did itself. What the fifth chapter does, is to place in contrast ruin in the first Adam and salvation by the Second, and to shew that this cannot be confined to those that had law; that as all connected with the first

Adam were made sinners and sinned, so all connected with the Second were made righteous; the disobedience of the first bringing in sin and ruin, the obedience of the Second, and that even unto death, righteousness; but that the law entered, by the bye, that the offence might abound. Now the deliverance was twofold in its nature: Christ died for us, we are justified by His blood; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. But He died to sin also in dying: so we, if we come to have a part with Him, have part in His death; we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. This is the deliverance: justification, death to sin, and life to God. Faith in the Christian recognises this: it is his whole state as a Christian—justified perfectly as one dead: as to sin, no more of it as to title over him, or the possibility of being charged with having it, than it has over a dead man; yet he is alive, but this is to God. For Christ, in that He liveth, lives to God, and we are alive through Him. Then just as the law came in by the bye, so does chapter 7, as a collateral point, to shew that the law could not deliver. It made sin exceeding sinful, provoked it as an occasion, and left man captive to the law of sin which is in his members. The struggles under it were useful, if there was a sense of its spirituality; because it brought the knowledge of the two distinct natures, and of our total want of strength, and that in us (that is, in our flesh) there is no good thing; so as, through grace, to cast us on the Deliverer. But all this was legal work and not deliverance, but most useful in searching out self, and casting on a deliverer, the need of which was thus fully felt.

Chapter 8 returns, after this experience under law, to the true deliverance itself in Christ. But the deliverance

is a real one. It is not merely the fact of putting away the sins of the old man: that indeed, thank God, is done. By Christ's obedience we are made righteous; we are justified by blood. But the question has been raised of sin dwelling in us, and of victory or being captive to it. Now there is deliverance and victory. But how is it arrived at? It is victory, for the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ made free from the law of sin and death. The dominion of sin is broken, as stated in chapter 6. But how do we, I repeat, get at it? You, sinner, renewed in your mind, are you not more troubled at this principle, this law of your evil nature, which leads you captive, than even at your past sins? Certainly, if you have learned the desolateness of succumbing when you would go right, you do. How can you be forgiven and a Christian, you say, with sin having the mastery over you as it has? Is it not said that it shall not if we are under grace?

How then, you ask, can I be under grace when sin has dominion over me? I answer, Grace has wrought in you, but you are not under grace in your standing as to your conscience before God. You are under law, you are thinking of your own responsibility, and having to answer for yourself. You say to me, And am I not then responsible? have I not to answer for myself? Doubtless you are responsible. But I ask, in my turn, As a Christian or as a man? If the former, you have eternal life. If not, but the latter—and that you have to answer for yourself in the sense of bearing the consequences of what you are and have done—are you not simply and for ever lost? You are responsible: to be sure you are: but you have not yet learned that upon the ground of that responsibility it is all over with you. But you will say, Yes, I do not deny

that: I could believe easily my past sins forgiven; but if they were, ought not I to be delivered from the power of sin? I answer, Yes. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and of death. To be carnal, sold under sin, is not the true Christian state. But you have probably to learn one thing more if you thus reason— that you are without strength. We must learn, sooner or later, that in us (that is, in our flesh) there is no good thing; and that when even to will is present with us, how to perform that which is good we find not.

But there is a truth that you have not yet learned, and which, when you are once convinced of your own wretchedness, will give you infinite comfort—may be the means of setting you free, and sparing you much wearing conflict. You feel this principle of sin, this law in your members, a condemning thing, a greater proof of your wretched state before God than even the past evil fruits. It is so. It is well you do. It is the evil nature, the very sap that produced the evil fruit brought out to light. So much the better; and what is to be done? There it is in itself, it does not change, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

How can you be relieved from the burden? Christ has died for it. God has condemned sin in the flesh. But how and where? See the grace of God: “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin [that is, as a sacrifice for sin], condemned sin in the flesh.” God has condemned sin in the flesh, that which is troubling you; but He has done it in Christ as a sacrifice. He, the sinless and holy One who knew no sin, not only bore our sins in His own body on the tree, but

was made sin for us. Come in the likeness of sinful flesh, taking the form of man in our nature and place, though holy and sinless in it, yet in the likeness of sinful flesh, He was made a sacrifice for the putting away of sin. God condemned the whole nature and condition we are in, but for him that believes He did so in that which has put it away, just because the blessed One did suffer the condemnation of it there. It is sin, the whole thing and state and condition of our nature, that He suffered for—was made a sacrifice. He was a sacrifice for sin, not merely for sins; He did not suffer for the fruits of the tree, and leave us the evil of the tree itself to appear in before God. God condemned—has condemned—sin in the flesh; your judgment of it cannot be too bad, but He has condemned it in Christ's being a sacrifice for it. Now you can lift up your head. The thing that has justly tormented you has been atoned for, put away out of God's sight. Christ has died for your state of sin as for your sins. Nothing shews so clearly its unbearableness in God's sight; only, when so shewn, it is, as existing before God, put away for ever out of His sight in the sacrifice of Christ. You, as in the flesh, have died in Him. You are not in it before God. You are in Christ, who has suffered and atoned for it, and He is risen.

I have dwelt on this, and in an experimental way, because it is the hinge of peace for an exercised soul. A person thus tormented thinks he sees clear and that he is not under the law, and is only looking for the just consequences of faith. But he is looking for victory in order to be content with self, instead of seeing it to be a condemned thing which he has no strength to get the mastery over, but that it has been condemned in the cross, and thus submitting to the righteousness of God,

owning Christ to be his righteousness, and joining, so to speak, with God in condemning the flesh. This he is able to do because he knows that it is gone in the cross as to his standing with God, and that he is free. Thus he is and will be free, because now the new nature, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, acts freely in confidence in God, in grace; and he knows he is alive in it, not in the flesh before God. This has been settled. It has been condemned and put to death in Christ. He is not under it nor does he belong to it. He is not in it at all before God. The new "I" is free; the life he has from and in Christ is all he is before God. The other he may have to overcome as an enemy, but he has nothing to do with it as to his place before God. He is in Christ, not in the flesh, before Him.

To be in Christ is the scriptural opposite to being in the flesh. This opposition the apostle now proceeds to unfold, first shewing that the righteousness the law required was thus fulfilled, but not by being undey it, not by taking it as a rule, but by walking after the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit, as the apostle remarks in Galatians, no divine law can condemn. We love our neighbours and so fulfil it. The two natures are opposed. It is not now a law given to the old and sinful one. What characterises the sinner and the saint is walking after the flesh and after the Spirit. It is not merely such an such an act condemned, but whatever is not of the Spirit —does not flow from the Spirit—flows from some source in us. There is but one other, the flesh.

They, then, that are after the Spirit walk on this principle, live by this life; mind, have their minds set on, the things of the Spirit. Those after the flesh, that live taking what the flesh wills for their object and sole

motive and guide, have their mind on the things of the flesh. Now the mind of the flesh is death, the mind of the Spirit life and peace. All the workings of the desire and will of the flesh end in death—yea, have the principle of death in them, for it is a living without God. It works apart from God, turns its back on Him, and passes on into death; while the free energy of divine life before God and peace of heart is the condition of those who walk in the mind of the Spirit, that is, the thoughts fixed on what the Spirit reveals and introduces into. The mind, the union of desire and will, of the flesh, is enmity against God. It not only goes its own way with lusts contrary to God's nature, but it would not have God to control or hinder it, and, as He must, it is enmity against Him. His law claims obedience on His authority. It is not subject and cannot be, or it ceases to be flesh—is not. So "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." In its nature—will, lusts—it is against God; it is not, if it is not this: of course, it cannot please Him, but is contrary to Him. They that stand on this ground before God cannot, of course, please Him. Such is the hopeless condition of man as in the flesh. But this is not the Christian standing at all. He is not in the flesh: "Ye are not in the flesh," not standing as a child of Adam in your natural place as born after the flesh, and to answer for yourself according to law. Ye are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Mark, now, the steps of progress. They that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit: this is characteristic. Next, this is life and peace. Next, we are in the Spirit if the Spirit of God dwells in us. Further on he shews us that not only is our standing in the Spirit; not only that which we have by the Spirit dwelling in us, is what

characterises us as living persons in God's sight; but that we are sons, heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, the true Son and Heir of all things. The man lives in and by the Spirit, and God sees him only as having this life; for this is what He has made him. The flesh is not himself, as we have seen; it is a mere enemy to be overcome: we are no longer in it before God.

This Spirit, whose presence in the believer characterises him, is spoken of in a threefold aspect here. It is the Spirit of God as contrasted with the flesh. It is in nature, source, character, divine. Next, as the Spirit of Christ, it shews us as being of Christ, His path and walk as ours, and manifests us in His likeness. This is its formal character as displayed in this world. Still the body in which it dwells is mortal. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus [its third character] dwell in us," even these poor bodies, over which Satan has now no claim at all (they are Christ's) shall be raised because of His Spirit that dwells in us.

Thus deliverance is complete in the fullest sense. The liberty of grace, in our standing in Christ through the Holy Ghost, we have; the liberty of glory we have not, and wait for. But now, if Christ be in me, this is my life; the body is to have no will or life of its own. This is always sin. A life where man wills in flesh is enmity against God. I hold it dead. If it be not, it is in it itself lawless—with law, therefore, a transgressor: what life then have I? If, as one born of Adam, I hold myself dead because that life is only sin, the Spirit is life because it produces righteousness. Hence we are not debtors to flesh at all. It is only the old man, from which we are delivered by the precious death of Christ, and our having died in Him. Flesh has no claim upon us; it has

done mischief enough, it must now be silent as dead. It does not say we are debtors to the Spirit, for He is power and liberty in life in us, and by Him we mortify the deeds of the body—which end in death as they flow from sin—and live.

The first eleven verses of chapter 8 shew the deliverance even to our resurrection; verses 12, 13, give the practical abstract conclusion; verse 14 and on, shew us into what state we enter as in Christ and the Spirit, the Spirit dwelling in us. He had shewn His work in life to the end of verse 11—that is, in nature, character, and standing. Now it is His personally dwelling in us, in our bodies. This gives conscious relationship with God, and our place, as regards all around us, and our being in the body through which we are linked to the creation around us. Before, life and character: now, relationship and position, and relative feelings to all around us; this to the end of verse 28.

We are now, then, brought to the immense and blessed truth of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us personally. It bears witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God. It is not merely operations in a derived life; it is "the Spirit itself." But practical consequences flow from His presence: we are led by the Spirit, no doubt, in a spiritual mind; still it is the Holy Ghost guiding by His direct action. But further, it is no spirit of bondage again to fear that we have received, but the Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. There is then in our spirits the consciousness of sonship, but the Holy Ghost present in us, which is a distinct fact, bears witness with it. This is true liberty, liberty with God; the heart fully free and happy with Him, redemption having wholly cleared away the old past, in the new place of sons in

divine favour, and conscious of it through the Holy Ghost.

But this leads us yet onward: if we are sons, we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the great Heir of all things— Christ Himself. But this association leads farther, and brings in sorrow, though sorrow of a divine character, so that it is really a step in advance. If we are heirs with Christ, we must suffer with Him, must tread the path He trod; and, having His Spirit in us, we must in our measure have the feelings He had. We cannot follow the world, it will be against us; but the sufferings of this short moment are, for faith, not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

We have now a view of the state of things around us as known to the Christian, and our position in it and connection with it. The sons of God are not yet manifested, and till then the whole creation groans and travails. All is tinder the ruin brought in by the first Adam, still not to be left there; but it cannot be freed till the manifestation of the sons of God. They themselves, as regards the body, belong to the old creation, though they rejoice in spirit in hope of the glory. The creation was subject to vanity (not by its own will, but through its head, man), and waits for the manifestation of the heirs of the new creation according to God: but till then it groans, as we Christians know, and travails in pain; and we, as to our body, belong to the groaning creation. We are, as to the full and final deliverance, saved in hope; we do not see it yet. In the inner man we are of the new creation and see the glorious inheritance before us, and therefore groan. We do not groan as if we had to be redeemed, or were uncertain if we are—far from that. It is because we know we are sons and heirs of God’s

inheritance that we feel the burden of a body which can have no part in it. We groan, not because we are uncertain if our soul is saved, and that we have no power against evil in ourselves as being in the flesh, but because being free we are burdened. As sons and heirs of God we have the joy of our relationship, and the bright and sure hope of the inheritance. The last we have not yet; and, as to our bodies, they belong to the old creation, and we are awaiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies—not our redemption, this we know in Christ, but that of our bodies. We groan because of the knowledge of our being children, while the vessel is of the old thing, unredeemed as to power.

But this puts us in a very blessed, and, in its nature, divine place. Through our bodies, we take up the sorrow, and sympathise with it. The state of things, the power of death, and general ruin, makes us groan, as Christ at the tomb of Lazarus; but it is according to God. We see sorrow and evil—we who have tasted by the Spirit of Christ everlasting good, and are animated with the spirit of love as He was; for however feeble ours may be, yet His Spirit must be as He was. We have not perhaps knowledge enough to discern what to ask for, but the groan expresses the want. He who searches the hearts (that is, ours, for it is our feeling in love and hence in grief) knows the feelings and mind, the purpose of thought, produced by the Spirit. This is the feeling produced in us according to the Spirit; but it is more, it is the Spirit Himself who is there, for the Spirit makes intercession for the saints according to God.

Thus, as regards the inner man, the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness -of being sons, of our relationship with God, through the grace that has redeemed us, and

we look to be manifested in glory when the creation shall be delivered. As regards the body, and the old creation to which it belongs, He takes part in our infirmities, taking up for and in us, and teaching us to take up in divine love, the sorrows of a groaning creation. “What a wondrous place, what a privilege to be of it! This is analogous to Christ, for sin is not here in question, but only its present sorrowful fruits. He felt perfect sympathy with sorrow as being a man, and a divine sympathy, but perfectly, and perfect in it, as a man; we, no doubt, imperfectly, and with sad defect in love, yet by the spirit of Christ—not in selfishness, but according to God. We suffer where Christ suffered, and by His spirit; and groan where He groaned, as we shall be blessed and reign where He reigns.

This closes the second part of the chapter, where the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, as the power of joy and hope in the consciousness of sonship with God, and as the helper in our infirmities, by reason of the vessel in which we are linked to the old creation, is unfolded to us.

The residue of the chapter speaks of God being for us, not of His work and presence in us. We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but we do know (such is the connection that all things work together for good to them that love God; and the source and security of all is set forth; they were called according to His purpose; He foreknew them, predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son, called them, justified them, glorified them. God (says the apostle, in the name of all the saints) is for us; who can be against us? Nor is this all. As regards the way of assuring us, He is for us in the gift of His Son. This secures to the heart His freely

giving us with Him all things. Nor is this all—there is the question of guilt: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” (Compare Zech. 3.) Is Satan to cast into the fire a brand God has just plucked out on purpose? And note, there God spoke for Joshua; and so here. It is God that justifieth, who is to condemn then? He does not say “justified before God,” but God justifies—who then can condemn? But there is more; there are the difficulties and dangers of the way—death, hostile principalities, the glorious height where Christ is: is He not too far above? Christ has died, yea more, He is risen. He makes, if He is on high, intercession for us. He who has so loved us, fills all things from the death He has overcome and left behind Him to the throne of God where He is not less for us than when on the cross, is not changed. Tribulation they were in, killed like sheep: was not He, in love to them? All the sorrows, even to death, were the proofs of His love. As to constancy of love, what could separate? as to power, all against us overcome; as to temptation and trial, all gone through. All besides are but creature difficulties or powers, they cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus, great as the blessing is, great as the dangers are, we are secured to enjoy the one and to get through the others, more than conquerors, by God being for us, through Him that loved us. They are the trials of a redeemed spirit, who has the Spirit of God as the source of his life, and dwelling in him; set free, through the work of Christ from all that his flesh involved him in; passing—in the consciousness that he is a child of God, His heir, and joint-heir with Christ, in a body not yet redeemed by power from its old creation state—through a world of sorrow, but knowing that God is for him. Not the sorrows of a soul overcome

by sin, and groaning under captivity; but one set free, and feeling the sorrow sin has brought in, and the burden of an unredeemed body (not in captivity to the law of sinful flesh), according to God.

# Romans 9

Editor's Note56

I will say a few words on chapter 8, which we did not quite finish last week. We considered the three subjects it contains. First, The living work wrought in us connected with no condemnation. Second, Not merely the work that is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, but the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself in us, as distinguishing between that which is born of the Spirit, and the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Third, Not only what God has wrought, or is in me, but what God is for me in His outward operations.

It is the third point which forms the subject of the closing part of chapter 8, which omits the work in us altogether, and brings forward the security, that is to say, what God is for us; which introduces the sovereign power of God acting in grace for us— “whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.” In this passage, sanctification and the whole work of the Spirit is therefore omitted (while it is fully brought out in other parts of chapter 8) and the apostle turns to God’s foreknowledge, and what He is and does for them whom He foreknew. And mark, the foreknowledge here is that of persons: it is not said “what he foreknew” in them, or that, because of that, they should be predestinated; but “whom he did foreknow, he has also predestinated to be conformed.”

In verse 29 we see what the wonderful thought of God about us is, that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. There is a spiritual conformity, even here, in the saints; but it does not stop at spiritual conformity,

for the predestinating purpose of God was to conform them to Christ Himself. In the wonderful purpose of God He had set up the man Christ Jesus, in whom He took all His delight, in His presence in glory. Looking then at Christ as the second Man, we find that He has sanctified Himself, set Himself apart as the One to whom we are to be conformed. He has gone up into glory, and has sat down at the right hand of God, before the church is gathered; and although we do not yet see all things put under Him, we see the Man Jesus crowned with glory and honour. Now, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; for God's wonderful thought about us is, not only to bring us into His presence, but that our very bodies even should be conformed to the likeness of the glorious body of His dear Son, "that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." For, as I have remarked before, it is not exactly the church, as a body, that is presented in Romans, but the individual relationship of the saint with God. As the brethren of the Lord Jesus, God has not only foreknown them, had His purposes and thoughts about them, but God has called them, and, through grace, they have listened. God called them—they became partakers before Him in blessing—not by ordinances, nor yet by descent, but by His calling them; and here comes in another feature of God's character—the activities of His own love in calling souls out of this evil world. "Whom he called, them he also justified"; for if God had foreknown these people, He has called them; not to reject them—God Himself has done it; for I am not only justified before God, but it is God that justifies me. He will not have us in His presence with one sin upon us. It is His doing, to have us with Himself according to the purposes of His love and the holiness of His nature. If I

am justified in His sight, it is God who justifies me, according to the perfectness with which He does everything. He speaks of it as a great fact (the inward working being left out here), as the wondrous basis on which He rests this justification—it is on what God is, and in His own work. Indeed, it is observable in a most remarkable way all through this Epistle, how everything is made to rest on what God is. Man having been tried in every way, without law, under law, under grace, is brought out and proved to be good for nothing: then God comes in and acts in His own sovereignty, according to what He is. This shuts out the possibility of anything whatever, be it sin or Satan, coming in against us—God is for us. This is the grand result which the soul discovers, and the Holy Ghost reasons from. The heart may argue, Why then am I finding all this tribulation if He so loves me—if He be for me? But faith interprets the tribulation by the certainty of God's being for us, and is more than conqueror. Everything is made to rest on what God is; on this great leading truth, proved in His sovereign ways to us as sinners, ways rehearsed in the preceding verses, which shew what God is for us; and if God be for us, who can be against us, for who can put himself in competition with God?— "is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" If you ask a proof of God's being for us, the proof is, He gave His Son. If I come to God, and say, What will He do for such a wretched sinner as I am? why, He has done more than the greatest sinner can ask, more than the greatest saint could think of, for He has given His Son for me; therefore, not only have we done with everything that was against us—Satan, every accuser—but the very sin that made me tremble, becomes a witness of the extent of the love of Him who is "for us." There it is I have learnt it: for He

has shewn Himself for me in justifying me. But if God be thus for us about our sins, we may count freely for all the rest. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?”

The Spirit never (as before remarked) reasons upwards from what man is, but downwards from what God is as known in grace in Christ. Thus God being for us, we are entirely free from the possibility of any charge being brought against us; for “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” And mark here, that it is not the elect merely, but that it is God’s elect. Well, but the soul says, this may all be very true, but how many things I have to meet; there is life before me and all its cares, the trials of the world, and death before me; how can I reconcile all this? if God be for me, how is it that I have all these things against me? We get the answer to all this in the application of Christ’s love to all our present circumstances. It is not merely the immense truth that God is for us, which the Holy Ghost puts before us; it adds, that Christ is for us, who came down into all these trials even unto death; as it is said, “Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again”; therefore, “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” He not only says that nothing shall separate us from the love of God, but he brings it down to our daily weakness, saying, “For thy sake we are killed all the day long”; that in all these daily trials in the world, we might be “more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

But you say, How can this make trials seem for us? Why it is not only that I have got the victory, that “we are more than conquerors,” but we have Christ with us in

the combat, who loved us enough to die for us, and has overcome death. All that might pretend to separate me from this love is the demonstration in detail of the interest this love of Christ takes in me. If you say, But Christ is too high up to help me down here; He is up there at God's right hand. Yes, blessed be God, the very Christ that died is risen again, and is at the right hand of God making intercession for us. Because He lives I shall live. But if you ask, Will not death separate me from the love of God? No; Christ died and is risen again. "Things present"—can they? No; for in these everyday trials I learn His love. "Things to come"? No; they are all met by Christ: as regards difficulties here, He has overcome the world; as regards another world, things to come will be my participation in His glory. "Principalities and powers"— can they? No; they are but creatures at best, and no mere created being can be stronger than God. God is the source and the power of the blessing; and the One who went down under the power of death and Satan, though He could not be holden by it, is now risen again, and is at God's right hand in heaven making intercession for us, and by the power of the Holy Ghost brings home the blessing to us, in every detail of daily life. Thus has God completely shut us up—just as Noah was shut up in the ark, and floated over all the trouble; Noah went into the ark, but it was God that shut him in.

The great secret in the Epistle is, that man is reduced as low as he possibly could be, that is, to his own real level, being proved to be everything that is bad, feeble, and good for nothing; and then God comes in in grace, and says, That is what God is for you; and this gives the heart quietness, and sets the conscience in full liberty, in virtue of the resurrection of Jesus, and closes it up from

all questionings by shewing that that on which it rests is outside man altogether—based on the stability of God Himself; and brought out in the work and Person of Christ; though a real work be wrought in the soul to enable it to enjoy it. God is in us, and for us, and has brought down everything to meet our daily need in Christ; and we can only adore, and wonder; and yet it ceases to be wonderful when we see it is God's doing: we know He must do something superlatively great to shew the exceeding riches of His grace; what He does returns up to Him again in adoration and praise: yet goodness, acting in its own sovereignty, must do something which is above all praise. As in Psalm 84, where we get the double blessing, "blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." In the house— there where God is—is the first and proper blessing; there there is nothing but praise. Then, "blessed is the man whose strength is in God"—the strength needed by the way—"in whose heart are the ways of [that is, the way to] God": for having learned grace here, we shall learn glory there. Let us now turn to chapter 9.

The first thing in the Epistle to the Romans is, that the apostle reduces man to his true level as a sinner, whether under or without law; and this is met by the bloodshedding spoken of in chapter 3. Then chapter 4 brings out faith in God who raiseth the dead—not my working to meet God, but believing in God who had come in with power and raised the One who was under the power of death and set Him at His own right hand. In chapter 5 we get this faith applied to justification; the results of His being delivered for our offences and raised again, are given—we are saved; thus assured of love we

are able to joy in tribulation, and, the grand result of all, in God Himself. In chapter 6, we are dead to sin. In chapter 7, dead to the law: and in chapter 8, we have the full liberty of the Christian. Chapter 8 being the summary of the whole Christian position, the result for the believer of the work of God in grace. God acting in the power of His love, brings us into His presence in the Person of Christ; being justified we get liberty, and God, in His own sovereign power of grace shuts us up in the ark—I mean, in Christ—in the security of His own grace. But then comes in a difficulty: what becomes, not merely of the broken law, but of the special promises made to the Jews? If Jews and Gentiles are thus reduced to one moral level, how are we to reconcile the fact of the unconditional promises made to the Jews, such as those made to Abraham in Genesis 15, 17 and 18? This difficulty is met in chapters 9, 10 and 11.

In chapter 9, the apostle speaks of the absolute sovereignty of God. The potter may do what he pleases with the clay. The question is, not what God has done, but His title to do what pleaseth Him. The close of chapters 9 and 10 brings out how the Jews' own prophets had forewarned them of what would come to pass. It was a known scriptural thing, Israel's failure and consequent rejection. But though it is the will of God to deal thus with them, He will never give them up; as we see in chapter 11, that Israel are still God's beloved earthly people.

The sovereignty of God being asserted does not affect the apostle's love to Israel; as he says, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart: for I could wish myself

accursed," or, "I have wished myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"; for this is the force of verse 3; that instead of despising his brethren, a charge the Jews were perpetually bringing against him, the real impulse of his heart had led him—not in cool reflection, for the thing was impossible, but in the earnestness of his soul in love to them—to express a feeling that never could be accomplished indeed, though spoken in earnestness, but which proved that Paul loved them quite as much as Moses ever loved them, and was willing, as far as affection went, to be like Christ, an anathema "for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh."

Here you see the power of divine love, which is willing to be and do anything and everything for those whom it would serve. It seeks all the good it can find in its true object— affection must do so; though the same affection may make it earnest in reproof. Just as the same Paul says to the Corinthians, who were convicted of sin not found among the Gentiles, "I thank my God on your behalf, that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; so that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of the Lord." Yet when he visits them, he will not spare; he will come with a rod. He gets at their consciences by opening their hearts to their privileges, and then he can rebuke them, when the will has been broken down by the sense of the love. You will be ready to say yourselves, However can such a favoured people act thus? And they felt that if he had not been forced to rebuke them, he would never have rebuked them at all; and thus what he said came home with additional weight and power on the conscience. So here Paul speaks to them of all that he can, "Ye are

Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, and the covenants." Do not you suppose that I want to undervalue your promises: I hold them up. You Israelites do not value them as you ought, you do not know them; you do not know that you have God over all, blessed for ever, for your Messiah.

It is thus, I believe, we should deal with poor Jews now. "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." For a time, indeed, they are set aside as a nation, in order to reconcile the world; and they are considered in their nature and condition of sinners as levelled to the condition of the Gentiles, the apostle having proved in chapter 3 that they are both alike under sin. But here the apostle reconciles the fact of the unconditional promises made to the Jews, with this doctrine as to their common sinfulness with the Gentiles, and he proves that they will have the promises in a much higher way than they could have had them at first; and while bringing both Jew and Gentile alike under sin, he raises up God above His promises (though He will accomplish them, of course, though Israel had forfeited all title to them, for it had rejected them when their accomplishment was presented in the Person of Jesus), and shews Israel from their own history that they must leave God to His sovereignty, or else they must lose their promises; and then that in the exercise of this sovereignty He will let in the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. They would have them by descent, which, of course, excluded the Gentiles. If, says Paul, you Israelites will take your promises by descent, we will just see what comes of it. You say, we be Abraham's seed, and have a right to the promises by descent; for these Gentiles are but dogs, and have no right to share with us in God's promises. Well, if God has

His sovereignty, He will in grace let in these Gentile dogs. But now I will prove to you that you cannot take the promises by descent. In the first place, “they are not all Israel which are of Israel”; yet if it is by descent you must take in all Abraham’s seed. And if you take in Abraham’s children, then you must take in Ishmael—those Arabians. Oh no, say they, we cannot allow that; what! Ishmaelites in the congregation of Israel, and heirs of promise? Yes, if by descent. If you do not take it by descent, you must take it by grace; and if it is by grace, God will not confine this grace to you, but will exercise it toward the Gentiles.

But now, to go further down in your history,57 and then you have Jacob and Esau; and if you go by descent, you must let in the Edomites by the same title as yourselves. But in verses 8, 9, it says, “the children of the promise are counted for the seed”: so that it must rest on Isaac and Jacob, and Ishmael and Esau remain outside; therefore your mouth must now be closed as to descent, for your mouth is bound up by God’s saying, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” He has chosen, according to His sovereign title, to bless you, and on that alone your blessing depends; as your own history shews, your own prophetic testimony proves, you cannot rest it on a mere title by descent. But is there then unrighteousness with God? for such is the natural objection of the flesh. No: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” If we begin to ask, Is there unrighteousness with God, as really calling Him in question, we are seeking to judge God, instead of God’s judging us. Whenever the sovereignty of God is called in question, it is the soul saying, in effect, I am to judge God, and not that God is to judge me. But further, see

how their mouth is stopped; for when did God say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy”? When every Israelite had lost all title to everything God had to give, then God retreated, if I may use the expression, into His own sovereignty, that He might not cut them off. Israel did pretend to take the ground of righteousness, as in Exodus 19, and what followed? The golden calf was made. Was God to share with the calf in having them as a people? No: by this, the very first link that bound them, that nearest to God, was broken; by this act Israel had forfeited everything; they had cast off the promises, which they had accepted on the condition of their own obedience (Moses might have had them) and the God that had made the promises, and who alone could fulfil them. Could God overlook this sin? Israel had undertaken to have the promises by their obedience; if God had dealt with Israel in righteousness, every one must have been cut off. What could God do but retreat, as I said, into His own sovereignty? There He had a resource; for if any of them are to be spared, it must be in this way of mercy. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” Man is entirely lost, so now God says, I will act for Myself. Taking a truth in connection with all other truth gives it its right and proper place, and its own divine force. Turn now to Exodus 19, 20 and 21. Israel undertaken to have the promises on condition of obeying all that God would command. God had said, “If ye obey my voice”; they answer, “all that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” But before Moses came down, God tells him, “They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, they have made them a molten calf, and had worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto”; then, “the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiffnecked people; now,

therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them," Exod. 32:8-10. Then Moses says, "Forgive them their sin." Here the mediator is brought in, a figure, of course, of the true Mediator. Moses goes up to make an atonement for them; "Peradventure58 I shall make an atonement for them." But let us see the effect of his mediation. First, God says, in chapter 33:3, "I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way": but "I will send an angel before thee" (v. 2). Then in verse 7, "Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp": then in verse 13, Moses says to God, "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people." And God replies, "My presence shall go with thee"—not with the people, but with the mediator. And then God proclaims the name of the Lord to the mediator, at the same time bringing out this principle, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." When Moses pleads with God for Israel, notwithstanding all their departure from God, yet Moses identifies them with God, and says, "Thy people which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt"; while God calls them the mediator's people. Remark here, in passing, one thing most beautiful to observe: God, after first threatening to consume them, by coming up into the midst of them in a moment, (chap. 33:5), had said (ver. 3), "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people." Yet Moses says in chapter 34:9, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go up amongst us, for it is a stiffnecked people." Grace had

come in in the interval, God's goodness had passed before him. This changed all; and the people being so stiffnecked, Moses says, we cannot do without God; so that Moses, when once the foundation of grace is laid, makes the very condition of the people, which would have led God to consume them, or at least not go amongst them, the reason for God's going up amongst them. It is a question of who is to go up; therefore Moses says, Do thou, O God, go with us. Grace had come in and therefore he could say to God, Go with us; thus bringing in God for us. The moment grace is brought in, even in the way of government (and here the question is one of government), we feel that our very sinfulness is a reason why the presence of God cannot be dispensed with.

We will now turn again to the subject of descent. We have seen Paul saying, If you Jews will have the promises by descent, then you must let in the Ishmaelites and Edomites; and, on the other hand, if you say you will have them by righteousness, you know that if God had dealt with you in righteousness there would not have been one of you here at this moment; say now (and you, my reader, ask yourself the question), will you be willing to be dealt with in righteousness? No, you would not; then do not you talk about it, until you can go to God on that footing. But if, says Paul to Israel, you still say, We will have the promises by righteousness, the golden calf has proved, at the very outset, that you cannot have them on that ground, and that your mouth must be for ever closed. But if you have such a conviction of sin as stops your mouth about righteousness, and so excludes all boasting, you will rejoice in the "mercy "and "compassion "of God, who

retreats into His own sovereignty, that He may know how to spare; because in this sovereignty He can shew mercy. If I am convicted in my heart of sin, I shall be glad enough to hear of grace, be it ever so sovereign: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” God is not bound up to righteousness; He can shew mercy, and “whom he will-he hardeneth.”

Turn now to Pharaoh’s history. “The scripture saith, for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” And here, I would say, I do not wish to enfeeble or escape the full plain sense of this passage, because it has been made a doctrinal question. There is a hardening in certain cases. It is impossible that God can make or tempt a person to be wicked; but He can harden, and give up the sinner judicially to blindness. I would here speak with reverence; but the scripture is very plain. Mark God’s ways, and first with the natural man, and how it ends. See Romans 1. After giving a long detail of wickedness, he says, in verse 24, “wherefore God gave them up to a reprobate mind to work all uncleanness.” In verse 25, “they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” “For this cause God gave them up to vile affections.” And then in verse 28, “even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.” Now in all this history, it is to be observed, that God does not make man wicked, but simply gives man up to what he is. Again, of Israel God says, “make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.” And so with professing

Christians in this last dispensation of mercy, “Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” It would be a horrible blasphemy to say that God made them wicked. But those who received not the love of the truth were judicially sent strong delusion. And here, observe, it is not said that God fitted the vessels of wrath to destruction, but “what if he endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”; that is, after long sufferance, God makes an example of what righteous judgment is; as He says to Pharaoh, “even for this cause have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee.” And in effect says, Now you shall see who Jehovah is; for Pharaoh had said, “who is the Lord, that I should obey him?” “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?” That is not your business to inquire; you are but a man, and yet you are replying against God! shut your mouth, for God gives no account of His matters to man. The first of all justice is, that God should have His rights; and if God have not His rights, who ought to have, who shall have? It is morally important that you should take your place, and leave God His place; you are but a mere man, and therefore it is not your place to be replying against God; you are to hold your tongue when God speaks.

But further, it is not said that God has made any vessel to dishonour: but “hath not the potter power over the clay, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?” Of course the potter has power to make what he pleases; but if we do not let God have His right and proper place, who is to set things in order when sin

has brought in disorder? The mark that a soul is right, morally right, is saying, I am a sinner, deserving everlasting destruction, and all my trust is in sovereign goodness. Faith says, I was bringing on myself “swift destruction,” but God’s grace stopped me; this is taking my true place before God. It is always seen (even in those systems which differ in this) that individual faith feels and acknowledges itself to be a debtor to sovereign mercy alone. But again, “hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?” Now, in this passage, though we have strongly asserted the absolute title of God to do what He pleases, it is not said that He made any vessels to dishonour; but the passage simply asserts His prerogative, His title to make of the same lump what He pleases, and that unqualifiedly and fully. But God does bear with these wicked men, as He said to Israel, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, “thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities” (chap. 43:24). Then again by the prophet Amos, “behold I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves” (chap. 2:13). Thus God “endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” willing to shew His wrath and make His power known. But when speaking of mercy, the apostle instantly brings God in; “that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.” It is moral dealing here, and not mere cold barren doctrine. We see how God deals with these vessels which He had afore prepared unto glory, and then how He endures with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And again, mark, that it does not say that these vessels of wrath were afore prepared for

destruction, neither does it merely say that the vessels of mercy were fitted unto glory. No; for the vessels of mercy were afore prepared of God unto glory, while the vessels of wrath are fitted to destruction by their iniquities having come to the “full.” But whatever there is of good must come from God, and God only; the evil, alas! is already in us. But if the question still be put, Why has God been bearing with this wickedness, and only at last shewn out His wrath in those vessels fitted to destruction? The answer is, that after He has proved the ways of men, and shewn all shut up under judgment, He then comes in with mercy, sovereign mercy; and so the apostle applies it. Cannot He then let in the Gentiles? Surely; for if God is setting up vessels of mercy, He can prepare a Gentile as well as a Jew. If the Jews, in their folly, arraigned God’s sovereignty—very well, says the apostle, let them have righteousness, and where then will they be? and having proved that law and descent have both failed as a title, he shews, if you Jews will not let in the Gentiles, you must yourselves be shut out. For if they will not bow to God’s sovereignty, let them take Sinai, where they have lost all title to all the promises, and are thus necessarily thrown on the ground of God’s doing what He pleases, or on judgment. God forces them to own this, that He may call in the Gentiles; as God says in Hosea, “and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.” Romans 9:25 is the call of the Jews, and verse 26 the call of the Gentiles. Verse 25 calls the Jews from the Lo-ruhamah and the Lo-ammi state of Israel. (See Hosea 1:6, 9.) But in verse 26 it is the call of the Gentiles; it being the special and proper privilege indeed of the Gentiles to be called the sons of

the living God, but not to be His people as a specific title. Thus in the very place where Lo-ammi was universally applied, the blessed title of the sons of the living God—for indeed it was by spiritual life—became the portion of the called, according to Hosea 1, latter part of verse 10. And this is confirmed by the fact of Peter's only quoting, in his writing to the dispersed of Israel who believed, the closing part of verse 23 of Hosea 2; the very same that is quoted in Romans 9:25; because Peter refers to the Jews only, and therefore only takes up those who, having been Ammi (my people) had become Lo-ammi (not my people); and though Ruhamah (mercy) had become Lo-ruhamah (no mercy)—but having obtained mercy, have become Ammi and Ruhamah, which they will continue to be in the millennium, after being as a nation brought back to God. While Paul, speaking of the Gentiles as well as the Jews, quotes in Romans 9:26, the latter part of Hosea 1:10 also; "and it shall come to pass in that place," etc.; so that these verses are taken by Paul to shew the whole bearing of the argument as to the calling of Jews and Gentiles, as well as peculiar mercy to Israel. In verse 27, Isaiah is introduced, clearly shewing the actual setting aside of the people as a body by the judgment of God, whatever mercy might be in store for them.

To us, all this is very simple, having become familiar to our minds; but to them, it must have been a tremendous and inexplicable thing that God's people should be set aside as to the actual administration of God's government on the earth. While God has no earthly people, He gives up the earth, as to immediate law (while providentially watching over events, of course). While Israel were God's people, on the earth, there was

a direct interference of God as to executive government on the earth; but now God is not dealing with His people on the earth as for the earth, but as a heavenly people— a mystery. God's power was shewn on the earth, but now God has given up the government of a people on the earth, and taken up a heavenly people— "blest with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ." Israel for a season is set aside; and Christ, the only door by which any can be saved, being exalted on high, the calling is that of a distinct people, not for the earth, but for heaven; and therefore the word is, "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." The idea of Christ having members on earth while He, the Head, is in heaven, no Jew would have understood; and before the Jew will own this in his conscience, they must be brought to see that they have been cut off for rejecting their Messiah. And the earth also is guilty; as having rejected God's Son; and for this, God, "will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." Well, dear friends, are you prepared for God to make a short work on the earth? But we know it will not be till after the last elect one of the church is gathered in; and if we are "keeping the word of his patience," He will keep us from the hour of temptation; and, meanwhile, He has set before us an open door, that no one can shut. In verse 32, "they sought it not by faith" — "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness: wherefore? because they sought it not by faith." Israel did not keep the law; and when the object of faith came, Him they crucified, so that, although to Israel the promises were given, we have seen how they were forfeited by them, as far as their title went to the promise. And here is the

wonderful wisdom of God shewn out in bringing failing Israel, and the poor Gentile dogs, both in alike on the ground of sovereign grace. One had not got the promise, the other refused it when presented to them in Christ; so that both should be objects of mere mercy.

In principle, all these great truths are for our own souls. The history of the world is the history of an individual soul. And God has taken pains to detail elaborately that wherein we may read ourselves as in a glass, and see that we are shut up to grace; and having come to that, nothing can separate us from the love of God. It depends on sovereign goodness; therefore I lean on what God is for me, and not on what I am for God. The moment our souls are brought to God, we find that Christ has more than overcome in love and put away all the evil we have learnt of ourselves, bringing His love into it. The ways, purposes, counsels, and power of God for man can never fail.

The Lord give us understanding, a divine understanding, of all His thoughts and ways; and let not our thoughts and affections be running out after the world, that does not know Him, nor yet the hidden mystery which He reveals to those who love Him; but may our hearts and souls know God Himself in all these things! They are precious and valuable, because they are the various parts which make up the glory of the Lord Jesus: therefore valuable because they belong to Him.

56 Revised Notes of a Lecture delivered in Davies Street, London.

57 At verse 9, the proper rendering is, “this word is of promise, at this time will I come and Sarah shall have a son.”

58 Though we have here the general analogy of mediatorial intervention, remark here the difference of that of which it was a shadow. Christ is gone up because He has made a perfect and effectual atonement, the efficacy of which He presents on high so as to secure our blessing; that, of course, Moses could not do. There is no “peradventure I shall” for us; He has made it before He went up to God to appear in His presence for us.

## The Humiliation Of Christ

The humiliation of Christ opens out to my mind in a very full and blessed character. The essential being of Godhead cannot change, as is evident—the Absolute, as men speak—and whatever His humiliation, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. His emptying Himself applied to the form. He was in the status, condition of Godhead, of which, not to speak of outward glory, will and acting from His own will (though one with the Father, see John 5) was proper and essential. But the full purpose of His will in free devotedness, and always so, was to give up His own will, and this according to eternal counsels; Psalm 40.

It was not a lowly being, to whom it is evil to have a will of its own, who had none—that would have been nothing; nothingness was the place of nothingness. But He who in His essence could will, gives up His place, or condition as such, and says, “Lb, I come to do thy will.” It was a divine act, always so, but a divine act of making empty. He was thus relative to the Father, not only as Son but as Servant—an immense truth! He gave up, not Godhead—that could not be —but the status and position of it, and came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

Man answered to this place according to the counsels and glory of God, as the angels, the obedient administrators of power, witnesses of a sustained creation. But he who had been made in God’s image, and now fallen, was in the condition to be the sphere of the display of all God’s moral glory, mercy, grace, righteousness, above all, love, for God is love; in a word

—redemption. Christ was a man. And now, in the same perfectness, He takes no will, not even of mdn, not even to eat when He was hungry—He lives by every word out of the mouth of God. He humbles Himself and is obedient even unto death, and that of the Cross—no resistance—no escape, though legions of angels would be ready at His call. He perseveres in submitting to all—a tested obedience, even to death. Not merely obedience in peace, as Adam innocent might, or an angel (though doubtless they must feel the ruin) but tested by unvarying giving up of self and where evil was.

The absolute in nature becomes relative as a Servant in place—and “no man knoweth the Son but the Father”—but the Father is revealed; and in this character exalted as Lord above all now. We adore Him as God, we see Him gone down under death as man, yet emptying Himself, humbling Himself, laying down His own life what belonged to, what was divine all through. Now, the centre of all the sphere of display of the divine glory and of all in which it is displayed; but this is an outward consequence; Philippians 2. But the place of Man and Servant never given up—wondrous truth! Only He rules over all the sphere of His humiliation—heaven and earth are subjected to Him as Man while such subjection is called for—He reigns till all things are put under His feet.

But in His own personal place, in which He is in connection with us, or rather we with Him, He never gives up the serving place—He takes it now; John 13. In Luke 12 He takes it in glory, but in the heavenly blessedness connected with us— those His Father has given Him. And finally, when the reigning and subjecting process is complete, and He gives up the kingdom

whose power was needed for that, He takes the simple subject place as Man in the eternal blessedness of God—still “God over all, blessed for evermore,” One with the Father—but His place as the subject Man perfect, and we with Him. Wondrous thought! The Firstborn among many brethren (companions metokoi), not, note (common equal sharers koinonoi) we could not be that. Compare Hebrews 2:14, consequent on 11.

God—and no mediatorial kingdom and power—being all in all—His emptying is no more undone than His Godhead. He always was and is Son with the Father—was and is always God; and now is and ever will be Man, who emptied Himself. It was, and so ever is, His own divine act; only He has a temporary kingdom according to eternal counsels in this character, a kingdom which He gives up. The apostle John enters largely into this; his Gospel is the expression of it, but it comes out. elsewhere in connection with the names of God, Light and Love, both of them essential names of God, yet with some difference, for Light has something of quality in it belonging to a person—Love is more absolutely personal. God is purity and manifests all things. But we are light in the Lord; as partakers of divine nature, we partake of this quality. In 2 Peter 1:4, we are made partakers of divine nature, not of the, and it is by promise our own state. But we are not love, for Love is sovereign goodness—that we cannot be; we love as partaking of divine nature too, but we cannot be sovereign goodness.

But in Christ’s emptying of Himself, and the course of His humiliation unto death, we find this love exercised—it is divine love expressed—we have seen the Father in Him—love brought to need—love active; “Hereby know

we love, because he laid down his life for us." So that the revelation of God, that in which His Being acts, according to what He is, was in this way of emptying and self-humbling of Christ; only we add "He gave his only begotten Son," when we speak of it historically in its external action. And Christ, thus the expression of Love, i.e. of God, in the world, God manifest in the flesh, was also necessarily Light in the world—purity, and showing what all was, but showing sovereign goodness to it when thus manifested.

Formally, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ—He was the love of God in the world, and light in it. The darkness comprehended it not. But it was in Man, and it became thus impartitive, the Word of life, "He that hath the Son hath life," they that received Him being born of God; and being cleansed, the Holy Ghost could dwell in them in order to be the power of realisation. Thus the apostle prays that they "may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith," not merely be life and righteousness, but dwell there in the power of the realisation of faith—He who is the expression and revelation of love—that we may be rooted and grounded in it. We dwell in love and in God, or rather here He in us, and thus are at the centre of the display of glory; the more external thing, and so far finite that it is in that which is created, but the display of God's glory in it, though not without love as its source and sustaining, for it is in redemption. Christ thus takes in all— first descended then ascended that He might fill all things— but then the saints, and this is their wondrous place, are associated with Him personally here, and we "comprehend with all saints "; for they are indeed His

companions, loved as He is loved, however personally infinitely above them.

Christ has taken this place in the same divine, perfect love, self being gone, that He might put us in the same place with Himself—whom the Father had given Him—and even now, His peace, His joy, the Father's words, the Father's love, and the glory given to them—gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God—to be with Him where He is; for in emptying Himself and becoming a Man, it was to associate us, the joint heirs in the same place, though ever Firstborn. Hence the apostle adds "and to know the love of Christ"— not abstract here, "rooted and grounded in love," through His dwelling in our hearts, who is the divine fulness of this love—Himself; but now He has entered into the counsels of actual glory, length, depth, etc.—it is the love of Christ, the actual, manifested, exercised love, yet still divine, "it passes knowledge," that we may be thus filled into all the fulness of God Himself, which indeed dwelt in Him bodily; compare 1 John 5:20.

Colossians does not enter on this ground, only touching it in "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is blessed to see how the highest being of God is exercised in grace towards any poor sinner. It is there it is, though afterwards perfected in us; see 1 John 4:12, 13. This has partly led us in this inquiry into the counterpart, that "as he is, so are we," because it is thus we enter into and understand it; "we are in him that is true, i.e. in his Son—he is the true God and eternal life."

But the gospel of John gives us large communications on this humiliation of Christ. His Godhead shines in every page of all the gospels, but John, as everyone knows, in

a peculiar way gives us the Person of Christ—the Word made flesh. Now I have remarked elsewhere the fact of the way in which He is everywhere One with the Father, yet receives all. But it is the direct expression of the truth we are studying—He is God, He is one with the Father, He is I Am. Everywhere He speaks to His Father on a divine footing of unity; "I have glorified thee, now glorify me." But He has taken the form of a Servant, never "now I will glorify Myself." "My Father is greater than I"; "Father, glorify thou me"—yet it was a glory He had— "along with thee (the Father) before the world was," "Thou hast given him power over all flesh"—"I receive whoever comes, for I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." He finishes the work the Father gave Him to do—it is the Father that sent Him; so chapter 8:26. But it is in this chapter the Lord says: "Before Abraham was, I am," which the Jews well understood.

In a word His path was "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, so I do." His divine nature and Godhead shine throughout, but He receives everything—is sent—and has taken the relative place of recipiency and subjection. John 5 has a peculiar character in this respect, and presented at first some difficulty to my mind. "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom he will"; "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," as the apostle notes, from the Jewish consciousness, making Himself equal with God. But in verse 19 He at once takes the place He is come into. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do." "Whatsoever he doeth, these doeth the Son likewise," and quickening comes as part

of this— “The Father loves the Son and shews him all.” But He, though He acts with the same divine power as the Father, yet is shewn all—does nothing of Himself; and in verse 26 He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself, i.e. the Son in the form of a Servant down here, and given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is Son of man. So that we know that it is in this humbled state that this applies.

Thus it becomes the clearest exposition of this unspeakable truth, the result of that, when in the form of God, He emptied Himself—His own act—divine all through, at every moment. How true it remains, “No man knows the Son but the Father”; but we adore Him. He is not ashamed to call us brethren, for now we are all of one.

But the point my mind rests on is the emptying of Himself; the rest is consequence, however blessed; Psalm 45:6, 7, and Hebrews 1:8, 9. Christ emptied Himself, taking upon Him the form of a Servant. Our best delight will be to be hidden behind Him and see Him have all the glory. It is interesting to see that whatever depth the Person of the Lord may give to this, the blessing itself, which has its very character from its adaptation to our state, is enjoyed by the simplest faith, and the more simple the more it is enjoyed. Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith is enjoyed by him in whom He dwells, not by him who can explain it, though it be true it must be enjoyed in order to be able to explain it.

But this humbling of Christ by Himself is divine love, and in exercise—we know God by it. It is Himself in activity, yet in giving Himself up in this unspeakable

way. In the Father God remains in essential Godhead; in the Son, one with Him in the exercise of it: coming down to serve, the Object in which we know God and see the Father. God is objectively before us in the Spirit power, operative power in us to be able to apprehend, and have the love shed abroad in our hearts so that we dwell in God and God in us.

[End of Miscellaneous — Vol. 1]