# Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, Volume 2: Ezra to Malachi

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## Ezra

The events which we have been considering, at the close of Kings and Chronicles, were deeply significant. The throne of God was no longer at Jerusalem. God had fulfilled His threat of casting off the city which He had chosen. He had bestowed the throne of the earth upon the Gentiles (Daniel 2:37). Not only had Israel failed under the old covenant, and rejected God (1 Samuel 8:7), so that God was no longer their king; but even after grace had raised up the house of David to sustain the relations of the people with God, under the rule of that house everything was entirely corrupted by sin; so that there was no more remedy, and God had written Loammi (not my people), as it were, on the forehead of a people who had forsaken Him. The counsels of God cannot fail; but such was the sad state in which the relationship between this people and God stood, if it can be said that a judgment like this allowed any relationship still to exist. So far as it depended on Israel, on man, all was lost. The consequences of this, with respect to God's dealings, were of great importance; they were nothing less than His taking His throne from the earth, casting off His people for the time as to His earthly government, and transferring power to the Gentiles. Man, in probation under the law, had failed, and he was condemned. He had been sustained in the way of grace through means which God had granted, in the family of David, for his continuance in the enjoyment of the blessings granted him, and he had failed again. Kingly power was in the hands of the Gentiles, and the people were under condemnation according to the old covenant.

But God now brings back a little remnant, that the true King might be presented to them, and causes the temple to be re-built in its place, according to the promises given by the mouth of Jeremiah, and at the request of His servant Daniel.

The latter, indeed, still at Babylon, had a deeper sense of he real condition of the people, than they had who were rebuilding the temple, and received also much more extensive information as to the future destiny of Israel and the intentions of God respecting it. But a due appreciation of this return from captivity also is not without importance, since it is evident that the understanding of God's dealings with respect to the restoration of Israel, and the coming amongst them upon earth of Messiah Himself is connected with this event. It was the will of God that there should be some respite. The current of His purposes, however, concerning the times of the Gentiles, and the position of His people, was unaltered. They were still in subjection to the Gentiles.1 It is Cyrus, king of Persia, who commands the people to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple. A type himself in some respects, of a far more glorious deliverer, he confesses Jehovah, the God of Israel, to be the true God. He is "the righteous man, raised up from the east, who treads down the princes like mortar." Called of Jehovah by name for this purpose, he favours Israel and honours Jehovah. Distinguished and blessed by the favour of the mighty God, a man whose conduct was certainly under the guidance of God, his personal character did not interfere with its being the times of the Gentiles, notwithstanding that God had put it into the heart of one of these Gentiles to favour His people. The word of God, by

Jeremiah, is fulfilled. Babylon is judged, a characteristic event of all importance. But, in fact, that which still exists is a prolongation of its power. The seat of the royal authority which God bestows on man is a city which is not the city of God, which is neither the earthly Jerusalem nor the heavenly. The house of David no longer holds the sceptre entrusted to it.

It is true that the rod of the tribe of Judah is preserved, in order that “the Branch “of the root of Jesse may be presented to this tribe. But the power of the Gentiles still continues; it existed even when the Messiah was on the earth, and the Jews had to be commanded to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar’s. The presentation of Jesus, the true Messiah, was but the occasion of fully demonstrating this in the cry, “We have no king but Caesar.”

Nevertheless, God still gives the people—guilty under the law—an opportunity for the exercise of faith. Let us examine the principles that characterise the energy of the Holy Ghost in the people at the time of their return.

The first thing to be observed is that, having felt what it was to have to do with the Gentiles, and having experienced the power and wickedness of those whose help they had formerly sought (the unclean spirit was, in this respect, gone out of them), the children of the captivity resolve that Israel shall be an unmingled Israel, and proved to be so. They are most careful in verifying the genealogies of the people, and of the priests, in order that none but Israel should be engaged in the work. Formerly one priest succeeded another without previous examination; genealogy was not verified, and children came into their father’s place in the enjoyment

of the privileges which God had granted them. But Israel now, through the great grace of God, had to recover their position. This was neither the beginning of their history, nor the power suited to the beginning; it was a return, and the disorder that sin had brought in was not henceforth to be endured. They were escaping from the fruits of it, at least in part. What had any but Israel to do there? To mark out the family of God was now the essential thing. Deliverance from Babylon was their deliverance. It was this family, or a small remnant of it, which God had brought, or was bringing, out from thence. Thus, even amongst those who had come back to Judaea, whoever could not produce his genealogy was set aside; and every priest with whom this was the case was put away from the priesthood as polluted, whatever, as it appears, might be the reality of his qualification. Divine discernment might, perhaps, recognise them and their rights another day; but the people who had returned from captivity could not do so. They were a numbered and recognised people. They dwelt each in his own city. It was weakness, no priest with Urim and Thummim, but it was faithfulness.

In the seventh month,2 the children of Israel gather themselves together at Jerusalem, each one going up from the place where he dwelt. The first thing which they do there, under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel, is to build the altar, to place themselves under the wings of the God of Israel, the sole Help and sole Protector of His people; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. Their refuge is in God. Beautiful testimony of faith! precious effect of the state of trial and abasement they were in! Surrounded by enemies, the unwalled city is protected

by the altar of her God erected by the faith of God's people; and she is in greater security than when she had her kings and her walls. Faith, strict in following the word, confides in the goodness of its God. This exactness in following the word characterised the Jews, at this time in several respects. We have seen it, chapter 2:59-63, where some could not shew their genealogy; we find it again here, chapter 3:2; and again in verse 4, on the occasion of the feast of tabernacles. Customs, traditions, all were lost. They were very careful not to follow the ways of Babylon. What had they left except the word? A condition like this gave it its full power. All this takes place before the house is built. It was faith seeking the will of God, although far from having set everything in order. We find, then, no attempt at doing without God those things which required a discernment that they did not possess. But with touching faith these Jews exercise piety towards God, worship God, and, as we may say, set Him in their midst, rendering Him that which duty required. They acknowledged God by faith; but until the Urim and Thummim should be there, they placed no one, on God's part, with the object of giving some competency to act for Him, in a position which required the exercise of.God's authority.

Having at length, brought together the materials which the king of Persia had granted them, the Jews begin to build the temple and lay its foundations. The joy of the people, generally, was great. This was natural and right. They praise Jehovah according to the ordinance of David, and sing, (how well it became them now to do so!) "His mercy endureth for ever." Nevertheless, the ancient men wept, for they had seen the former house, built according to the inspired direction of God. Alas! we

understand this. He who now thinks of what the assembly3 of God was at the first will understand the tears of these old men. This suited nearness to God. Farther off, it was right that joy, or at least the confused shout, which only proclaimed the public event, should be heard; for, in truth, God had interposed in His people's behalf.

Joy was in His presence and acceptable. Tears confessed the truth, and testified a just sense of what God had been for His people, and of the blessing they had once enjoyed under His hand. Tears recognised, alas! that which the people of God had been for God; and these tears were acceptable to Him. The weeping could not be discerned from the shout of joy; this was a truthful result, natural and sad, yet becoming in the presence of God. For He rejoices in the joy of His people, and He understands their tears. It was, indeed, a true expression of the state of things.

But, in such a case, difficulties do not arise only from the weakness of the remnant; they proceed, also, from elements with which the remnant are outwardly connected, and which, at the same time, are foreign to the relationship of God's people with Himself. In Israel's case, there was real weakness, because God—although faithful to His people according to their need—did not, in fact, come forward to establish them on the original footing. To do so would not have been morally suitable, either with respect to the position in which the people stood with God, or with regard to the power which He had established among the Gentiles apart from Israel, or with a view to the instruction of His own people in all ages as to the government of God. Relationship with God is never despised with impunity.

But besides this, in such a state of things the power of the world having gained so much ground already in the land of promise, even among the people to whom the promise belonged, difficulties arose from the fact that persons who, in consequence of the intervention of the civil powers, were within the borders of the promised land, desired to participate with the Jews in constructing the temple. They alleged, in support of their claim, that they called upon God as the Jews did, and had sacrificed unto Him since Esarhaddon had brought them into the land. This was not enmity. Why repel such a desire? The Spirit of God calls them the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin. The people of God—the assembly of God—ought to be conscious of their own peculiar privileges, and that they are the assembly of the Lord. The Lord loved Judah and Benjamin. From His grace towards this people flowed all the blessing of which they were the object; and the people were bound fully to recognise this grace. Not to recognise it was to despise it. Now this grace was the sovereign goodness of God. To admit strangers would have been insensibility to this grace as the only source of good; it would have been to lose it, and to say that they were not its objects according to the sovereign goodness of God, more than other persons of the world. But the faithfulness and intelligence of the chiefs among Israel delivered them from this snare. “We ourselves together,” said they, “will build unto Jehovah the God of Israel.” “Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God.” In fact, it would have been to deny that He was their God, the God of Israel. This is especially the case of the assembly when called to remember her privileges after long forgetfulness and painful chastisement. If God allow it for the trial or the chastening of His people, it is possible that the work

may be stopped through the practices and the malice of those who will praise the great and noble Asnapper to the powers of the earth; before whom they will appear in their true earthly character, just as they assumed the garb of piety when seeking to insinuate themselves among the remnant of Israel. The power that belonged to God's people, at the time of their former independence, will alarm one who, not trusting in God, dreads the effect upon his own authority of the energy which the Spirit of God produces in the people of God independently of this authority, however submissive the people may be. Israel was acting here according to Cyrus's own decree; but this is of no avail. That which depends on God is absolute; that which does not depend on Him is arbitrary; but the faithful have nothing to do with all this. God may see that trial and chastening are needful to them. Whatever happens, they have to go through that which puts faith to the proof; but their path is ordered by the will of God, and their faith relies upon Him. In this case they had to wait; but God's time would come; and that, not by means of a mere decree from the Gentile king: God raises up a much more precious encouragement for them from another quarter. Although the people had been subject to the Gentiles, God was still supreme; His word is still of supreme authority to His people, whenever He condescends to speak to them. If necessary, He can dispose the hearts of kings to uphold it. In every case His people are to follow it, without seeking other motive, or other help. Haggai and Zechariah are sent of God, and prophesy among the people. These immediate communications from God were of infinite value, as His word ever is; and although they did not change the position of the people with respect to the Gentiles, they were a touching proof that

God was interested in His people, and that, whatever might be their afflictions, the God of Israel was above all that had power to oppress them.

I have said that the people were obliged to wait. This was the case as soon as they received the decree that forbade their continuing to build. But many years had elapsed before this prohibition came; and it seems evident to me, from examining the prophecies which throw so much light on the contemporary history, and from comparing their dates, that it was want of faith in the remnant which was the true hindrance. There were adversaries in the land who made them afraid, and who thus prevented their building. It appears that the Jews did not dare continue. Their adversaries hired counsellors in the Persian court to frustrate the purpose of the Jews. But the first thing was that the adversaries weakened the hands of the people. It was not until two reigns later that the prohibition was obtained; but the Jews had left off building through fear of their adversaries (compare chap. 4:4, 21, and 5:1, with Haggai 1:1, 2, 4; 2:15). Neither was it because the king's decree was brought them that they began again to build, but because they feared Jehovah, and feared not the king's command, as seeing Him who is invisible (Hag. 1:12, 13). God was not any more to be feared in the reign of Darius than in that of Cyrus or of Artaxerxes; but the source of their weakness was their having forgotten God. This makes manifest the great grace of God in awakening them by the mouth of Haggai. God had until then also chastened the people.

All this shews us that, in ceasing to build the temple, Israel was in fault. It appears from Haggai (chap. 2:15) that they had made no progress at all. The terror with

which the adversaries had inspired the Jews had stopped them. They had no excuse for this, since even the king's commandment was on their side. That which they lacked was faith in God. We have seen that, when there was faith they dared to build, although there was a decree against it. The effect of this faith is to give rise to a decree in their favour, and that even through the intervention of their adversaries. It is good to trust in God. Blessed be His gracious name!

Under the influence of the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah the house was finished (chap. 6:15).

Jehovah's great grace in this was a real occasion for joy. The priests are set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, according to the law of Moses, and we find more faithfulness than in the best days of the kings (compare chap. 6:20 with 2 Chron. 29:34). But we hear nothing of the ordinances of David, and a still greater deficiency is seen in their celebration of the feast of dedication. They kept the passover—a proof that the redemption of the people could be remembered in the land. Happy privilege of the restored remnant! Many also had joined them, separating themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land. Jehovah had given them cause for joy; but fire no longer came down from heaven to testify divine acceptance of the sacrifice offered for the dedication of the house. This was indeed a negative difference, but one of deep significance. And even that which formed the subject of their joy betrayed their condition. "Jehovah had turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." It was great kindness and touching grace on His part. But what a change!

Alas! this was not the end of the history. God, in His goodness, must still watch over the unfaithfulness and the failures of His people, even when they are but a small remnant who by His grace have escaped from the ruin. He puts it into the heart of Ezra, a ready scribe in the law of Moses, to think of the remnant in Jerusalem, to seek the law of Jehovah, to teach it and cause it to be observed. Here again it is still the Gentile king who sends him for this purpose to Jerusalem. All blessing is of God, but nothing (except prophecy, in which God was sovereign, as we have already seen in the case of Samuel at the time of the people's downfall), nothing in point of authority comes immediately from God. He could not pass by unrecognised the throne which He had Himself established among the Gentiles upon the earth. And Israel was an earthly people.

The character of this intervention of God by Ezra's mission is, I think, a touching proof of His loving-kindness. It was exactly suited to the wants of the people. It was not power. That had been removed to another place. It was the knowledge of the will and the ordinances of God,—of the mind of God in the word. The king himself recognised this (chap. 7:25). Guarded by the good hand of his God, this pious and devoted man goes up with many others to Jerusalem. Alas! as soon as he can look into these things, he finds the law already broken, evil already come in. The people of Israel had not kept themselves separate from the people of the lands, and even the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass. Ezra is confounded at this, and remains overwhelmed with grief the whole day. Can it be that the remnant, whom God had snatched, as it were, from the fire, have so soon forgotten the hand that delivered

them, and married the daughters of a strange god? Those who trembled at Jehovah's word having assembled with him, Ezra humbles himself on account of it. At the time of the evening sacrifice, he pours out the deep sorrows of his heart before the Lord. A great multitude have their hearts touched by grace. There is no prophetic answer, as so often before had happened in similar circumstances; but there is an answer from God in the hearts of the guilty. "We have sinned," said one among them; "yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." And they set themselves heartily to the work. Israel is summoned, each one under pain of exclusion, to come up to Jerusalem, and they assembled at the time of rain, for the matter was urgent; and the congregation acknowledge it to be their duty to conform to the law. Under the hand of Ezra, and by the diligence of those who were appointed to this work, it was accomplished in two months. As for all those who had taken strange wives, they gave their hand that they would put away their wives: they confessed their sin and offered a ram for this trespass.

Once more we find that that which characterises the operation of the Spirit of God, and the intervention of God among His people, with respect to their walk and moral condition, is separation from all who are not the people of God as they were. Those of the priestly family who were unable to produce their genealogy had been excluded from the priesthood as polluted; and those among the people who were in the same case were not acknowledged. They positively refuse any participation in the work to the people of the land who wished to join them in building the temple; and, finally, with respect to their own wives, several of whom had borne them

children, they have to put them away, and to separate themselves, at whatever cost, from all that was not Israel. It is this which characterises faithfulness in a position like theirs; that is, a remnant come out from Babylon, and occupied in restoring the temple and service of God, according to that which yet remained to them.

Moreover, we see that God did not fail to comfort them by His testimony—sweet and precious consolation! But the power of the Gentiles was there. That which appertained to authority and the throne at Jerusalem, and to the power of ordaining, which belonged to it, was not re-established. The public sanction of God was not granted. Nevertheless, God blessed the remnant of His people, when they were faithful; and the most prominent thing, and that which should dwell on our hearts, is the grace which, in the midst of such ruin, and in the presence of the Gentile throne set up through Israel's sin, could still bless His people, though acknowledging the Gentile throne, which God had established in judgment upon them. Their position is clearly and touchingly stated in chapter 9:8, 9.4 It is a solemn season, when God, in His compassion, encourages and sustains the little remnant of His people in the midst of their difficulties; and owns them, as far as possible, after the ruin which their unfaithfulness has brought upon them—such ruin that God had been constrained to say of them, Loammi.

It is most afflicting to see the people, after such grace as this, plunging again into fresh unfaithfulness and departure from God. But such is God, and such is man.

We must ever bear in mind that Israel was an earthly people, and their full place in blessing now5 that of the seat of God's power in righteousness upon earth, so that their relationship to another power, now set up among the Gentiles, was peculiar. But, if this be borne in mind in the application of the contents to other circumstances, the instructions afforded by this book are extremely interesting, as exhibiting the principles of conduct in which faith is displayed in the difficulties connected with a partial restoration from a ruined state, the dependence on God by which man is sustained in the midst of these difficulties, God's own ways in respect to His servants, and the absence of all pretensions to re-establish what could not be set up in power. Besides this, we have to view the Book of Ezra as giving that peculiar display of God's mercy and ways which left the rod of Judah subsisting till Shiloh came. No Shechinah was in the temple; no Urim and Thummim with the priest. But there was a sovereign intervention of God in that mercy which endures for ever, so that occasion was given to Messiah's coming according to the promises made to the fathers. The judgment of the Gentile power of Babylon carried with it the witness of a better deliverance, but for this the full time of God's purposes was to be awaited.

1 The coming of Christ did not change this. The restoration of the remnant gave occasion to the presentation of Christ to the people according to the promises; but His rejection left their house desolate to see Him no more till their repentance in the last days. Meanwhile, during His lifetime on earth, not only have we, in Luke, the epoch divinely dated by the reigns of Gentile rulers, but, pressed on the point, the Lord refers

to their position and baffles their hypocrisy, which would have profited by what was the fruit and wages of their own sin to put Him in an inextricable difficulty, by telling them to give to Caesar what was Caesar's, and to God what was God's. Meanwhile deeper and more blessed counsels were accomplished.

2 This was the month in which the blowing of trumpets took place— a figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days.

3 See Acts 2 and 4.

4 Only for 'were 'in verse 9, we must read 'are.'

5 I say "now," because, till Samuel's time, Israel was called to be blessed in obedience under priesthood, God being their King. But after David's time in view of Christ, the nation became the seat of God's power in righteousness, so far as it enjoyed the blessing.

## Nehemiah

The Book of Nehemiah will require but few remarks; but it is important to establish its import. It is a necessary link in the history of God's dealings, in the recital of His patience and loving-kindness towards Jerusalem, which He had chosen.

In Ezra we have seen the temple rebuilt and the authority of the law re-established among the people, who are again separated from the Gentiles, and set apart for God.

In Nehemiah we witness the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and the restoration of what may be termed the civil condition of the people, but under circumstances that definitely prove their subjection to the Gentiles.

Through grace, faith had set up the altar, and the Gentiles had had nothing to do with it, except by voluntary service; but when the city is to be rebuilt, it is the governor appointed by the Gentiles who holds the prominent place, God having touched the heart of these Gentiles and disposed them to favour His people. We see in Nehemiah himself a heart touched with the affliction of his people, a precious token of the grace of God; and He who had produced this feeling disposed the king's heart to grant Nehemiah all he desired for the good of the people and of Jerusalem. We see also in Nehemiah a heart that habitually turned to God, that sought its strength in Him, and thus surmounted the greatest obstacles.

The time in which Nehemiah laboured for the good of his people was not one of those brilliant phases which, if faith be there, awaken even the energy of man, imparting to it its own lustre. It was a period which required the perseverance that springs from a deep interest in the people of God, because they are His people; a perseverance which, for this very reason, pursues its object in spite of the contempt excited by the work, apparently so insignificant, but which is not the less the work of God; and which pursues it in spite of the hatred and opposition of enemies, and the faintheartedness of fellow-labourers (chap. 4:8, 10, 11); a perseverance which, giving itself up entirely to the work, baffles all the intrigues of the enemy, and avoids every snare, God taking care of those who trust in Him.

It is also a beautiful feature in Nehemiah's character, that in spite of his high office he had all the detail of service so much at heart, and all that concerned the upright walk of God's people. In the midst, however, of all this faithfulness, we perceive the influence of the Gentile power controlling the whole state of things. Nehemiah's arrival and even his conduct are marked with this influence. It was not faith alone that was in action, but a protecting power also (compare Ezra 8:22; Neh. 2:7-9). Nevertheless, the separation from all that was not Jewish is carefully maintained (chap. 2:20, 7:65; 9:2; 10:30;13:1, 3 29, 30).

This history shews us, first of all, how, when God acts, faith stamps its own character on all who surround it. The Jews, who had so long left Jerusalem desolate, are quite disposed to recommence the work. Judah, however, is discouraged by the difficulties. This brings out the perseverance which characterises true faith

when the work is of God, be it ever so poor in appearance. The whole heart is in it, because it is of God. Encouraged by Nehemiah's energy, the people are ready to work and fight at the same time. For faith always identifies God and His people in the heart. And this becomes a spring of devotedness in all concerned.

Let us remark, that in times of difficulty faith does not shew itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be, and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness; for that with which faith is occupied, is the city of God and the work of God, and these things have always the same value, whatever may be the circumstances in which they are found.

God blesses the labours of the faithful Nehemiah, and Jerusalem is once more encompassed by walls; a less touching condition than when the city of God was defended by the altar of God, which was a testimony to His presence and to the faith of those who erected it; but a condition that proved the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God, who, nevertheless, while outwardly re-establishing them, revoked no part of the judgment pronounced On His people and His city. He who rebuilt the walls was but the vicegerent of a foreign king; and it was the security of the people, and that which uprightness of heart required of them to acknowledge this; and it was done (chap. 9:37). Still, God blesses them. Nehemiah recurs to the numbering of the people, according to the register of their genealogies that was drawn up at their first return from captivity, an already distant period. Thus the people are again placed in their cities.

By means of Ezra and Nehemiah, the law resumes its authority, and that at the people's own request, for God had prepared their hearts. Accordingly, God had gathered them together on the first day of the seventh month. It was really the trumpet of God, although the people were unconscious of it, that gathered them to this new moon, which shone again in grace, whatever might be the clouds that veiled its feeble light. The people's hearts were touched by the testimony of the law, and they wept. But Nehemiah and Ezra bade them rejoice, for the day was holy. Doubtless these men of God were right. Since God was restoring His people, it became them to rejoice and give thanks.

The second day, continuing the search into the holy book, they found that Israel ought to keep a feast on the fifteenth day of the same month. On restoration from chastening, when the church finds itself again before God, it often happens that precepts are recollected, which had been long forgotten and lost during the apparently better days of God's people; and with the precepts, the blessing that attends their fulfilment is recovered also. Since the days of Joshua, the children of Israel had not followed these ordinances of the law. What a lesson! This feast of tabernacles was kept with great gladness,6 a touching expression of the interest with which God marked the return of His people; a partial return, it is true, and soon beclouded (and even the hope to which it gave rise entirely destroyed by the rejection of the Messiah, who should have been its crown), yet of great value, as the first fruits in grace of that restoration which will accompany Israel's turning of heart to Christ, as manifested by their saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah! "The gladness

was sincere and real; but everything was imperfect. The tenth day had not its antitype. Israel's humiliation had, as yet, no connection with that death which at once filled up their iniquity, and atoned for it. Their joy was well founded. It was yet but transient.

On the twenty-fourth day, the people came together to humble themselves in a manner that became their position, and they separated themselves from all strangers. Beginning with the blessing promised to Abraham, they relate all the tokens of God's grace bestowed upon Israel, the frequent unfaithfulness of which they had afterwards been guilty, and there is a true expression of heartfelt repentance; they acknowledge without any disguise their condition (chap. 9:36, 37), and undertake to obey the law (chap. 10), to separate themselves entirely from the people of the land, and faithfully to perform all that the service of the house of God required.

All this gives a very distinct character to their position. Acknowledging the promise made to Abraham, and the bringing in of the people to Canaan by virtue of this promise, and their subsequent failure, they place themselves again under the obligations of the law, while confessing the goodness of God who had spared them. They do not see beyond a conditional and Mosaic restoration. Neither the Messiah nor the new covenant has any place as the foundation of their joy or of their hope. They are, and they continue to be, in bondage to the Gentiles.

This was Israel's condition until, in the sovereign mercy of God, the Messiah was presented to them. The

Messiah could have brought them out of their position and gathered them under His wings, but they would not.

It is this position that the Book of Nehemiah definitely brought out. It is the king's commandment that provides for the maintenance of the singers. A Jew was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people (chap. 11:23, 24).

We have already seen that gladness was the portion of the people; a joy which acknowledged God, for God had preserved the people and had blessed them. But the princes of the people had immediately relapsed into unfaithfulness; and during Nehemiah's absence the chambers of the temple, in which the offerings had been formerly kept, were given up to Tobiah, that subtle and persevering enemy of God's people. But at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem the joy of the people and the faithfulness of Nehemiah brought them back to the written word, and Israel separated themselves again from the mixed multitude. Tobiah's stuff is cast out of the chamber prepared for him in the temple. The observance of the Sabbath is again enforced. Those who had married strange wives, and whose children spake partly the language of strangers and partly that of the Jews, are put under the curse and sharply rebuked and chastised. The order and the cleansing, according to the law, are re-established, and this leading thought of the book, as to the people's condition, closes the narrative.

That which we have said will give an idea of the great principle of this book.

I will add a few more remarks in this place.

The Book of Nehemiah places Israel, or rather the Jews, in the position they were to hold in their land until the

coming of the Messiah; separate from the nations, faithful in keeping the law, but deprived of the privileges which had belonged to them as the people of God; under the yoke of the Gentiles, capable of rendering unto God the things that were God's, but deprived of His presence in their midst, as they had formerly enjoyed it in the temple; and, finally, bound to render unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. When the Messenger of the covenant came (the Son of God, who could have cleansed the temple and placed the glory there), they received Him not; and they continue under the burden of the consequences of this rejection. This is now their condition until the coming of Christ.

It is this which gives to the Book of Nehemiah its importance. Nehemiah's faith embraced those promises of God which were connected with His government—such, for instance, as those contained in Leviticus 26. But his faith went no farther (see chap. 1). There was blessing upon this faith, and it accomplished the purposes of God; but it left Israel where they were. The precious phrase, "His mercy endureth for ever," is not found in this book. Nehemiah's faith did not rise so high. He is himself the servant of the Gentiles, and he acknowledges them. Such trust in God as is expressed in the words just quoted was linked with the altar and the temple, where Jehovah was everything to faith, and the Gentiles nothing, except as enemies (Ezra 3, 4).

Although it leaves the Jews in a much better condition than that in which they had previously stood, through the good hand of God upon them for immediate blessing, yet the Book of Nehemiah has no prophetic future, no future for faith.7 The Jews are still Lo-ammi (not my people). The presence of God, sitting between the

cherubim, was not with them; nor could it be, seeing that God had removed the throne into the midst of the Gentiles. I speak of His presence in the temple, the habitation of His glory. Set thus in blessing and under responsibility, the Messiah's coming was to put everything to the proof. The result disclosed an empty house, swept and garnished, from which the unclean spirit had gone out, but in which there was nothing. The unclean spirit will return, and others worse than himself with him. Having rejected Christ, this unhappy people will receive the Antichrist; but this was only manifested by the coming of Christ.

In Nehemiah the people are only set, meanwhile, in this place of blessing. The prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai are connected with the work of Zerubbabel, and not with that of Nehemiah; with the simple faith that reared the altar as the means of blessing and safety. There (Zech. 1:16) Jehovah could say that He had returned to Jerusalem with mercies; but it is "after the glory "that He will come to dwell there (chap. 2:8-13). The prophecy encourages them by blessing, and promises them the coming of Christ, and the presence of Jehovah at a still future period. Chapter 8 of the same prophet connects these two things together to encourage the people to walk uprightly; but it will be seen in reading it that the fulfilment is there clearly marked as taking place al the end of the age, the rejection of Christ (chap. 11) becoming the occasion of the judgments that were to fall upon them, and to give occasion, in a still more striking manner, for that sovereign grace which will use the power of the rejected Messiah for the deliverance of His people, when they are utterly ruined in consequence of their sin.

The prophecy of Malachi, which was uttered after this, declares and denounces the corruption already brought in after the blessing restored in a measure by mercy; and the coming of Jehovah in judgment.

To these remarks it may be added, that neither in Zechariah nor in Haggai does the Lord call the people, My people. It is said, prophetically, that this shall be the case in the time to come, in the latter days, when Christ shall come to establish His glory. But the judgment pronounced in Hosea has never been revoked, and there is not one expression used that could gainsay it. The Book of Nehemiah gives us, then, the partial and outward re-establishment of the Jews in the land, without either the throne of God or the throne of David, while waiting for the manifestation of the Messiah, and His coming to seek for the fruit of so much grace; in a word, their restoration, in order that He may be presented to them. The people are provisionally in the land, on God’s part, but under the power of the Gentiles who possess the throne.

6 The feast of tabernacles was the celebration of their rest and possession of the land after passing through the wilderness. The booths marked that they had been under tents as pilgrims.

7 And where faith was not, and they had inwardly departed from God, their legal exactitude without grace in the heart became narrowness of heart and hypocrisy. Scrupulousness is not uprightness.

## Esther

The Book of Nehemiah has shewn us Judah reinstated in the land, but deprived of the presence of God, except as to general blessing, and unacknowledged by God as His people; so that, whatever length of time may elapse, their condition leads us morally up to the moment when the Messiah should be presented to seal up prophecy, to finish the transgression, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. That book gave us the last word—until the coming of Christ—of the history of Israel; and that, in grace and patience on God's part.

The Book of Esther shews us the position of Israel, or, to speak more accurately, the position of the Jews, out of their own land, and looked at as under the hand of God, and as the object of His care. That He still cared for them (which this book proves to us), when they no longer held any position owned by God, and had, on their part, lost all title to His protection, is an extremely touching and important fact in the dealings of God. If, when His people are in such a state as this, God cannot reveal Himself to them—which is manifest— He yet continues to think of them. God reveals to us here, not an open interposition on His part in favour of His people, which could no longer take place, but that providential care which secured their existence and their preservation in the midst of their enemies. Those who were in danger were of the captivity of Judah (chap. 2:5, 6), and of those who had not returned to the land of Canaan. If this betrays a want of faith and energy on their part, and of affection for the house and city of God, we must see in it so much the greater proof of the

absolute and sovereign goodness, absolute and sovereign faithfulness, of that God Himself.

We see then in this history, the secret and providential care that God takes of the Jews, when, although maintaining their position, as Jews, they have entirely fallen from all outward relation to Him, are deprived of all the rights of God's people, and are stripped of the promises, in the fulfilment of which, as offered them by the mercy of God at that time in Jerusalem, they take no interest. Even in this condition God watches over and takes care of them—a people beloved and blessed in spite of all their unfaithfulness; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. This, when well weighed, gives this book a very touching and instructive character. It is the sovereign unfailing care of God, come what will, and shews the place which this people hold in His mind.

It has been often remarked that the name of God is not found in the Book of Esther. This is characteristic. God does not shew Himself. But, behind the power and the mistakes of that throne to which the government of the world had fallen, God holds the reins by His providence; He watches over the accomplishment of His purposes and over everything necessary to their fulfilment; and He cares for His people, whatever may be their condition or the power of their enemies. Happy people! (compare, as to Israel, Jer. 31:20).

It is to be noticed that faith in the protection of God, and an acknowledgment of it, are to be found even when the dealings of God, with respect to His promises, are not owned. We are speaking of God's government, and not of salvation. Salvation is not the question here. The

Gentile reigns and does according to his will, taking at his pleasure one of the daughters of Benjamin for his wife. Sad condition, indeed, for the people of God! a position contrary to all divine law, to all faithfulness under other circumstances, but here not leading even to expostulation. The people of Israel are lost here as to their own state. But God acts in His sovereignty, and makes use of this sorrowful evidence of their position to preserve them from the destruction with which they were threatened.

Nehemiah unfolds the last relationship of God with the people before the coming of the Messiah; a relationship of longsuffering, in which God does not own them as His people; a provisional and imperfect relationship. Esther teaches us that God watches in sovereignty over the dispersed Jews, and preserves them even without any outward relationship, and that, without revoking any part of the judgment passed upon them, God shelters them without displaying Himself, and consequently by hidden means.

It was this that, as a matter of history, had yet to be made known before the public interposition o God at the end, in the Person of Messiah, which prophecy alone could reveal.

This interposition appears to me to be pointed out in the circumstances of this history; vaguely, indeed, yet clearly enough for one who has traced the ways of God, as revealed in the word. We see the Gentile wife set aside on account of her disobedience, and her having failed in displaying her beauty to the world; and she is succeeded by a Jewish wife, who possesses the king’s affections. We see the audacious power of Haman, the

Gentile, the oppressor of the Jews, destroyed; and the Jew, the protector of Esther, Mordecai, formerly despised and disgraced, raised to glory and honour in place of the Gentile. All this, be it remembered, is in connection with the earth.

Finally, in the details of this book there is a very interesting point, namely, the providential means which God employed, the opportuneness of the moment at which everything happens —even to the king's wakefulness, shewing, in the most interesting manner, how the hidden hand of God prepares and directs everything, and how those who seek His will may rely upon Him at all times and under all circumstances, even when deliverance appears impossible, and in spite of all the machinations of the enemy and their apparent success.

The close of the book presents, historically, the great characteristic facts of the dominion of the Gentiles; but one can hardly fail to see in it typically, in the position of Mordecai, the Lord Himself as head of the Jews, in closest connection with the throne that rules over all.

The very circumstances into which this book enters are appropriate. When an acknowledged relationship subsists, the dealings of God are according to the conduct of those who stand in this relationship; but here there is no such relationship subsisting. The scene is filled, and rightly filled, with heathen circumstances and heathen manners. Israel is as lost among them, their conduct does not come forward; but their preservation, where to the eye of man heathenism is everything, and their enemies seemingly all powerful. This is all in place. Any other picture would not have been the truth, nor

given the true representation of the state of things, nor brought out into their true light the dealings of God.

It will be easily understood that this book concludes the deeply interesting series of the historical books, which, through the goodness of God, we have been considering, exhibiting— as far as there has been ability—their leading features. May the Spirit, who has enabled us to enjoy that which God has deigned to reveal in them, continue to instruct us while meditating on those books which we have still to examine!

## Job

The Chetubim, or Hagiographa, in which I do not now comprehend Daniel (though his book has a character distinct from the other prophets) form a very distinct and interesting part of divine revelation. None of them suppose an accomplished and known redemption, in the New Testament sense of the word, though like every blessing all is founded on it. In Job a single passage gives a particular application of the term: “I have found a ransom” (Copher). The Psalms recount we know, prophetically, the sorrows and sufferings in which it was accomplished.

But redemption by blood is known by faith, when accomplished, whether by the Jew or the Christian. Isaiah prophesies of Israel’s recognition of it fully. There were also, as we know, shadows of it under the law. But the knowledge of eternal redemption is christian knowledge, or that of the Jews when they look on Him whom they pierced. Till Christ’s death, the veil was unrent, the holiest unapproachable. There was knowledge more or less clear of a Redeemer—of a personal Redeemer to come; of God’s favour towards those that walked with Him, and the confidence of faith in Him and in His promises. But there was no such knowledge of sin as led, God being revealed, to the consciousness of exclusion from His presence as a present state, nor of such a putting of it away as reconciled us fully and for ever to God by its efficacy, and brought us to Him.

The books we are treating of are not prophecies of God’s dealings or actings, save as the Psalms express future

deliverance by power and by God's judgments; but they are the divinely given expression of man's thoughts and feelings under the government of God,8 and the explanatory revelation of God before redemption is fully known. This process has mainly gone on in Israel; and hence they are in the main the various expression of God's ways with Israel. Still, what was carried out there, under revealed conditions and prophetic communications in direct government, was what was in principle true of God's ways everywhere, though there specially displayed (the question of man's positive righteousness being raised too there by the law, the perfect rule of life for the sons of Adam).

The Book of Job affords us the example of the relationship of a godly man outside and doubtless before Israel, and God's dealings with men for good in this world of evil; but then it runs up, I doubt not, into a clear type of Israel in result. Those ways are fully displayed in that people. And it is to be remarked that, when Job practically feels the impossibility of man's being righteous with God, he complains of fear and having no daysman between them; and Elihu, who takes up this ground in God's stead, explains not redemption but chastising and government. These things God wrought oftentimes with man (chap. 33, 36).

Ecclesiastes estimates this world under the same government, in its present fallen state, and raises the question whether by any means man can find happiness and rest there, with no trace of the knowledge of redemption. Nor is there any recognised relationship with God. It is always Elohim (God), never Jehovah, fearing God and keeping His commandments being the whole duty of man as such.

The Song of Solomon affords direct relationship with the Lord, the Son of David, the ardent affections which belong to the relationship with Christ; Proverbs, a guidance through the mixed and entangled scene, and here all is on the ground of relationship with Jehovah, God (Elohim) being only once or twice mentioned in a way which does not affect this (see more fully note to page 24). But none place themselves on the ground of known redemption. They do look for redemption by power. Hence, on the contrary, Romans begins with the revelation of wrath from heaven, not government, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness where truth was, against Gentile and Jew,9 and brings in redemption, personal justification, and righteousness—God's righteousness. The case of Gentile and Jew is fully gone into, and brought out as before God Himself, and wrath from heaven the necessary consequence; complete redemption by blood for heaven, and sovereign grace reigning through righteousness and giving us a place with the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, together with the result for Israel hereafter. All is made clear in the light as God is in the light—His eternal redemption, and heavenly places, though finally earth will be blessed. But we are pilgrims and strangers here. This is our place by redemption itself. To the Abrahams and Davids it was so, by getting nothing of what was promised, or else persecution under the government of God upon the earth; so that under that order of things it was after all a puzzle to both, though the final inheritance of the land, the heir, and the judgment of the wicked, known by revelation, met the puzzle in their minds.

But in Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, which express men's feelings under it, this puzzle is fully manifested. Faith and confidence in God may get over it, or persevere through it; prophetic testimonies may meet it; but it is there, and this earth is the scene of the reply of God, even if their faith might be sometimes forced to rise above it, nourished by personal confidence in God. But a present fixed eternal relationship with God even our Father through redemption, in a wholly new scene into which we are brought by that precious blood, whose shedding has glorified God Himself, and reconciled us to Him, though yet in an unredeemed body,—that was unknown. Much was learned, learned as to God, and this was most precious. But the actual result for Job was more camels and sheep, and fairer daughters; in the Psalms, judgment of enemies, and deliverance through mercy that endured for ever, and an earth set free under heaven's judicial rule; in Ecclesiastes, as to the perception of the present effect of government, that man must fear God, keep His commandments, and leave it there. Present known redemption is nowhere found. And oh what a difference, an unbounded difference, this makes! "As he is, so are we in this world" He who redeemed us is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Proverbs and the Song of Solomon have, as I have said, another character, though referring to the same scene: Proverbs, not man's feelings in the scene, but God's guidance through it by the experience and wisdom of divinely instructed authority;10 and the Song of Solomon, the carrying the heart quite out of it all, though still in it, not by known redemption, but by devoted affection to Messiah, and of Messiah to Israel, by the revelation He makes of Himself, indeed of His love to them to beget it in Israel's heart.

These exercises of heart have their place in us now, for we are in the world; but in the consciousness of accomplished redemption and the present care of a holy Father, the perfection of whose ways, as seen in Christ, is the model of our conduct. We can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing in ourselves that we have in heaven a better and an enduring substance; and glory in tribulation, because it works its needed end, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. This is another case, and a blessed one it is.

I think these general remarks will help us to understand the books which are now about to occupy us. I turn to the books themselves.

After what I have said, the Book of Job will not require a long examination—not that it fails in interest, but because when the general idea is once laid hold of, it is the detail which is interesting, and detail is not our present object.

In the Book of Job we have one portion of those exercises of heart which this division of the holy book supplies. These are not joyful exercises, but those of a heart which, journeying through a world in which the power of evil is found, and not being dead to the flesh, not having that divine knowledge which the gospel furnishes, not dead as to one's self with Christ nor possessing Christ in resurrection, is not capable of enjoying in peace, whatever its own conflicts may be, the fruit of God's perfect love; but which struggles with the evil or with the non-enjoyment of the only real good, even while desiring to possess it; while, by the means of these very revelations, the light of Christ is cast upon

these exercises, and the sympathy and entering of His Spirit in grace into them practically is touchingly developed. What is learned in them is what we are—not committed sins; that was not Job's case, but the soul itself is put before God.

In Job we have man put to the test; we might say, with our present knowledge, man renewed by grace, an upright man and righteous in his ways, in order to shew whether he can stand before God in presence of the power of evil, whether he can be righteous in his own person before God. On the other hand, we find the dealings of God, by which He searches the heart and gives it the consciousness of its true state before Him.

All this is so much the more instructive, from its being set before us independent of all dispensations, of all especial revelation on God's part. It is the godly man, such as one of Noah's descendants would be, who had not lost the knowledge of the true God, when sin was again spreading in the world and idolatry was setting in; but the Judge was there to punish it. Job was encompassed with blessings and possessed real piety. Satan, the accuser of the servants of God, goes to and fro in the earth seeking occasion for evil, and presents himself before Jehovah among His mighty angels, the "Bene-Elohim": and God states the case of Job, the subject of His government in blessing, faithful in his walk.

It is carefully to be remarked here, that the spring and source of all these dealings is not Satan's accusations, but God Himself. God knew what His servant Job needed, and Himself brings forward his case and sets all in movement. If He demands of Satan if he had

considered His servant Job, it is because He Himself had. Satan is but an instrument, and an ignorant though subtle instrument, to bring about God's purposes of grace. His accusations result really in nothing as against Job, save to disprove their truth by what he is allowed to do; but, for Job's good, he is left to his will up to a certain point, for the purpose of bringing Job to a knowledge of his own heart, and thus to a deeper ground of practical relationship with God. How blessed and perfect are God's ways! How vain in result the efforts of Satan against those that are His!

Satan attributes the piety of Job to God's manifest favour and to his prosperity, to the hedge He had put around him. God gives all this into the hands of Satan, who speedily excites the cupidity of Job's enemies; and they attack him and carry off all his possessions. His children perish through the effects of a storm which Satan is allowed to raise. But Job, dwelling neither on the instruments employed nor on Satan, receives this bitter cup from the hand of God without murmuring. Satan suggests again that man will, in fact, give up everything if he can preserve himself. God leaves everything to Satan except the life of His servant. Satan smites Job with a dreadful disease; but Job bows under the hand of God, fully recognising His sovereignty. Satan had exhausted his means of injuring Job, and we hear nothing more of him; but it is beautiful to see that God has hereby completely justified Job from the accusation of Satan. Job was no hypocrite. He had lost all to which Satan traced his piety, and it shone forth brighter than ever. Satan can trace the motives which work in flesh, the evil in man's heart which he excites; but grace in God, His uncaused love, and grace in man which trusts

in and leans on it, he cannot measure, nor know the power of.

But the depths of Job's heart were not yet reached, and to do this was the purpose of God, whatever Satan's thoughts may have been. Job did not know himself, and up to this time, with all his piety, he had never been in the presence of God. How often it is the case that even throughout a long life of piety the conscience has never been really set before God! Hence peace, such peace as cannot be shaken, and real liberty, are not known as yet. There is a desire after God, there is the new nature; the attraction of His grace has been felt: nevertheless God and His love, as it really is, are not known. If Satan is foiled (the grace of God having kept Job's heart from murmuring) God has yet His own work to accomplish. That which the tempest that Satan had raised against Job failed in doing, is brought about by the sympathy of his friends. Poor heart of man! The uprightness and even the patience of Job had been manifested, and Satan had no more to say. But God alone can search out what the heart really is before Him; and the absence of all self-will, perfect agreement with the will of God, absolute submission like that of Christ, these things God alone could test, and thus lay bare the nothingness of man's heart before Him. God did this with Job; revealing at the same time that He acts in grace in these cases for the good of the soul which He loves.

If we compare the language of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms, we shall often find the appreciation of circumstances expressed in almost identical terms; but instead of bitter complaints and reproaches addressed to God, we find the submission of a heart which acknowledges that God is perfect in all His ways. Job

was upright, but he began to make this his righteousness; which evidently proves that he had never been really in the presence of God. The consequence of this was that, although he reasoned more correctly than his friends, and shewed a heart that felt really far more than they what God was, he attributed injustice to God and a desire to harass him without cause (see chap. 19; 23:3, 13; 13:15-18; 16:12). We find also in chapter 29 that his heart had dwelt upon his upright and benevolent walk with complacency, commending himself, and feeding his self-love with it. “When the eye saw me, it gave witness to me.” God was bringing him to say, “Now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself.” It is with these chapters (29, 30, 31), which express his good opinion of himself, that Job ends his discourse; he had told his whole heart out. He was self-satisfied: the grace of God had wrought and in a lovely way in him; but the present effect through the treacherousness of the human heart, and not being in God’s presence which detects it, was to make him lovely in his own eyes. If (chap. 9) he confesses man’s iniquity (for who can deny it, and especially what converted men?), it is in bitterness of spirit, because it is useless to attempt being just with such a God. Chapter 6, as well as the whole of his discourse, proves that, whether it was the pride of his heart which could not bear to be found in such a state by those who had known his greatness, a state which pride would have borne in stubbornness alone, or sympathy which, in weakening that had left him to the full sense of it, it was the presence and the language of his friends that was the means of bringing out all that was in his heart. We see also in chapter 30 that the pride of his heart was detected.

As to the friends of Job, they do not call for any extended remarks. They urge the doctrine that God's earthly government is a full measure and manifestation of His righteousness, and of the righteousness of man, which would correspond with it: a doctrine which proves a total ignorance of what God's righteousness is, and of His ways; as well as the absence of all real knowledge of what God is, or man as a sinner. We do not see either that the feelings of their hearts were influenced by communion with God. Their argument is a false and cold estimate of the exact justice of His government as an adequate manifestation of His relationship with man, though they say many true commonplace things which even the Spirit of God adopts as just. Although Job was not before God in his estimate of himself, he judges rightly in these respects. He shews that although God shews His disapprobation of the wicked, yet the circumstances in which they are often found overthrow the arguments of his friends. We see in Job a heart which, although rebellious, depends upon God, and would rejoice to find Him. We see, too, that when he can extricate himself, by a few words, from his friends, who, he is quite sensible, understands nothing of his case, nor of the dealings of God, he turns to God (although he does not find Him, and although he complains that His hand is heavy upon him), as in that beautiful and touching chapter 23, and the reasonings as to divine government, chapters 24, 21. That is to say, we see one who has tasted that God is gracious, whose heart, wounded indeed and unsubdued, yet claims those qualities for God—because it knows Him—which the cold reasonings of his friends could not ascribe to Him; a heart which complains bitterly of God, but which knows that, could it once come near Him, it would find

Him all that it had declared Him to be, and not such as they had declared Him to be, or were themselves—could he find Him, he would not be as they were, He would put words in his mouth; a heart which repelled indignantly the accusation of hypocrisy; for Job was conscious that he looked to God, and that he had known God and acted with reference to Him, though God thought fit to bring his sin to remembrance.

But these spiritual affections of Job did not prevent his turning this consciousness of integrity into a robe of self-righteousness which hid God from him, and even hid him from himself. He declares himself to be more righteous than God (chap. 10:7, 8; 16:14-17; 23:11-13; 27:2-6). Elihu reproves him for this, and on the other hand explains the ways of God. He shews that God visits man and chastises him, in order that when subdued and broken down—if there is one who can shew him the point of moral contact between his soul and God, in which his soul would stand in truth before Him11—God may act in grace and blessing, and deliver him from the evil that oppresses him. Elihu goes on to shew him that, if God chastises, it is becoming in man to set himself before God to learn wherein he has done wrong: in short, that the ways of God are right, that He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous, but if they are in affliction He shews them their transgressions, and if they return to Him in obedience when He openeth their ear to discipline, He will give them prosperity; but that the hypocrite shall perish. The first case which Elihu brings forward (chap. 33) is God’s dealings with men. He awakens their consciences to their state, and puts His bridle on the pride and self-will of man. God chastises and humbles him. The second is specially with

the righteous (chap. 36), the case of positive transgression but in one righteous in God's sight, from whom He withdraws not His eyes, in whom He allowed not iniquity; but in the first case he was in the path of destruction. It was this case12 which needed the interpreter to place him in uprightness before God. Finally, he insists upon the incomprehensible power of God Almighty.

Jehovah then speaks, and addressing Job, carries on the subject. He makes Job sensible of his nothingness. Job confesses himself to be vile, and declares that he will be silent before God. The Lord resumes the discourse, and Job acknowledges that he has darkened counsel by speaking of that which he understood not. But now, still more submissively, he declares openly his real condition. Formerly he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; now his eye had seen Him, wherefore he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. This is the effect of having seen God, and of finding himself in His presence. The work of God was accomplished—the work of His perfect goodness, which would not leave Job without causing him to know himself, without bringing him into God's own presence. The object of discipline was attained, and Job is surrounded with more blessings than before.

We learn two things here; first, that man cannot stand in the presence of God; and secondly, the ways of God for the instruction of the inner man.

It is also a picture of God's dealings with the Jews on the earth.

The Book of Job plainly sets before us also the teaching of the Spirit, as to the place which Satan occupies in the

dealings of God and His government, with respect to man on the earth. We may also remark the perfect and faithful care of God, from whom (whatever may have been the malice of Satan) all this proceeded, because He saw that Job needed it. We observe that it is God who sets the case of Job before Satan, and that the latter disappears from the scene; because here it is a question of his doings on the earth, and not of his inward temptations. Further, if God had stopped short in the outward afflictions, Job would have had fresh cause for self-complacency. Man might have judged that those afflictions were ample. But the evil of Job's heart consisted in his resting on the fruits of grace in himself, and this would have only increased the good opinion he had already entertained of himself: kind in prosperity, he would have been also patient in adversity. God therefore carries on His work, that Job may know himself.

Either the sympathy of his friends (for we can bear alone, and from God in His presence, that which we cannot bear when we have the opportunity of making our complaint before man), or the pride which is not roused while we are alone but which is wounded when others witness our misery, or perhaps the two together, upset the mind of Job; and he curses the day of his birth. The depths of his heart are displayed. It was this that he needed.

We have thus, man standing between Satan, the accuser, and God, the question being not God's revelation of everlasting righteousness, but His ways with the soul of man in this world. The godly man comes into trouble. This has to be accounted for, the friends insisting that this world is an adequate expression of God's righteous government, and that consequently as Job had made

great profession of piety he was a hypocrite. This he stoutly denies, but his will unbroken rises up against God. God has chosen to do it, and he cannot help it. Only he is sure if he could find Him, He would put words in his mouth. He spoke well of Him though in rebellion, and thinking of his goodness as his own. Still he affirms that though there was a government, this world did not shew it as his friends said; but he is not broken down before God. Elihu comes in, the interpreter, one among a thousand (and practically how rare they are!) and he shews God's discipline with man and with the righteous, and rebukes both sides with intelligence. Then God comes in and puts Job in his place by the revelation of Himself; but owns Job's right feeling as to Him, and puts the friends in their true place, and Job is to intercede for them. Job, humbled, can be fully blessed. This knowledge of self in God's sight is of all importance; we are never humble nor distrustful of self till then.

8 And these pass into what Christ's were in His humiliation and sufferings, and thus become prophecies of His sufferings, but in the form of His feelings under them, and this of infinite price to us.

9 And note here Psalm 14, which he quotes as proof of sin in the Jew, and Isaiah 59, both end in deliverance in Jerusalem by power. In Romans it is met by present justification by blood.

10 It will much help the reader as to the character of this book and Ecclesiastes to remark, that in Proverbs the name Jehovah is always employed, save in chapter 25:2, where it is "Elohim," and "her God," chapter 2:17. But this is not an exception: that is, it is recognised relationship with the revealed God of Israel. Whereas in

Ecclesiastes Jehovah is never found. It is always Elohim, the abstract name of God without any idea of relationship: God as such in contrast with man and every creature, and man having to find out experimentally his true place and happiness as such, without special revealed relationship with God. In Job the editor, if I may so speak, or historian who gives the dialogues, always uses Jehovah; but in the body of the book Job, unless at any rate once as to the government of God (chap. 12:9), and Elihu constantly, use the name of Almighty, the Abrahamic name of God, or simply God. The friends generally use God, or particularly Eliphaz the Almighty, sometimes it is only, He. Zophar, I think, uses no name. The dialogue is characterised by God or Almighty.

11 This is a very important point. God can bless in a direct manner with the light of His grace, when the soul is brought into its true place, to what it really is in His sight. Then, whatever its state may be, He can bless it, in respect of that state, with increased light and grace. If I have got far from Him, and careless in walk, when I have the consciousness how far I am, He can fully and directly bless. But the soul must be brought into the recognition of its state, or there would be no real blessing; I should not see God in unison with it. For its sensible state did not answer to its real state in God’s sight.

12 In this case it may be a first conviction of sin, or the knowledge of self where self has never been really judged, as was Job’s case.

# Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms has evidently a peculiar character. It is not the history of God's people, or of God's ways with them, nor is it the inculcation of positive doctrines or duties, nor the formal prophetic announcement of coming events. Many important events, doubtless, are alluded to in them, and they are immediately connected with various prophetic revelations (as, indeed, with precepts and all the other parts of the divine word to which I have just referred); but none of these form the true character of the book itself. The subjects too, of which the various parts of scripture I refer to treat, necessarily find their place in the thoughts expressed in the Psalms. But the Psalms do not directly treat of them.

The Psalms are almost all the expression of the sentiments produced in the hearts of God's people by the events (or I should speak more correctly if I said, prepared for them in the events), through which they pass, and indeed express the feelings, not only of the people of God, but often, as is known, those of the Lord Himself. They are the expression of the part the Spirit of God takes, as working in their hearts, in the sorrows and exercises of the saints. The Spirit works in connection with all the trials through which they pass, and the human infirmity which appears in those trials; in the midst of which it gives thoughts of faith and truth which are a provision for them in all that happens. We find in them consequently the hopes, fears, distress, confidence in God, which respectively fill the minds of the saints—sometimes the part which the Lord Himself takes personally in them, and that, occasionally, exclusive of

all but Himself, the place which He has held that He might so sympathise with them. Hence a maturer spiritual judgment is required to judge rightly of the true bearing and application of the Psalms than for other parts of scripture; because we must be able to understand what dispensationally gives rise to them, and judge of the true place before God of those whose souls' wants are expressed in them; and this is so much the more difficult as the circumstances, state, and relationship with God, of the people whose feelings they express are not those in which we find ourselves. The piety they breathe is edifying for every time; the confidence they often express in God in the midst of trial has cheered the heart of many a tried servant of God in his own. This feeling is carefully to be preserved and cherished; yet it is for that very reason so much the more important that our spiritual judgment should recognise the position to which the sentiments contained in the Psalms refer, and which gives form to the piety which is found in them. Without doing this, the full power of redemption and the force of the gospel of the grace of God is lost for our own souls; and many expressions which have shocked the christian mind, unobservant of their true bearing and application, remain obscure and even unintelligible.

The heart that places itself in the position described in the Psalms returns back to experiences which belong to a legal state, and to one under discipline for failure and trial in that state, and to the hopes of an earthly people. A legal and, for a Christian, unbelieving state is sanctioned in the mind: we rest content in a spiritual state short of the knowledge of redemption; and while we think to retain the Psalms for ourselves, we keep

ourselves in a state of soul in which we are deprived of the intelligence of their true use and our own privileges, and become incapable of the real understanding of, and true delight in, the Psalms themselves; and, what is more, we miss the blessed and deeply instructive apprehension of the tender and gracious sympathies of Christ in their true and divinely given application. The appropriating spirit of selfishness does not learn Christ as He is, as He is revealed, and the loss is really great. There are comforts and ministrations of grace for a soul under the law in the Psalms, because they apply to those under the law (and souls in that state have been relieved by them); but to use them in order to remain in this state, and to apply them prominently to ourselves, is, I repeat, to misapply the Psalms themselves, lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be, introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them, though obedience and confiding dependence be ever our right path.

I purpose in this study of the Psalms to examine the book as a whole, and each of the Psalms, so as to give a general idea of it. The most profitable manner of doing this (though the character of the Book of Psalms renders it more difficult here) will be, as I have attempted in the books we have already considered— to give the meaning and object of the Spirit of God, leaving the expression of the precious piety which it contains to the heart that alone is capable of estimating it, namely, one that feeds on Jesus through the grace of the Spirit of God.

The Psalms, and the workings of the Spirit of God expressed in them, belong properly in their application and true force to the circumstances of Judah and Israel, and are altogether founded on Israel's hopes and fears: and, I add, to the circumstances of Judah and Israel in the last days, though as to the moral state of things those last days began with the rejection of Christ. The piety and confidence in God with which they are filled find an echo, no doubt, in every believing heart, but this exercise, as expressed here, is in the midst of Israel. This judgment, of which the truth is evidently demonstrated by the reading of the Psalms themselves, is sanctioned by the Apostle Paul. He says, after citing the Psalms, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law."

The Psalms then concern Judah and Israel, and the position in which those who belong to Judah and Israel are found. Their primary character is the expression of the working of the Spirit of Christ as to, or in, the remnant of the Jews13 (or of Israel) in the last days. He enters into all their sorrows, giving expression to their confessions, their confidence of faith, their hopes, fears, thankfulness for deliverances obtained—in a word, to every exercise of their hearts in the circumstances in which they find themselves in the last days; so as to afford them the leading, the sanction, and the sympathy of the Spirit of Christ, and utterance to the working of that Spirit in them and even in Christ Himself. In addition to this, the Psalms present to us the place which Christ Himself when on earth took among them, in order to their having part in His sympathies, and to make their deliverance possible, and their confidence in God righteous, though they had sinned against Him.

They do not as the Epistles, reason on the efficacy of His work; but in the Psalms which apply to Him, present His feeling in accomplishing it. They intimate to us also the place He took in heaven on His rejection, and ultimately on the throne of the kingdom; but, save His present exaltation (which is only mentioned as a fact necessary to introduce, and to give the full character to Israel's ultimate deliverance), all that is revealed of the Lord in this His connection with Israel is expressed, not in narration, but in the utterance of His own feelings in regard to the place He is in, as is the case with the remnant themselves. This feature it is which gives its peculiar character and interest to the Psalms.

They teach us thus that Christ entered into the full depths of suffering which made Him the vessel of sympathising grace with those who had to pass through them—and that as seeing and pleading with God in respect of them. In the path of His own humiliation, He got the tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him that was weary. They were sinners, could claim no exemption, count on no favour which could deliver and restore. They must, if He had not suffered for them, have taken the actual sufferings they had to undergo in connection with the guilt which left them in them without favour. But this was not God's thought; He was minded to deliver them, and Christ steps in in grace. He takes the guilt of those that should be delivered. That was vicarious suffering as a substitute. And He places Himself in the path of perfect obedience and love in the sorrow through which they had to pass. As obedient, He entered into that sorrow so as to draw down, through the atonement, the efficacy of God's delivering favour on those who should be in it, and

be the pledge, in virtue of all this, of their deliverance out of it as standing thus for them, the sustainer of their hope ‘n it, so that they should not fail.

Still, they must pass through sorrow, according to the righteous ways of God, in respect of their folly and wickedness, and to purify them inwardly from it. Into all this sorrow Christ entered, as He also bore their sins, to be a spring of life and sustainer of faith to them in it, when the hand of oppression should be heavy without, and the sense of guilt terrible within, and hence no sense of favour, but that One who had assured to them and could convey this favour had taken up their cause with God, and passed through it for them. The full efficacy indeed of His work in their deliverance, in that one Man’s dying for the nation, will not be known by them till they look on Him whom they have pierced. They are purposely left (and especially the remnant, because of their integrity; for the rest will join the idolatrous Gentiles for peace’ sake) in the depth of trial, which, as ways of God in government, brings them through grace to the sense of their guilt in a broken law and a rejected and crucified Messiah, that they may truly know what each of them is, and bow before an offended Jehovah in integrity of heart, and say,” Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.”

But, though the deliverance and a better salvation be not to come till then, still, in virtue of the work wrought to effect it, Christ can sustain and lead on their souls to it; and that is just what is done in these Psalms. These are His language to, or rather in, their souls when they are in the trouble—sometimes the record of how He has learned it. Hence too, souls yet under the law find such personal comfort under them. Let not any soul, let me

remark in passing, suppose that deep heart-interest in these sorrows of Christ is lost by passing from under the law to be under grace. There is immense gain. The difference is this—instead of using them merely selfishly (though surely rightly) for my own wants and sorrows, I, when under grace, enter in adoring contemplation and joyful love into all Christ's sorrows, in the deeper competency given by His Spirit dwelling in me. I go back now in peace, as He is on high, and I trace with divinely given interest and understanding (whatever my measure) all the sorrows through which He passed when here, tracing this "path of life "in love to us across a world of sin and woe, glorifying God in it, through death itself, to the righteous glory in which He now is. Christ comforted His disciples in John 14, though not indeed as under law; but He says at the close, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father." Under law the Psalms may comfort us in profitable distress; under grace we enjoy them as loving Christ and with divine intelligence.

But to return. The great foundation which had to be laid to make sympathy possible was, that Christ did not escape where the remnant of Israel will,14 because He must suffer the full penalty of the guilt and evil, or He could not righteously and for God's glory deliver them. Thus Christ must pass personally fully through the sorrow as He did in spirit; and besides that, make atonement for the guilt. He passed through it, save in atonement work, near to God; and makes all the grace and favour of God towards Him, all that He found God to be for Him in sorrow, available, through the atonement, to those who should come to be in it, that they might thus have all the mind of God towards them in grace in

that case to use when they found themselves in it, even though in darkness. If it be said, How can they when they have not yet learned that God is for them in the atonement? These Psalms, entering into every detail, are precisely the means of their doing so according to Isaiah 50, as already referred to. In truth, many Christians are in this state. They cling to promise, feel their sins, are comforted by hope, see the goodness of God, use the Psalms as suiting them, and do not know redemption nor peace.

The Psalms, then, belong properly to Israel,15 and in Israel to the godly remnant. This is the first general principle, which the word itself establishes for us, as we have seen stated by Paul—What they say, they say to those under the law.

In examining the Psalms themselves, we shall find other elements of this judgment, which are very clear and positive. The Psalms distinguish (Psalm 73) and commence by distinguishing (Psalm 1) the man who is faithful and godly, according to the law, from the rest of the nation. “The ungodly are not so,” nor shall they “stand in the congregation of the righteous.” Indeed, Isaiah teaches the same truth doctrinally just as strongly.16 Their characteristic subject is the true believing remnant, the righteous in Israel (Psalm 16:3 and many others). It is, therefore, the portion and hope of Israel which are in view in them. In Psalm I this is definitely and distinctly presented. But it is the hope of a remnant, whose portion is from the commencement distinguished in the most marked way from that of the wicked.

Again, it is evident (and it is the second general principle I would notice), that it is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, which speaks. That is to say, it is the Spirit of Christ interesting Himself in the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel. This Spirit speaks of things to come as if they were present, as is always the case with the prophets. But this does not make it the less true that it is a spirit of prophecy which speaks of the future, and which in this respect often resumes its natural character. But if the Spirit of Christ is interested in the remnant of Israel, Christ's own sufferings must be announced, which were the complete proof of that interest, and without which it would have been unavailing. And we find, in fact, the most touching expressions of the sufferings of Christ, not historically, but just as He felt then, expressed as by His own lips at the moment He endured them.17 It is always the Spirit18 of Christ that speaks, as taking part Himself in the affliction and grief of His people, whether it is by His Spirit in them or Himself for them, as the sole means in presence of the just judgment of God, of delivering a beloved though guilty people. Hence we see the beautiful fitness of the language of the Psalms in a point I shall touch upon farther on. In the Psalms which speak properly of atonement Christ is alone, and thus His work is secured. In those which speak of sufferings not atoning in their nature, even though they go on up to death, parts may be found personally applicable to Christ, because He did personally and individually go through them, but in other parts of the same Psalms the saints also are brought in because they will have a share in them, and thus His personal sufferings are presented to us, but His sympathy too is secured.

Another principle connects itself with this, which gives the third great characteristic of the Psalms. The sins of the people would morally hinder the remnant's having confidence in God in their distress. Yet God alone can deliver them, and to Him they must look in integrity of heart.

We find both these points brought out: the distresses are laid before God, seeking for deliverance; and integrity is pleaded and the sins confessed at the very same time. Christ, having come into their sorrows, as we have seen, and made atonement, can lead them in spite of their sins and about their sins, to God. They do not indeed know at first perhaps the full forgiveness, but they go in the sense of grace as led by Christ's Spirit, (and how many souls are practically in this state!)19 in expressions provided in these very Psalms, to the God of deliverances, confessing their sins also. They "take with them words and return to the Lord." Forgiveness also is presented to them. The Spirit of Christ being livingly in them (that is, as a principle of life), and fixing the purpose of their heart, they can, through confessing their sin, plead unfeignedly their integrity and fidelity to God. But the thought of mercy everywhere precedes that of righteousness as their ground of hope. In substance, all this is true of every renewed soul who has not yet found liberty, the liberty obtained by known redemption. The Psalms, unless certain praises at the close of the book and the end of some others, are never the expression of this liberty: and even when the expression of it is found, it is that of earthly deliverance or forgiveness.

In sum, then, the Psalms are the expression of the Spirit of Christ, either in the Jewish remnant (or in that of all

Israel), or in His own Person as suffering for them, in view of the counsels of God with respect to His elect earthly people. And since these counsels are to be accomplished more particularly in the latter days, it is the expression of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant in the midst of the events which will take place in those days, when God begins to deal again with His earthly people. The moral sufferings connected with those events have been more or less verified in the history of Christ on the earth; and whether in His life, or, yet more, in His death, He is linked with the interests and with the fate of this remnant. In Christ's history, at the time of His baptism by John, He already identified Himself with those that formed this remnant; not with the impenitent multitude of Israel, but with the first movement of the Spirit of God in these "excellent of the earth," which led them to recognise the truth of God in the mouth of John, and to submit to it. Now it is in this remnant that the promises made to Israel will be accomplished; so that, while only a remnant, their affections and hopes are those of the nation. On the cross, Jesus remained the only true faithful one before God in Israel—the personal foundation of the whole remnant that was to be delivered, as well as the accomplisher of that work on which their deliverance could be founded.

There are some further general observations on a point to which I have already alluded, which, while in a great measure they are drawn from the Psalms themselves, yet, through the light the Gospels also cast on it, may aid us in seeing the spirit of the whole book, and entering into the purport of many psalms in detail. I mean the sufferings of Christ. We have seen in general already that the book brings before us the remnant, its

sorrows, hopes, and deliverance, and Christ's association with them in all these. He has entered into their sorrows, will be their deliverer, and has wrought the atonement which lays the foundation of their deliverance, as it does of the deliverance of any living soul—but He died for that nation. Of course His own perfection shines out in this; but here we are to look for its connection with Israel and the earth, though His personal exaltation to heaven be mentioned, from which their final deliverance flows. We are not, however, to look for the mystery of the assembly, which at this time was hid in God, nor for Christ viewed in His associations with the assembly. The Psalms furnish most exquisitely all the earthly experiences of Christ and His people which the Spirit of Christ would bring before us. We must look to the New Testament (as in Philippians, for example, and elsewhere) to find the heavenly ones of those He has redeemed.

Now Christ passed through every kind of moral suffering the human heart can go through, was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart. Nor can anything be more fruitful in its place (for it must not be too long dwelt on in itself, and entirely separated from the divine side of His character, or it becomes profitless or hurtful, because really fleshly sentiment), than to have the heart engaged in contemplating the sorrows of the blessed Redeemer. Never were any like His. But the Psalms will bring them before us, and I refrain from entering on them here. In these introductory remarks, I can only shortly refer to the principles on which, and the positions in which, He suffered. There are, I think, three. He suffered from man for righteousness and love, for the testimony He bore in that which was good, in which He

bore testimony to, and revealed, God: He suffered from God for sin. These two distinct characters of suffering are very simple and plain to every believer's mind. The third kind of suffering supposes somewhat more attention to scripture. It is said of Jehovah's ways with Israel, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." This was (as to the last part, yet will be) most especially fulfilled in Christ, Jehovah come as man in the midst of Israel. But the sufferings of Israel, at least of the remnant of the Jewish portion of the people, take a peculiar character at the close. They are under the oppression of Gentile power, in the midst of utter iniquity in Israel, yet are characterised by integrity of heart (indeed, this is what makes them the remnant), but conscious of, for that very reason, and suffering under, the present general consequences of sin under the government of God and the power of Satan and death. The deliverance which frees them from it not being yet come, the weight of these things is on their spirits. Into this sorrow Christ has also fully entered.

During His whole life, up even to death itself. He suffered from man for righteousness' sake (see, in connection with this, Psalm 2 and others). Besides this, on the cross He suffered for sin, drank the cup of wrath for sin, the cup His Father had given Him to drink. But besides these two kinds of suffering He bore in His soul, at the close of His life (we may say from after the paschal supper), all the distress and affliction under which the Jews will come through the government of God—not condemnation, but still the consequence of sin. No doubt He had anticipated, and, so far felt it, as in John 12 the coming cross; but now He entered into it. It

was, as to the point we are now on, as He said, apostate Israel's hour then and the power of darkness. But He was still looking to His Father in the sense of faithfulness. Nor was He yet forsaken of God. He could still look to man's watching with Him. What could watching do when divine wrath was upon Him? But the distinctive character of these kinds of suffering is clearly seen if we, as taught of God, weigh the psalms which speak of them respectively. Thus we shall see that, when He suffers from man, He looks, as speaking by His Spirit in and for Israel, for vengeance on man. Others too are then often seen to suffer with Him. When He suffers from God, He is wholly alone, and the consequences are unmingled blessing and grace. As to suffering from man, we can have the privilege of so suffering, having the fellowship of His sufferings. In suffering from God as under wrath, He did so that we might never have the least drop whatever of that cup; it would have been our everlasting ruin. In the sufferings He underwent under Satan's power, and darkness, and death, when not yet actually drinking the cup of wrath, besides what was due to the majesty of God in view of this (see Heb. 2:10), He suffered to sympathise with the Jews in their afflictions, which they come into through their integrity and yet in their sins. Every awakened soul under the law will find comfort in this. All these sufferings are entered into in the Psalms as to Christ and as to Israel. But the Jews passed into utter ruin, and loss of all the promises (save sovereign grace), and the remnant into their place of trial and sorrow as such, by the rejection of Messiah.

It is to be remembered that, though all three principles of suffering are essentially different, and all very clear and important in their character, at the close of Christ's

life all coalesced and united in the sorrows of His last hours—save that I doubt not, in coming out of Gethsemane, the pressure of Satan's power on His spirit had been gone through and was over, but on the cross He suffered from man for righteousness, and from God for sin only. I am persuaded that this last, when fully on His soul, was too deep to leave it possible for the other or anything else to be much felt.

Having made these general observations, which appeared to me necessary to understand the book, we will now examine, with the Lord's help, its contents; and may He indeed guide both myself and my reader in doing it! If it does depict Christ's sufferings and His interest in His people on earth, it behoves us to search into it reverently, yet with child-like confidence, and to wait—as indeed we ever should—upon His teaching, that we may be led and taught in our search. That which speaks of what He felt should be touched with confiding love, but with holy reverence.

It is generally known that the Psalms are divided into five books, the first of which ends with Psalm 41; the second, with Psalm 72; the third, with Psalm 89; the fourth, with Psalm 106; and the fifth, with Psalm 150. Each of these books is distinguished, I doubt not, by an especial subject. Our examination of the Psalms contained in each will give the fullest insight into the character of the several books; but it may be well to give here a general notion of their contents.

The subject of the first book is the state of the Jewish remnant before they have been driven out of Jerusalem, and hence of Christ Himself in connection with this remnant. We have more indeed of the personal history of

Christ in the first than in all the rest. This will be readily understood, as He was thus going in and out with the remnant, while yet associated with Jerusalem. I use Jewish here in contradistinction with Israel or the whole nation.

In the second book, the remnant are viewed as cast out of Jerusalem (Christ, of course, taking this place with them and giving its true place of hope to the remnant in this condition). The introduction of Christ, however, restores them, in the view of prophecy, to their position in relationship with Jehovah as a people before God (Psalms 45, 46). Previously, when cast out, they speak of God (Elohim) rather than Jehovah, for they have lost covenant blessings; but by this they learn to know Him much better. I doubt not, the history of Christ's life afforded occasion to His entering into the practical personal sense of this condition of the people, though, of course, less historically His place in general. In Psalm 51 the remnant own the nation's (more precisely the Jews') guilt in rejecting Him.20 In the third book we have the deliverance and restoration of Israel as a nation, and God's ways towards them as such (Jerusalem, at the close, being the centre of His blessing and government). The dreadful effect of their being under the law, and the centring of all mercies in Christ are brought out in Psalms 88 and 89, closing with the cry for the accomplishing of the latter. Electing grace in royalty for deliverance, when all was lost, is presented in Psalm 87.

In the fourth, we have Jehovah at all times the dwelling-place of Israel. Israel is delivered by the coming of Jehovah. It may, in its main contents, be characterised as the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world.

Jehovah having been always Israel's dwelling-place, they look for His deliverance. For this the Abrahamic and millennial names of God, Almighty and Most High, are introduced. And where is He to be found? Messiah says, "I seek them in Jehovah, the God of Israel." There He is indeed found. Thus there will be judgment on the wicked, and the righteous delivered. The full divine nature of Messiah, once cut off, is brought in to lay the ground for His having a part in the latter-day blessings, though once cut off. He is the unchangeable living Jehovah, the Creator. Then comes blessing on Israel, creation, judgment of the heathen, that Israel might enjoy the promises. But it is the same mercy which has so often spared them.

The last book is more general, a kind of moral on all, the close being triumphant praise.

Having spoken of the details of their restoration, through difficulties and dangers, and God's title to the whole land, the wickedness of the antichristian tool of the enemy, the exaltation of Messiah to Jehovah's right hand till His enemies are made His footstool, and the earthly people made willing in the day of His power—we have then a rehearsal of God's ways, a commentary on the whole condition of Israel and what they have passed through, and the principles on which they stand before God, the law being written in their hearts.

Then the closing praises.

As this rapid sketch will have shewn (and the details I shall now enter on will shew more clearly still), there is far more order in the Psalms than is generally supposed by those who take them up as each an isolated ode to serve as the expression of individual piety. They are not

connected, it is true, in one continuous discourse or history, as other parts of scripture may be; but they express in a regular and orderly way distinct parts of the same subject; that is, as we have seen, the state of the remnant of the Jews or Israel in the latter day, their feelings, and Messiah's association with them. These topics are treated in the most orderly way. The Spirit of God, who has superintended the structure, as He has inspired the contents of the whole scripture, has stamped the unequivocal traces of His hand on this especial part of it. Who collected these divine songs, the work of diverse authors, and written at different epochs, I do not pretend to say. This the learning of divines may discuss; but the result cannot, I think, leave a doubt on the mind of any one who enters into their purport as to whose power wrought in it.

I have already noticed generally the subject of each of the five books. The distinction of subject I found in them had led me to divide the whole Book of Psalms in the same way, before my attention had been drawn to the well-known fact of its being so divided in the Hebrew Bible. But this principle of order is carried out also in the details of each of the books. This order in the first book, and the contents of the psalms which compose it, are now to occupy us. It is, perhaps, the most complete in the general and characteristic view it gives of the subjects treated of in the Psalms, and so far the most interesting. The others naturally pursue more the details which carry out the general idea thus given.

It will be remarked that the following principle runs through it, and indeed, more or less, the others when it is applicable:— some great truth or historical fact is brought forward as to Christ or the remnant, or both,

and then a series of psalms follows, expressing the feelings and sentiments of the remnant in connection with that truth or fact.

## Psalms (Book 1)

The first book may be in general thus divided into distinct parts. The first eight psalms form a whole, an introductory whole to the entire collection of Psalms. This series may be subdivided into the first two, which, in a more particular manner, lay the basis of all that is taught or expressed in Psalms 3-7, and, finally, Psalm 8. The character of these I shall enter on immediately. At present I proceed with the order of the book. Psalms 9, 10 form the basis of the psalms which follow to the end of 15. They give, not the great principles which are at the foundation of all Israel's latter-day history, but the historical condition of the remnant in the latter day. Psalms 11-15 unfold the various thoughts and feelings which that condition, and the circumstances in which the pious remnant find themselves, give rise to. Psalms 16-24 present to us Messiah formally entering into the circumstances of the pious remnant, the testimonies of God, the sufferings of Messiah, and the final manifestation of His glory when He is owned as Jehovah on His return. The remnant are found in this series as in Psalms 17, 20, and 23; but the main subject spoken of in them, with the exception of Psalm 19, which gives the testimony of creation and the law, is Messiah. Psalms 25-39 present to us the various feelings of the remnant under these circumstances. The whole book closes and is complete with the true source of the Messiah's intervention in the counsels and plans of God, the place He took in humiliation, and the blessing which belonged to him who could with divine intelligence discern and enter into His humbled condition, and that of the righteous remnant who were associated with Him (for so

indeed they were, and this is what the Psalms especially bring out).

It is extremely important that, on the one hand, some psalms should personally bring before us the Messiah; but it is also important that the moral traits which form the beauty and excellency of His character in God's sight, and the attractive object which God delights to bless, should be brought before us also, that, on the one hand, we may delight in them, and, on the other, the indissoluble moral connection between Christ and the remnant may be brought into view. This connection of moral character and its display in Christ is very distinctly brought before us in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. There blessing is pronounced on those who exhibit certain moral traits and qualities. These characterise the remnant; yet, if they be carefully looked into, they will be found to be morally a description of Christ Himself. Hence it is that we find Him and the remnant so mixed up together in many psalms, while some, as I have said, present distinctively the great foundation of blessing in Himself. We may apprehend also thus the difference of the associations of Christ with the remnant of Israel and those of the assembly with Him. Those of the assembly begin when redemption is accomplished, and Christ is already exalted on high. By the Spirit sent down from heaven the saints are united to Christ there; and their experiences as Christians flow from their position as united to Christ consequent on accomplished redemption, and then in conflict with the world.

Previous to the knowledge of redemption, and for that very reason, saints may now pass through experiences analogous to, and in principle the same as, those of the

Psalms, and find, in consequence, great comfort from them; but their own place, as Christians, is in union with Christ.21 The Lord's associations with the remnant are different. They pass through their trials before the knowledge of redemption or its application in power to them. Their experiences are not the fruit of union22 with Christ. Christ has trod the same path, in grace towards them; not that they were united to Him, for He was alone; but He was afflicted in their affliction and oppression by the world. Death was before Him; the fruits of the penal government of God on them, manifested in the state in which Israel then was, He has entered into in grace, as we have seen. Suffering under wicked Israel, and oppressing Gentiles, as the remnant will in that day, He thus, by His Spirit prophetically, associates Himself with them in all their sorrows, and gives a voice by His Spirit to them on their way up to the discovery of redemption.

This makes the tone and purport of the Psalms very plain. The "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do "was on the cross when atoning work, the fruit of grace, was going on. Judgment on Israel was then suspended, and the Holy Ghost blessedly took this cry up by the mouth of Peter in Acts 3:17, where the return of Jesus to them (as the children of the prophets, and the people in whom the blessing of the nations was to be) was proposed on their repentance. This grace was then of no effect; but in the last days all the fruit of that cross and that cry on earth will be made good on earth, when they have repented and looked on Him whom they have pierced. But this demand (as its final accomplishment will be also) was founded on atoning work, accomplished with God alone, which was based on grace and will bring

grace; and not in connection with His sufferings from men, which bring judgment on men, His adversaries.

The Psalms constantly present to us this consequence of the wickedness of men against Christ, and the wish of the remnant that it may arrive. Such a wish will never be found expressed by Christ in the Gospels. He pronounces prophetic woes on others for hindering those that were entering in; but this is love to these souls. No call for judgment is found. In the Psalms, on the other hand, no such passage as “Father forgive them “is found; though the fruit of grace, after His own deliverance from the horns of the unicorns, is most strikingly unfolded. The gospel was the good news of the visitation of the world and of Israel in love by the Son of God. The incarnation was Christ entering alone into this path of love towards all. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Nought else was, nought else could be, revealed and unfolded then. It was what He was personally in the world. But the remnant of God’s people are to go through these sorrows. The only possible means of their deliverance was the destruction of their enemies. We shall go up from the midst of our sorrows to meet the Lord in the air; we have no need to wish our enemies destroyed in order to our deliverance; we have in the gospel to do with grace, with a heavenly Christ that is not passing through sorrows, and with glory.

The remnant of Israel therefore call for this execution of judgment on their enemies. They have to do, not with that heavenly, sovereign, abounding grace which gives us a place with Christ clean out of the world (not of it, as He was not of it who was loved before the world was founded), but with the government of this world.

Objects, no doubt, of grace themselves (and of mere grace, for they have rejected the promises in Christ presented to them in the truth of God, and have been concluded in unbelief that they might be the objects of mercy), still, they are the nation in whom the government of this world centres and in respect of whom it is displayed. Hence they await judgment, and the display of the righteous exercise of that government, and the cutting off of the oppressor and the wicked. Hence Christ (who has entered into, and will in spirit enter into, their sorrows, but was Himself cut off instead of seeing His enemies cut off, accomplishing a better and more glorious work) did not then ask for the world, but for those that were His, and that they might be with Him where He was. John 17 marks the formal contrast of the two systems. He would not call down fire from heaven—would not execute righteous judgment. It is intimated indeed in the Sermon on the Mount that He was in the way with Israel (as in John, that the world had not known Him). Still, the christian path is to do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, as He did.

Hence, while passing through the sufferings, He could only prophetically be associated with the desires and aspirations after judgment which will have their righteous place when the time of public divine government of this world and judgment is come. Hence already in Psalm 2 this is the place we find Him set in. All the psalms are constructed in view of that. Thus the remnant in suffering, calling for judgment, reach back to Him who, though He never sought judgment for Himself, did suffer and will seek judgment for them and execute it— Himself the centre of that centre of earthly government divine. He is seen by the prophetic Spirit in

the same circumstances, and the cry for judgment is heard. But it will be found that, wherever this is the case, as we have remarked, the remnant, other men, are found besides the Lord Himself.

In principle, any suffering Jew might so speak; only, as Christ suffered above all, the terms used in the Psalms, where the demands for vengeance occur, sometimes rise up to circumstances which have been literally true in Him in His sorrow on earth. But the point of departure of the feeling, and of the whole of what is said, is any godly Jew whatever in the last days. Into that Christ has entered. The proper or exclusive personal application to Himself is only true when it is proved by the circumstances and the terms of the passage. The point of moral departure is always the remnant and their state. He is merely associated with them in the mind of the prophetic Spirit; though, as to the facts, He entered into deeper sorrow than they all. Hence the immense importance of first of all seeing the position and necessary thoughts of the remnant in the Psalms.

Christ is merely associated with them and their position in grace; though He must be the centre, and pre-eminent, wherever He is found. There is no possibility of understanding the Psalms at all otherwise. All interpretation is false which does not take this principle or truth as its point of departure. When we get into a prophetic and governmental order, even in the New Testament, we at once find the same demands of vengeance. It is judgment, and not grace. The souls under the altar in the Revelation desire that their blood may be avenged; and the holy apostles and prophets are called to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon.

This important principle then is to be laid down, that, in every psalm in which the godly remnant can have a part, that is, where the Person of Christ is not the direct subject (we have seen there are some, as Psalms 2, 102, and others, which speak personally of Christ), the whole is not to be applied to Christ, nor the psalm itself, in general, primarily. It belongs to the condition of the remnant, and speaks of it; and the principle of God's dealings with them through Christ is often given as the great example of the sorrow of the suffering godly. And hence, in the circumstances it refers to, it may rise up to such as literally depict those through which Christ has passed, so as to shew the way in which Christ has entered into their circumstances. This last may be evidently the most important part of the psalm. But this does not change the principle. There may be psalms where the remnant are introduced collaterally as objects of blessing in result, but where a particular part may be evidently applicable to Christ, who only procures that result. {Ps 22}

Psalm 22 has a distinct and peculiar character, because there Christ, while speaking of sufferings common in kind, though not in degree, to Him and the remnant, yet, as in them already, passes into that in which He was entirely alone. Indeed, the bringing these out in contrast is the very subject of the psalm. The godly have been, the remnant will be, in suffering. But the godly were delivered when they cried, so will the remnant; but Christ, perfect in the fullest sorrow, was not. So that Christ is really alone here; though, in order to shew the contrast of this suffering with others in which saints could be, and had been, this last character of suffering is mentioned. The fact already mentioned (that, in the

psalms expressive of the godly man's suffering from men, there is always the call for vengeance on the part of the speaker, and that in Christ's life— as the Gospels give it to us, that is, according to truth as personally come into the world, and standing as a witness alone in the world—He never does so, but the contrary when on the cross, and in His life-time forbids it, reproaching the disciples with not knowing what manner of spirit they were of) evidently has the most important influence on our judgment, how far and in what way we find the living historical Christ in the Psalms as a direct object.

To turn now to details.

The attentive reader will remark that, in the order of which I have spoken of the psalms of the first book, a principle I have referred to is fully exemplified: that is, that standard psalms with some great principle or fact come first, and then a series expressive of the thoughts and feelings of the remnant produced by these. Thus Psalms 1, 2 are followed by Psalms 3-7, which depict the state of things as felt by the Psalmist, connected with Psalms 1, 2, Christ being rejected (closing with the result in Psalm 8);23 then Psalms 9, 10, the state of facts in the latter days; Psalms 11-15, the various feelings of the remnant connected with them. Next, Psalms 16-24 Christ and the whole testimony of God, and Christ on the cross or atonement, having been set before us, the feelings consequent on this are depicted from Psalms 25-39. Sins are acknowledged for the first time in Psalm 25. Trials and deliverance had been spoken of before; but sins could not be confessed but in view of, and as building on, the foundation of atonement, when God really taught. So it will be indeed historically with Israel in the last days; though that is not entered on here.

I will now pursue in detail what the Lord may graciously afford me on the psalms of the first book. I have already said that the first two psalms lay the ground of the whole collection. They shew the moral character and position of the remnant, and the counsels of God as to Christ—King in Zion; the law and Christ, the two great grounds of God's dealing with Israel. Psalm 1 is the description of the godly remnant, and the blessing that accompanies their godliness according to the government of God. This blessing, save in the heart-comfort and peacefulness of an upright mind, has never been accomplished; but it is given in the same manner as the portion of the meek when Christ presents the kingdom (Matt. 5). They shall inherit the earth; but the kingdom was not, has not yet been, set up in power.24 (This is the subject of Psalm 2). Hence the Lord in Matthew speaks of suffering for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is the portion of those who do; and if suffering for His name's sake, then heaven itself comes in, and their reward there is great.25 {Ps 1}

In Psalm 1, however, we have simply the godly remnant on the earth. I say remnant, for the subject of the psalm is spoken of as characterised by individual faithfulness. The ungodly, sinners, and scornful, are around him. The law is his delight. He is a godly Jew, keeping apart from the ungodly, and is blessed, and prospers. Such is the principle of the psalm. But to make it good the earthly judgment must come in. There the ungodly shall not stand, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous—then left free from the pressure of those who cared not for God. The psalm gives us the general character of the godly man, and the result under the judicial government of God.

Another element is then brought in. Jehovah knows the way of the righteous—the way of the ungodly shall perish. It is a judgment on one side, and a moral approbation before that judgment come on the other, which is connected with the covenant-relationship of Jehovah with Israel. We have seen that Christ was on earth this godly man, and took His place among the faithful remnant, these excellent of the earth—was perfect in that place. So far this psalm takes Him in; but that is not yet directly spoken of. Its subject is the character of the godly, and the result under the government of God, Jehovah, in the midst of His people. It is not yet suffering because of this. That is a circumstance which will come out in its time. It is the character of the godly man in presence of the wicked, and the result measured by the abiding principles of God's government. Jehovah knows the righteous—others shall positively perish. Psalm 1 is the moral character of the remnant, their position in the midst of the ungodly, and the general government of God, and the connection of Jehovah and the righteous.

Besides this, remark that the psalm places both in presence of a proximate judgment, by which the wicked are driven away like chaff, and the righteous form the congregation; that is, it refers definitely to the remnant in the last days. The principles of this psalm, the character of the persons spoken of in it, and their position, are clear enough, and important as laying one great part of the basis of the whole superstructure of the Psalms—God's government, and the trials of the remnant which seemed to deny the government here spoken of, which is only to be made good in judgment when the mystery of God shall be finished. We are on the

ground of Israel's place and of God's government according to the law, but the righteous distinguished from the wicked, and blessing, not the portion of all Israel as a whole, but of the righteous who will form the congregation when judgment is executed. Blessing is on the righteous, but these shall be the people when the ungodly shall be driven away as chaff. It is just the doctrine of the end of Isaiah (see chaps. 48:22; 57:20; 65; 66). Only in the last passage the judgment reaches the nations also.

A godly remnant of the people, delighting in the law, and the judgment of God, resulting in the congregation of the righteous, according to the true character of Jehovah, the wicked being driven away—such are the first truths presented to us, the moral government of God on the earth made good by judgment in Israel.26 Hence the last days are clearly in view.

The next great element of the condition of Israel and the government of God, is Messiah—the counsels of God concerning His Anointed. Here the heathen are brought in, and form the principal subject of the psalm; and again we find ourselves in the last days, when Christ's rights will be made good against the kings of the earth and all opposers. But Israel is again here the centre and sphere of the accomplishment of these counsels of God. The Anointed is to be King in Zion. The adversaries are the great ones of the nations, the evil reaching alas! to the heads of Israel who, as we shall find, "shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes"—"an ungodly nation" (Psalm 43), and as Peter also himself has taught us in applying this psalm.

I have said that the counsels of God as to Messiah are the element here introduced to us of the ways of God treated of in the Psalms. But the psalm opens with the rising up of the nations to cast off His authority, and Jehovah's who establishes it, the apostate Jews, as we have seen, being engaged in this great rising alas! against God. The nations rage, the peoples imagine a vain thing—the kings of the earth, and the rulers would break the bands of Jehovah and His Anointed together. But this rising only brings in wrath and displeasure, against which all resistance will be vain. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh, Adonai27 has them in derision; Jehovah, in spite of all, has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. Such is the sure counsel of God made good by His power. Man's presumption in resistance only brings his ruin.

But more is then brought out. This King, who is He? Jehovah has said to Him, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." It is One who—begotten on what can be called "to-day," that is, begotten in time—is owned Son by Jehovah. It is not then here the blessed and most precious truth of eternal sonship with the Father, though it is not to be dissociated from it, as if it could be without it, but One who— the Anointed Man, and that holy thing born into this world with the title, by His birth there also, of Son of God—is owned such of Jehovah. Thus, Paul tells us, this raising up Jesus (not raising up again) is the accomplishing the promises made to the fathers, quoting the psalm in confirmation. He quotes another passage for His resurrection and incorruptibility. Thus we have Christ born into the earth, owned Son of God by Jehovah.

But large counsels flow from this title. He has only to ask of Jehovah, and the heathen are given Him for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. He will rule them with a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel—break with resistless power, ruling in judgment all that impiously and impotently rise up against His throne. But this execution of judgment is not yet accomplished. The psalm itself invites the kings and judges to submission and humbly owning the Son, lest they perish if His wrath be kindled but a little. He is Himself to be trusted; and who can claim this but Jehovah?

This summons to the kings of the earth is founded, remark, on the establishing the title of Christ to royal judgment and power on the earth. But is Christ set King in Zion? He was cast out of it and hung upon the cross for better blessing and higher glory, even that He had with the Father before the world was, yet cast out of Zion, to which He presented Himself as king. And as to the heathen and the earthly inheritance, He has not yet asked for it; when He does, in the Father's time, He will surely give it, and so His foes be His footstool. He declares (John 17) that He did not ask about it, but about those given Him out of it. The kings of the earth reign on, many bearing His name to be found yet in rebellion when He shall take to Him His great power, and the nations be angry, and His wrath come. No rod of iron has yet touched them—the potter's vessel, broken as nothing, is not now their image. The Lord is not yet awakened to despise it. They reign by God's authority. But there is no king yet in Zion. Christ has been rejected. Meanwhile we know He is Adonai in the heavens.

We have now the great elements of latter-day history, a Jewish remnant awaiting judgment, the wicked being still there, the heathen raging against Jehovah and His Anointed, He that sits in heaven laughing at their profitless rage, Jehovah setting Christ surely king in Zion, yea, upon His asking, giving Him all the nations for His inheritance (the submission of all to be enforced by resistless judgment). No sorrows here, not even as to the remnant in Psalm 1; but the counsels and decrees of God, and power such as none can resist. In a certain sense the kings of the earth did stand up and the rulers take counsel together, and—as to earthly power and scenes—succeeded. Christ was rejected and did not resist.

Where then is the remnant viewed in the Jewish scene of this world's history? What place have they? The great principles on which they stand are unfolded in the Psalms 3-7. It will be easily seen now how the first two psalms form the basis of the whole book, though the great body of its contents are the consequences of their non-fulfilment in the time to which those contents apply. Indeed in this the structure of the book resembles that of a great multitude of psalms—the thesis stated in the first or few first verses, and then the circumstances, often quite the opposite, through which the saint passes to arrive at what is expressed at the beginning of the psalm. The five following psalms then unfold to us, in general and in principle, the condition of the remnant and the thoughts and feelings produced by the Spirit of Christ in them, in the state of things consequent in Israel upon His personal rejection. The circumstances in which they find themselves are not historically alluded to till Psalms 9 and 10. Hence these psalms give the

working of the Spirit of Christ in them in the suited moral fruits, so as to display the state of the godly remnant, the holy seed that is in Judah when all is ruined. The principles of their state, the elements of feeling unfolded in it, are brought before us. There is not the strong expression which flows from the pressure of circumstances; but each moral phase is exhibited, the different feelings to be produced by the Spirit of Christ in relationship to God.

The first, Psalm 3, gives the condition in general in contrast with Psalm 2, and the support and confidence of faith in it. The troublers of the godly man are multiplied, haughty, and triumphing over him as having no help in God; but Jehovah is his shield. He lies down in peace, and by faith sees his enemies smitten and their power destroyed. Salvation belongs to Jehovah, and His blessing is upon His people. Here again, remark, we find the latter days; and, though surrounded by his enemies, the godly man rests in peace and prophetically sees their destruction, and blessing on Israel. It expresses confidence in God in the midst of hostile numbers, and without resource. Christ has surely entered fully into this; but the place of the psalm is in the latter days, after proof of the non-accomplishment of Psalm 2, at His first presenting Himself as Messiah to Israel. {Ps 4}

Psalm 4 differs in this respect from Psalm 3, of which we shall see other examples, that it is not simple confidence, but appeals to righteousness against the sons of men, who turn all the glory that belongs to the people of Jehovah, and especially to their king, into shame; but Jehovah has chosen the godly. The light of Jehovah’s countenance is his resource. In Psalms 3:4,

and 4:1, the experienced mercy of Jehovah is referred to. {Ps 5}

In Psalm 5 the cry of the godly is presented, and the character of God, as necessarily responding to that of the godly, is appealed to as necessitating His hearing him and judging the wicked. If the godly love godliness, surely Jehovah does; if the godly abhor wickedness, surely He does. It answers to the “righteous Father “of the Lord in John 17:only there the answer was heaven; here, earth—the necessary consequence of the difference of Christ’s position on earth and that of the remnant. {Ps 6}

In Psalm 6 the remnant take another ground. They are oppressed, their soul vexed, the extremity of distress presses on their spirit, and their conscience not being cleared gives the fear that Jehovah might be against them in anger, and they look that Jehovah should not rebuke them in anger nor chasten in hot displeasure, which they had as a nation deserved but which the redeemed heart deprecates. But they look to be saved through mercy and saved from death, and call on the wicked to depart, for Jehovah has heard. {Ps 7}

Psalm 7 appeals to Jehovah, on the ground of the righteous and more than righteous dealing of the godly with their enemies, that Jehovah may arise and awake to the judgment He has commanded, and that thus, by the deliverance of the remnant by judgment, the congregation of the various nations of the earth would compass Him about. He would then judge the peoples, thus distinctly bringing out the future judgment. Another point is brought out here. The Lord judges the

righteous man. If a man turn not, but go on in his wickedness, His wrath will follow him.

In all this we have the Spirit of Christ as it associates itself with the Jewish remnant, and in certain respects Christ Himself called to mind; that is, as passing through the circumstances which enabled Him to enter into theirs with truth (for we have seen that the effect on His soul personally was never what it is in the remnant). It is not His history, but His sympathy with them. There are two principles which connect Christ on earth and the remnant in the latter days: He takes them in grace into His place as on earth,28 and He enters into theirs. As to the nature and principles of their life, the righteous have the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ as it would work in their state. Their appeals are the expression of this. And God allows their claims (though they have not clear intelligence respecting this), furnishing in the Psalms expressions to them. It is a need and a desire too which the life that is in them legitimates to His heart who can take account of the ground Christ has laid for blessing, which makes Him righteous in forbearance, though the righteousness, as to the Jews, be not yet manifested. Their knowledge of what Jehovah is as respects integrity and oppression—what He has ever been—makes them look for a deliverance which seems impossible.29 There is another expression to note here—"how long?" It expresses the expectation of faith. God cannot reject His people for ever: how long will He deal with them as if He did, and take no notice of oppression? Hence in one place He says, There is none that knoweth how long. As a whole, then, these psalms are a general exhibition of the state of the remnant of the Jews before God in the latter day,

and the principles on which their souls stand as godly—not as yet the strong outpouring of their feelings under the trial of circumstances. Is Christ then absent from them all? Surely not, or the Psalms were not here. Christ entered in sympathy into their condition, forms the faith of their hearts in it by His Spirit, is thus fully found in their low estate in the best way. His own personal feelings when on earth they do not express30 though He has learnt by His own sorrows in like circumstances—blessed truth!—to have a word in season for him that is weary.

We have now come to Psalm 8 which closes this unfolding of the condition of the remnant, and the counsels of God as to the rejected Anointed of Jehovah. What is said is still by the mouth of the now delivered remnant. “O Jehovah, our Lord! “In vain have the heathen risen up against Him! “How excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.” It is not now a king in Zion— though surely that will be true; but a glory set above the heavens. It is not now merely the people of the great King blessed; but wherever the children of men dwell, Jehovah’s name, Israel’s Lord, is great, is it now as setting the Christ on His holy hill of Zion? No, it is in setting the Son of man, not merely over the children of men, but over everything His hand has created in all places of His dominion. He is set over all the works of His hand; none are excepted. He only is excepted who put all things under Him. And who is this Son of man? It is one made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned now with glory and honour, and set (which the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 2, shews us is not yet accomplished) over all the works of God’s hands.31 He could not be

rejected as Christ (even if that title was afterwards to be made good by Him who laughs from heaven at the impotent rage of the kings of the earth) without His having a yet more glorious place destined to Him in the counsels of God —the being gloriously crowned in heaven, and set over all things. Son of God and (Son of David) King in Zion was His title on earth.32 But His first rejection in this character throws Him out into this wider glory He had faithfully acquired too,—what belonged by divine committal to the Son of man. Hence we see in the Gospels the Lord charging His disciples to say no more that He was the Christ (for He was now virtually rejected by Israel), because the Son of man must suffer and be rejected, delivered to the Gentiles, die, and rise again (Luke 9). This was grace to Israel therefore; but to man, to man in Christ. Still Israel's Lord, Jehovah, was thus excellent in all the earth. This is that with which the psalm closes, as the proper result in the mouth of the remnant, though it was brought about by, and dependent on, a much higher glory. God, in the presence of the rage and ill-will of His enemies, and to silence the oppressors and the pride of the enemy, and of the relentless pitiless persecutors of His saints and people, has chosen the weakest things of the earth to perfect praise.

We have had an example of this—a little anticipative example of this—in the reception of the rejected Christ riding into Jerusalem. It shall be fully accomplished in the last day. Then He had witness given to Him, as Son of God in raising Lazarus, as Son of David in thus riding into Jerusalem, as Son of man when the Greeks came up. But then He must die to have this last glory (John n, 12). In the last days all shall not thus fail on earth. It shall be

accomplished in power. Meanwhile He is crowned with glory and honour in a better place. The psalm has an elevated and enlarged energy, as is suited to the great deliverance celebrated. Creation makes man so little in himself. What is he when we consider this vast and shining universe? But glance at Christ, and you see all its glories grow dim before the excellency of Him under whose feet all is put. Yea, they are lighted up again by that glory. Man is indeed great and above all in Him, the Son of man set over all things.

It is not the place here to enlarge on the use of this psalm in the New Testament; but it makes its use and import very clear. In 1 Corinthians 15 we see that it is accomplished in resurrection. In Hebrews 2 we see that the subjection of all things is in the world to come—that they are not yet put under Christ's feet, but that He is crowned already with glory and honour. Ephesians 1 shews that the church is united to Him in this place of glory, but that does not at all enter into the scope of the psalm. It was part of the mystery hid from ages and generations.

Before passing on, I would briefly review the ground we have gone over in these introductory psalms. First, the remnant in the latter day is set before us; then the counsels of God as to Messiah, but the kings of the earth and the rulers setting themselves against Jehovah, and His Anointed. Yet He will be set king in Zion. Then Psalm 3 to Psalm 7 present the great principles on which the remnant will have to walk under the circumstances in which they find themselves, Christ being rejected. They do not afford us the deep expressions of feeling which the extent of distress brings out, but only the sentiments produced by grace in their position, so far as they are

needed to give a voice to the feeling of grace and faith in it: Psalm 3 to Psalm 5 confidence; Psalms 6, 7, bowing of heart under distress; Psalm 3, simple confidence; Psalm 4, appeal to the God of righteousness, and the path of the righteous marked out; Psalm 5, he cries to Jehovah, because He discerns between the evil and the good, and the wicked thus must be removed, and Jehovah bless the righteous that trust in Him; Psalm 6, mercy is appealed to, as, distressed in spirit, he entreats Jehovah not to rebuke him in anger, and Jehovah has heard him in his distress to save him from death; Psalm 7, he appeals against his persecutors, contrasting their conduct and his own towards them, but Jehovah judges His people.

These are the great elements of relationship between Jehovah and the remnant of His people in that day. How precious it will be for the remnant to have their faith sustained and given words to, above their fears, by these gracious witnesses of the Spirit of Christ, to guide them, and justify their best hopes, and calm their justest fears! It is not difficult, I think, to understand why Christ could not personally have the feelings and desires here expressed, and yet animate by His Spirit prophetically these same desires in the remnant, and enter into all their circumstances in sympathy. He came from heaven, and never lost the spirit that breathed there, though He was in the circumstances which earth brought upon Him; but that spirit is love. He was above evil in the power of love, and the consciousness of divine feelings which the Son of man who is in heaven would have, though He passed through every sorrow which the Son of man on earth could be subject to. He went through all the distress that sin and man’s relentless enmity and the insensibility even of His disciples33 could bring upon

Him; but, while only the more sensible of it and feeling it the more deeply because He was perfect, He was above all the evil in love in the personal perfection of good. The remnant will not be so. They will be sustained of God, yet not only in the midst of evil, but under it, pressed by it, by the sense of guilt, by fear of wrath—not merely the deep sense of wrath, but a personally sifting dread of it. There is no deliverance for them without the destruction of their enemies; and they desire it. These are Jehovah's enemies too, and their desire is right (see Psalm 6:5, 7, 10).

This Christ, as we have said, did not. He was above all this enmity in heavenly love and through known communion with His Father, whose will He had peacefully to do in known approval: until, in the end, He entered into that dark valley, where, for our sakes and Israel's, He was indeed to meet wrath, but there His converse was with God. As to His human enemies, He only says, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," and all were prostrate before Him, and it is His to tell them in peace, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Hence Himself, love divine, passing through every sorrow that Israel or we may have to pass through, He did so personally in love. All was felt, but He was above the evil in love to men, being in perfect communion with heaven and its loving favour. In this He is a pattern for Christians, not for Israel. But He really went through all that the remnant can ever go through, yet was free enough from any power over Him to feel for others in it. This He does perfectly, and prophetically inspires the expressions of faith to those who, not knowing yet heavenly love and deliverance, are pressed under it; and gives utterance, by the prophetic Spirit towards God (as

the Spirit would in such), to the sense of their oppression of heart which circumstances give occasion to, when divine favour and deliverance are not known.

No one can enter into another's sorrows under this oppression so well as one who knows the cause of it, and what that produces in respect of relationship with God, but is not in it. Christ has been in all their affliction, and felt it, but not felt, as to others, what those who are under it, and necessarily and rightly occupied with themselves, feel. He felt for His oppressors with heavenly love. His sympathy, being perfect, has, by the prophetic Spirit, entered into all the remnant's circumstances and feelings, and given divinely-furnished expression to them. The heart may rise up and say, It is an easy thing to give it by the prophetic Spirit if He is not really in it. I answer, He was in every part of the affliction to the full, and infinitely more than the remnant ever will be, having suffered, withal, that which they never will because He has. But does His having a better feeling in that into which He entered hinder His having perfect sympathy with them? It enables Him to have it, as regards all the distress, which came from Satan, and from God when it was not merely a question of feeling for those from whom the distress came, when He was suffering Himself. He went through all in the same way (only much more deeply) than they; and, as to a part and the deepest part of it, took on Himself what they never will have.

When the remnant are in the same sorrows, not knowing divine favour, He will minister to them, and through these psalms, all the feelings which God can look upon with approbation and listen to. He will conduct their souls through them. How often in trial when we hardly

dare to express what we feel (for fear of offending God, in the uncertainties of a cloudy faith) does a text which utters our sorrows in a way which, being in the word, must be right, assuage the heart and give confidence in looking up to God! So will it be then. {Ps 9, 10}

In Psalms 9 and 10 we enter historically on the circumstances of the remnant in the last days in the land. The great principles having been laid down (the remnant—Messiah—trial in the midst of Israel through His rejection—a path He had learnt in person—glory in the Son of man), we get in these a preface as regards the circumstances, a laying of them down, that the scene of the exercises, the state of things which gives rise to these, and the deliverance wrought by the judgment of God, may be plainly before us.

We may remark here, in confirmation of previously expressed judgments, that the righteous man, Messiah, according to the counsels of God, but rejected (with the consequent sorrows of the remnant into which He thus enters), and in result glorified as Son of man, and set over all the works of God's hands, having been brought before us in the first eight psalms, we find ourselves at once (when entering on the historical detail of circumstances) in the last days, the righteous remnant being under the oppression of the wicked and the heathen. Messiah, in Spirit, in the oppressed remnant, owns the righteousness of Jehovah, in judgment, sitting on the throne judging right.

Remark the great difference here, in passing, between the celebration of the righteousness of God, sitting in the throne, judging right, and vindicating the righteous man from the oppressor, and Christ on the cross, who

was not vindicated on the earth, but declares Himself forsaken of God (His enemies, outwardly, having all their will against Him), and then righteousness being established in a heavenly way, God's righteousness in setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." As regards this righteousness, He was taken completely out of the world, so that the disciples—as in flesh, as was the case with the Jews—saw Him no more. He had glorified God, and was glorified in God, as God has been in Him. The righteousness which judged the oppressor, though executed by God who alone is really righteous and has power, had its sphere and measure in earthly government, and in discerning the righteous and the wicked among men, the oppressed and the oppressor. It was connected with the righteous government of God. The clear apprehension of this difference is a key to the whole frame of thought in the Psalms.

Another point, it may be useful to remark, is this. In the English translation several words are translated people: Am34 in the singular, people, or Ammi35 my people (Israel): Goim36 heathens or nations, that is, those outside, who are in contrast with Israel as the people of God. Israel is so designated to mark its guilt, Psalm 43:1. Leummim 37 the peoples and nations in general on the earth, the various races of mankind; Ammim38 peoples in the plural, I think the nations viewed in connection with Israel restored and taken into relationship with Jehovah.

To turn now to the psalms before us: Psalm 9 presents to us Jehovah, the Most High (the names of God which connect themselves with the Jews, and the millennial

accomplishment of the promises made to Abraham), delivering the people by judgment from the oppression of the heathen, and destroying the wicked. The delivered Jew celebrates this goodness which has maintained the right and cause of the righteous. The Spirit of Christ speaks fully in this, as having taken up their interests. It is really His right. If the Jew has any, it is through Him. If they say it, He has put the words in their mouth. Indeed, if Christ had not entered into their sorrow, and given them these words, they could not have said, My right.

Let us consider this (as to circumstances) first leading psalm with somewhat more detail. The humble and oppressed one praises God with his whole heart, under the double name of Jehovah and Most High.39 The turning back of his enemies is not merely a human victory. They fall and perish before the presence of Jehovah Elohim. But this was to maintain the right and cause of the godly one—really the right and cause of Christ, who had thus thrown Himself into their portion in gracious sympathy. In verse 6 a very important principle is brought out for faith at all times, then to be verified in fact. The efforts of the enemy here are for time. He can destroy, if God allow, present prosperity. The Lord endures for ever. We have only to do His will by the way. He has always His way at the end. That will which we do by the way, perhaps in sorrow and suffering then, will surely reign at the end of the way. Destructions were now to come to a perpetual end—the cities and their memory had been destroyed. Jehovah endures for ever.

We have heard of the patience of Job—that was by the way; we have seen the end of the Lord—that is the

ground for faith. It walks with Him who certainly has the end at His command. He shall endure for ever—has prepared His throne for judgment. He will judge the world universal in righteousness, and minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness. This was the public character of Jehovah. But there was a private part of His character, so to speak, the making of which however also public, is the great subject of the psalm; and indeed, with that first public one, the great subject of all the psalms. Both are known only to faith, but are celebrated beforehand. This second part is this: Jehovah is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. The result is confidence in Jehovah at all times on the part of those who know His name. The intervention of Jehovah in that day in favour of those that seek Him will make good this name everywhere.

Another point is brought out also. Jehovah dwells in Zion as thus revealing Himself. His doings, what He does for the display of His name through judgment in favour of the remnant, are to be declared among the peoples40—another word than that often used, and signifying, I apprehend, the peoples that He owns—that they may be able thus to trust in Him. He is returned thus to Zion at the close. Verses 13, 14, are the cry of the remnant, and on the ground of mercy, that their hearts may praise Jehovah in Zion, as well as because of His judgments; verse 15 celebrates the judgment; and the moral, so to speak, is told in verse 16. Jehovah is known by the judgment which He executes. The way in which this psalm serves as a preface for understanding the scope of the book, and its application to the last days, is evident. Once seized, it largely helps in the intelligence of the whole book. In verse 17 the wicked41 be they who

they may, Jew as well as Gentile, and indeed particularly the Jew, and all the nations who forget God,42 are shewn to be rejected and judged, and to have their place in hades by judgment. And in this God remembers the needy, for the destruction of the wicked is their deliverance. Hence for this, for Jehovah to arise, is the cry of the remnant. This feature explains certain expressions in the psalms to which I have before alluded —the demand for judgment. Compare the characters of the judged ones in Romans 1, 2. Only there the wrath is from heaven, not governmental on earth from Zion; and a greater moral development will be found, as was to be expected, and not the external judgment of nations.43 The body of Psalm 10 depicts the state of things in the last days, until Jehovah arises to judgment, and more especially the character of the wicked, for he is known by his character, and is especially to be found in the Jew. Compare Isaiah 40-48 and 49-58: in the one passage, the question being particularly idolatry and Babylon; in the second, the rejection of Messiah (the two capital sins which bring the Jews to judgment—Jehovah, and His Anointed). The wicked in his pride acts upon that which is seen; as the righteous by faith on the character of Jehovah, faith in Him. The wicked boasts himself in his heart's desire, and blesses him (counts him happy, that is) whom Jehovah abhors. He pursues his plans without conscience, seeking to destroy the humble by craft, and reckons that God has forgotten him. How well Christ could help them here! The humble cry under the oppression. Why does Jehovah stand afar off, and hide Himself in the time of trouble?

They were far indeed from being where Christ was, yet the shadow, so to speak, of that sorrow was passing over

them, but they could hope in God. So in verse 12. They call upon God to lift up His hand—not forget the humble: why should the wicked contemn God? Jehovah has seen it and will requite; the poor committed himself to Him. Verse 16 to the end celebrates Jehovah's coming in in reply, and its results. Jehovah is King for ever; the heathen are perished out of His land. There is the public judgment; now the secret of the Lord. Jehovah has heard the desire of the humble. He prepared their hearty and then hearkened; and that hearing will be in judging, in being Judge for the fatherless and the oppressed, so that the man of the earth, he who had his strength and hope there, should no more oppress.

One or two remarks are required on both psalms. There are two parties, and in a certain sense three, besides the poor humbled remnant who wait upon God: the heathen (Goim), strangers to Israel, who oppress them, enemies of God; and the wicked, then more especially among the Jews, as we have seen. I have said three, because the wicked are spoken of in a double way. In general, indeed exclusively so in Psalm 10 and each time it is used in Psalm 9, except verse 17, it is in the singular. In verse 17 it is plural, to shew that all of them will be cast down into sheol. In the singular it is, I judge, characteristic; yet I doubt not, there will be one special wicked one, The Lawless One, 2 Thess. 2:8; the Antichrist, but known here certainly by his character, not by a distinct prophecy of his person. The lawlessness is manifested, but not The Lawless One, and it is not confined to one. The analogy of this, with the circumstances in which Christ was in His rejection on earth, is very plain, as is the case with all the forms of wickedness. The very

Trinity is imitated in mischief in the Apocalypse. There is the city of corruption, as the bride of Christ; and so on.

Up to this, save as the Messiah of God's counsels was brought out in Psalm 2, the righteous man was given characteristically, and here it was necessary to characterise the whole party opposed to Jehovah and His Christ, though one may be the concentrated expression of this character. The remnant were to judge by this character morally. Next, remark, these wicked ones are judged with the heathen; they all come together under the same judgment. The wicked shall be turned into "sheol," and all the heathen who forget God. So verse 5: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked." Psalm 9 is, as we have seen, the general view of Jehovah's intervention in judgment. In Psalm 10 we have particularly the position of the sorrow and trial of the remnant within. Hence we find the wicked (man), not the heathen until on the execution of judgment they are found too to have perished out of Jehovah's land, so as to identify the judgment with the general statements of Psalm 9. How completely this all answers to the history we have of the latter days, I need not say.

What the righteous remnant are to do when the power of evil is thus dominant in Emmanuel's land, Psalm 11 treats of. Psalms 11-15, as I have already remarked, give the thoughts and feelings of the remnant at that time (that is, consequent on the state of things spoken of in Psalms 9, 10). I will now trace the outline of these five psalms. Psalm n presents to us the righteous repelling the idea of quailing, as void of resource, before the godless wickedness of those who fear not God. He trusts in Jehovah. Still the wicked, with all will, seek the

destruction of those who are true of heart. And if all human resource fails—all that was a ground on which hope could be built for the earth, what was the righteous to do? Jehovah is as stable as ever. He is in His holy temple—has His place on earth, which faith owns, let it be ever so desolate; and His throne is in heaven: no evil can enter there, and it rules over all.

But there is more than this. If He abide in sure repose, because Almighty and far above all evil, in heaven, He looks on the earth—He governs it, for this, not the assembly's heavenly portion, is our subject here and indeed in all the Old Testament. His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. This is a most solemn and consoling truth for those in trial. But the ways of God in government are still further revealed. The Lord tries the righteous: so the history of Job, a picture of what happens to Israel, teaches us. The present state of things is not in any way a revelation of the government of God. Faith knows God has the upper hand, and that all things work together for good to those that love Him; but immediate government, so that the present state of things should shew the result of God's estimate of good and evil here below, is not in exercise. If it were so, no evil could be allowed. The righteous would flourish, and all he does prosper. But it is not so. The assembly, meanwhile, has her portion out of the world, has her place of abode where Christ has gone to prepare her one. She suffers with Him and will reign with Him. But as to all His saints, He tries them; as to the wicked, whom He abhors, upon them He will rain judgment, snares, and fire and brimstone; for the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness, His countenance beholds the upright. Here is the clear ground for faith then,

when the remnant are in trial. God beholds—He tries the righteous, and will in due time execute judgment. It involves this: the righteous Jehovah loves righteousness.

Such is the general basis of the godly man's confidence and walk; but they are not insensible to the evil, but can present it to the Lord. This is the subject of Psalm 12, "Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth." Jehovah will cut off the proud and deceitful lips. It is the character of the wicked. He knows no check, no bridle to his will—says, Who is lord over us? But it is just for his oppression of the poor that Jehovah arises. God's word, on which these had relied, and which promised help as the necessary witness of Jehovah's character to which they looked, is a sure and well-tried word. It will bear infallibly its promised fruit. There is nothing deceitful in it. Jehovah will keep His poor from the generation of the wicked. But the wicked have full scope when the worthless are exalted on high. {Ps 13}

In Psalm 13 the righteous is reduced to the lowest point of distress as far as evil from men goes. It is as if God had entirely and definitely forgotten him. His enemy was exalted over him, and he taking counsel in his heart; but then he cries— looks to Jehovah to hear lest he should perish on the one hand, and his enemy on the other have to say he had prevailed. But he is heard, and sings to Jehovah, in whose mercy he had trusted, and who deals bountifully with him at last. {Ps 14}

In Psalm 14 the evil has reached its climax in God's sight. What is ever true of flesh is now brought up under God's eye at the time when He is going to judge. Man rises up in pride before Him: yea, He judges because flesh does so. He looks down to see if any understand or

seek Him amongst men; but there are none. A remnant indeed wrought in by grace, whom He already owns as His people (v. 4), are there, and these the wicked eat up as they would bread—they do not call on Jehovah. It is man's full-blown pride and wickedness; but all is soon changed: God is in the congregation of the righteous. Fear falls upon the proud, who but a while ago were scorning the poor for trusting Jehovah. The seventh verse shews us that all this is anticipative and prophetic, and where and how it will be accomplished. It is the desire of the godly one according to the intelligence of faith. He looks for it, note, out of Zion, not content till Jehovah establishes praise there. The people, too, remark, are seen as in captivity. Then comes the inquiry —who is the person that will have a share in the blessings of that holy hill, when the Lord shall have established the seat of His righteous power in Zion? {Ps 15}

Psalm 15 gives the answer—he in whom is uprightness of heart in the path of the law. Remark here, that while the godly (when all is utterly dark, and wickedness has entirely the upper hand, and the foundations of human earthly hope, even in the things that belong to God on the earth, are destroyed, and wickedness is in the place of righteousness) look above and see God's throne immutable in heaven, and thus all in heaven and earth brought into connection; yet, as to the point they look to, it is Jehovah in His holy temple and deliverance coming out of Zion; and so it will (see Isaiah 66:6). The immutable throne in heaven will establish in sure power the long desolate throne upon the earth. Jehovah will be in His temple, but will reign in the Person of Christ in

Zion. This is Jewish deliverance and according to just Jewish hopes.

There is one important general remark to make here—the sense of full relationship with Jehovah is enjoyed. Whatever the trial, whatever the condition of the remnant, the wickedness of the people, the oppression of the Gentiles in the land, the faith of the remnant contemplates its relationship with Jehovah. And hence Jehovah is viewed as in His holy temple, though there is as yet no manifestation of His power. We have not, therefore, the remnant as yet entirely cast out, nor is the power of Antichrist here contemplated as manifested. When he sets up his power, there will be open apostasy, and the faithful will be driven out. But the wicked and the Gentile, as such, in the land, are contemplated. We learn clearly from this psalm (n) that the wicked is characteristic. It is plural, except verse 5 where it is in contrast with the righteous.

These psalms, passing over the driving out from Jerusalem, go on in hope to another scene—the deliverance wrought by Jehovah when He is indeed returned to Jerusalem; not the destruction of Antichrist by the Lord coming from heaven, but the driving out of the Gentile oppressors by Jehovah established in Zion. Hence all Israel is brought in (Psalm 14:7). And their salvation comes out of Zion. Hence these psalms, as far as they refer to Christ, look at the time in which He walked on earth before His final rejection. They do not, save Psalms 2 and 8, directly refer to Him, but to the remnant. But in His public path on earth, He did, from His baptism by John Baptist, associate Himself graciously with them; as at the close He tasted in grace their final sorrows in the close of their history.

These psalms present to us the state of the remnant while still having their place among the nations who have not yet openly broken, in apostasy, with Jehovah, but whose wickedness is in fact shewing itself, and ripening to its highest pitch. And they pass over, in faith, to the time when Jehovah, seated in Zion, delivers His people, casting all the Gentiles out of His land, all Israel being restored from their captivity. The whole latter-day scene, except the last half-week of Antichrist's power, is before us. Jehovah is still in His place, as publicly owned. It was just thus in the Lord's days. In Psalm 14:5, Elohim is spoken of, because it is not relationship which is there in question, but God Himself in His nature and character. Not man, or anything human, or even Satan's power, was there; but God was in the generation of the righteous. {Ps 16}

With Psalm 16 we begin a very important series of psalms— those in which the connection of Christ Himself with the remnant is brought before us by the divine Spirit. In Psalm 16, Christ takes formally His place among the remnant. It is quoted by the apostle Peter to prove His resurrection, and the principle of it is referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews to shew His participation in human nature.44 After examining many critical authorities, I adhere to the English translation of the second verse. The third leaves the sense obscure, from not changing the preposition. "But to the saints "answers to "said unto the Lord," not to "extendeth not to thee." He says to the Lord, "My goodness… to the saints,… in them is all my delight." Thus this psalm has a most important and deeply interesting place. It is Christ taking His place in grace amongst the poor remnant of Israel—of the servant to tread the path of life

which none as in flesh had found in this world, and that leading through death to beyond it, where there was fulness of joy. He takes the place of dependence, of trust, not of divine equality. And He who says He does not, must have had title to do so, or need not have said it. He was taking another place. He takes the place of servant, and calls Jehovah His Lord. Nor was this all. He takes a place, however alone He might be in perfection and perfect in doing it, with the saints on earth. And this He does, not merely as a fact, but with the fullest affection. His delight is in them. He joys to call them the excellent of the earth.

Note further, it is not with the heavenly saints He associates Himself, nor are those of whom He speaks here united to Him in heaven, but He associated with them. Some may go to heaven by that path of life of which He has Himself left the track, but His association with them, and theirs with Him, is under the title of the excellent of the earth.

We may further remark, that the whole psalm breathes this spirit, and takes this place, of dependence, so precious for the poor remnant. It is not, Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days—that was taking a divine place. His body was a temple; He raised it up Himself. Here He leans as man on Jehovah—in both perfect. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.” Let us now consider the contents of this psalm in more detailed order. We have already noticed the first verses; but the principles are of the last importance, as presenting Christ taking this place, so that I return to them.

Messiah looks as man to God to preserve Him. He takes the place of man. It is not merely a Jew already there calling on Jehovah, but a man with God. He puts His trust in Him. The principle of trust Paul alleges in Hebrews 2 as a witness that Messiah was the true man. Next, He takes the place of a servant. He says to Jehovah—for now He takes His place before Him—"Thou art my Adon, my Lord." This is a definite and distinct place. He moreover takes His place, not in divine goodness towards others, but before God in a man's place. My goodness, He says, extendeth not to thee. Thus He said to the young man who came to Him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." But though in truth alone, looked at in His relationship to man, for all were sinners, He takes His place with the remnant, the excellent of the earth. This He did historically, when He went to the baptism of John Baptist, with those whom the Spirit led to God in the holy path of repentance. They went first there. He associates Himself with them in grace. Still, we look on to the full result in the last days even here. He will not hear of any God but Jehovah. The sorrows of those who did should be multiplied. Jehovah Himself was His portion, and He maintained Him in the sure enjoyment of that which He was to enjoy in the purpose of God, and pleasant was the place where the lines had fallen to Him. It was Jehovah's inheritance on the earth that was His portion, and this is specially in Israel. Such was His portion; but then there was His path first. Here He blesses Jehovah too. His counsel was always His guide. He walked by it. The secret of Jehovah was with Him to guide Him; and away from men, when all was brought into the silence of His heart and its inmost feelings, His own inmost thoughts were light and guidance. It is ever

so when we are in communion with God; for, though in the heart (such thoughts are always His light in it, the fruit, and the moral fruit, of the working of His Spirit) there was the positive direction and guidance of Jehovah, and those inward apprehensions of His soul, the result of divine work in it.

In Christ of course this was perfect. It is well, while judging of all by the word, not to neglect this working of the soul, as moved and taught of God. The mind of the Spirit in moral discernment, is found in it. Besides this guidance, there was positive purpose of heart. He had set Jehovah always before Him. This only direction did He follow, and because of His being near, and at His right hand, He would not be moved. It was not self-dependence, but trust in Jehovah. This was indeed the path of life, though as yet unmanifested in visible power (compare Rom. 1:4).

Hence He would rejoice through all, and pass through death with unclouded hope; His flesh should rest in it; as a man He did not fear it. Jehovah, whom He trusted, would not leave His soul in hades, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Soul and body, though going respectively to the place of departed spirits and the place of corruption, would not be left in the one or see the other. Jehovah would shew Him the path of life through, but beyond, death. How blessedly He did so! It led up to brighter joys than Israel’s blessing, among whom He had come to sojourn. There indeed the excellent of the earth could not follow Him (John 13:33, 36; 21:19). He must first dry up the waters of Jordan for them, and make it the path for them also where He was gone. For that path, since it led through death, must lead, if it was indeed the path of life, to what was

beyond it—the presence of Him, in whose presence there is fulness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Such is the blessed issue and result of the Lord's path across this world, where He took His place among the saints, and trod, in confidence on Jehovah (into whose hands He committed His spirit), the path which, if He took us up, must lead through death, and then found the path again in resurrection, and so as man up to Him with whom is fulness of joy. The Spirit of holiness marked the life of the Son of God all through. He was declared to be such, with power, by resurrection; but, being man, passed up into the presence of God. The holy confiding life found its perfect joy there. He is (blessed be God, and the name of that blessed One who has trod this path!) our forerunner.45 Let us dwell for a moment on the connection of this with other scriptures, partially referred to. It is of importance, as shewing Christ's position in the midst of Israel, and the difference of their associations with Him, from those of the saints of the assembly. And besides that, we get the divinely perfect feelings of Christ Himself in this position: He is in association with the saints in Israel; only He voluntarily takes it (that is, that into which they are called out in witness of their return to God). We see (Heb. 2:13) that this association is with those that are sanctified. He makes one company with that pious remnant manifested thus for God. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, having taken up their cause and consequently become man, become flesh and blood, because the children whom God had given Him partook of it.

We see that He really became man, but to identify Himself with the interests, and to secure the blessing of

the saints46 of the remnant, of the children whom God was bringing to glory, and who are distinguished from the mass of Israel, to whom they were to be a sign (see Isaiah 8:18). In this passage the condition of this remnant and the expectation of better days are considered. Leaving aside the assembly which is not the subject of prophecy, the passage passes, as we often see, from Christ's personal connection with the saints in Israel to this position and portion of these saints in the last days. This is with sufficient distinctness given us in this passage of Isaiah to help us much in understanding the way in which the Spirit of God does pass from the previous history of the saints in Israel over to the last days, leaving out the assembly altogether. Christ, in spirit, contemplates these only—His connection, that is, with the remnant of Israel, and so far with the nation, and thus passes over the whole history of the assembly, to Himself again in the same connection with the nation in the last days.

"Bind up the testimony," He says (Isaiah 8:16, 17), "seal the law among my disciples, and I will wait47 upon Jehovah, who hideth his face from the house of Israel, and will look for him." This was when He had become the rejected sanctuary and the stumbling-stone.

It continues to the final glory, when Israel shall possess Him as the Son born to them (Isaiah 9:6, 7). If we do not abstract the assembly, it is impossible to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament. The assembly has her heavenly portion, but Christ can consider His relationship with His earthly people separately.

To return to Psalm 16, the reader will remark the reference to idolatry (one of God's great controversies

with Israel) in the fourth verse. From Matthew 12:43-45, and Isaiah 65 we learn that the Jews will fall into idolatry in the latter days. Jehovah alone is acknowledged by the prophetic Spirit of Christ. It is after this is all done away that He will rejoice, in the days that are to come, in the portion which Jehovah has given Him with the excellent of the earth. The certainty of this hope is connected with the resurrection (which is a necessary condition to its fulfilment, and which the favour of Jehovah secures to His Anointed) in all the virtue of that power which will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. Hence the apostle refers to the sure mercies of David; that is, to the accomplishment of all God's promises to Israel, as a proof that Christ was to rise from the dead now no more to return to corruption. Nothing can be more beautiful (if it be not His death) than the expression of the Lord's feelings given us in this psalm—the expression by Himself of the place He has taken, and that with the saints. Jehovah is His own portion. How truly was it so! What other had He? Yet His delight was in the saints. Do we not see it in His disciples? With the first step of spiritual life in the remnant, shewn in their going to John's baptism of repentance, He identifies Himself who surely had no need of repentance. So, as a faithful man, an Israelite, He sets Jehovah always before Him. So, even in death, He rests, in confidence, on Him for resurrection, that path of life through, and in spite of, death (and which He has opened for us), and there Jehovah, God, His Father's presence, is (He knows) the fulness of joy; at His right hand pleasures for evermore. This is the highest proper joy of the mind and Spirit of Christ; not glory, but the presence of God.

The key to Psalm 16 was in the words, “In thee do I put my trust”; to Psalm 17, “Hear the right.” In Psalm 16 we have seen the blessed path and working of that spirit of confidence. It is, though the same spirit works in the remnant, essentially applicable to Christ Himself in Person. Psalm 17 doubtless applies to Him also, but not so entirely so. It is on somewhat lower ground, though one on which the Spirit of God speaks. We see distinctly that it contemplates others, though not without Christ, in verse 11. “They have now compassed us in our steps.” Still, Christ is found here: without Him none really could say to purpose, Hear the right. It is an appeal to the judgment of Jehovah, God, coming forth to vindicate the righteousness of Him that cries to Him. The godly remnant will be, in the main, delivered from their deadly enemies. Jehovah will arise and disappoint them.

Still, some will fall, even of the wise (Dan. 11:35)—Christ Himself, the perfect One, though for more glorious reasons, still in sympathy with His people, did. Hence the righteousness goes higher up than the present deliverance by God’s government of the godly remnant on earth, to a result true of Christ, and a comfort for the faith of all those who may fall under the oppression of the enemy. “I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness.” This is fully true of Christ, who is before His Father in righteousness, and is the very image of the invisible God—He in whom He is displayed in glory. But He traces the path He trod as the righteous One on earth, in the midst of evil, and where He underwent the temptations of the enemy. First, there was perfect integrity of heart, and that in the most secret thoughts of it. There was purpose not to transgress. In obedience

the words of God's lips guided Him; and thus the paths of the destroyer were never an instant entered on; the words of God's lips never lead there. This the Lord shewed in His temptation in the wilderness. In the paths of Jehovah He looked to Him to hold up His goings. This is a part of righteousness in man—dependence. He called on God, sure that He would hear Him. This is the confidence we have. Such was His path.

He applies it then as the ground of looking for the intervention of God's power to protect Him—as He does those that trust in Him—from the wicked that oppressed Him. Prosperous and lifted up as they were, Jehovah was His refuge when He did not yet interfere. But He looked to His openly doing so. Remark that the perfectness of moral character gives nearness of confidence and sense of preciousness to Jehovah. Even in us God would have this. We are of more value than many sparrows—the very hairs of our head counted. Here it is perfect, and He looks to be kept as the apple of the eye—that which is most preciously guarded by him whose it is.

After all, these prosperous oppressors were but the hand of Jehovah—men of this world, who got all heart could desire from the outward providence of God. But what a lesson among Jews, whose legal portion was blessing in basket and store and children! (Compare the parables of Dives and Lazarus, and of the unjust steward). Here then the breach with this world, and a place in glory in the next, are fully contemplated. Jehovah's face in righteousness, and likeness to Him when thus woke up into another world, were well worth the portion of the men of this world. But here, mark, death and another world are contemplated, though deliverance is also (the remnant being more distinctly brought in). It is the same

as we have seen in Matthew 5, where also both are contemplated. We have thus, in this first book, the Jews at the end of days, but in circumstances analogous to what Christ's life was, that is, moving as godly ones in the midst of the wicked people. {Ps 18}

Psalm 18 presents to us the connection of Christ, and particularly of His (not atoning suffering—that is found in Psalm 22, but His) entering into the sorrows of death, with the whole history of Israel. It is the connection of the deliverance of Israel and the final judgment executed in their behalf on the earth with the title Christ had to that intervention. No doubt the atonement was absolutely necessary to this, but it is not on that side that His sufferings are looked at here. God delights in Him and answers Him according to His uprightness, and delivers the afflicted remnant, into whose sorrows He has entered, with Him. Christ is the centre, in a word, of the deliverances of Israel—the cause of their deliverance from Egypt, and of their complete and final redemption by power in the latter day, and then their personal Deliverer too. He is dependent on Jehovah, is heard, and His sorrows are before us; but at the close He works in the power of Jehovah the deliverance of His people, and then is the full witness of God's mercy (chesed) to His Anointed David and His seed for evermore. Mercy here is not simply such as we would speak of to sinners, but favour and grace shewn and enjoyed, so as even to be used for piety in man. It is particularly celebrated in Psalm 89, where, from these mercies centering all in Him, the term is applied to Christ in person. He is the chasid (v. 19). Hence the blessings conferred on Israel at the close (and indeed on all who enjoy them) are called by the same word "the sure mercies of David,"

confirmed by an everlasting covenant, and indeed, as the apostle shews us, secured by the resurrection of Christ, making their connection with His sorrows of death in this psalm very plain.

This psalm presents us also with a direct scriptural proof and illustration of a most essentially important principle as to the nature of all the psalms, giving a key to their general character and form. We know from the book of Samuel that the occasion of this psalm was the celebration of David's deliverances from the hand of Saul and of all his enemies. But it is evident that the language of the psalm in no way stops short at any events in the life of David, or that in its main purport the Spirit of God contemplates even what happened to that already anointed sufferer, who was the occasion of the psalm. The Spirit of God takes up the circumstance which has present personal interest for him whom He uses as prophet merely, as the occasion to bring out the larger and wider scene of which Christ alone can be the centre, giving a meaning to the whole, in respect of which the more immediate circumstance only forms a partial, though perhaps a most interesting, link in the chain which leads up to the full display of God and His ways in the great result. So it was with all the prophets, only here more personally predictive. Sennacherib's invasion, for example, is the occasion of bringing on the scene the Assyrian of the latter days. Thus prophecies had an application of the deepest interest at the time and became the instrument of the present government of God, but were also the revelation of those ultimate events on the earth in the same peoples and nations in which the government of God would be fully and finally displayed. They are of no private interpretation. See 2

Peter 1:20. They formed part of the great scheme of divine government.

In the Psalms the writer and immediate occasion sometimes almost wholly disappear, are never the main object, but are not to be lost sight of in the expressions used as the utterance of personal feeling, and which are not the revelation of objective facts. In the latter case the circumstances of the writer have little application. The Psalms necessarily bring in the speaker more, though believers find that the Holy Ghost used the speaker's feeling to provide for the hearts of others, yet commanded and wrought in them, and led the writer by His power far beyond anything that the occasion would have suggested to his own mind. The feeling, in its nature suited to the event which might give rise to the psalm, was only the occasion of the Holy Ghost taking the writer up to provide a divine record to guide feelings in future days, or to reveal those of Christ as taking up the cause of His people. They may be those of the speaker too, as in simple piety was often the case; but in all cases it was the Spirit's provision for future days, or a prophecy relating to Christ Himself and the part He takes in those dealings of God with Israel, and going on, looking at the book as a whole, to the full and undisguised celebration of the results.

The psalm, as we have said, takes in the whole history of Israel, and speaks as in the time when deliverance from the pressure of hostile power is already accomplished. But it celebrates especially Jehovah Himself the Deliverer, and still declares the speaker's dependence on Him. This is the thesis of the psalm. It then, as is the usual form of the Psalms, goes through all the circumstances which lead the soul up to what is

celebrated in the first verse or verses. Christ is seen, the sorrows of death compassing Him and floods of ungodly men besetting Him, the sorrows of hades upon Him and the cords of death about His soul. I have no doubt the letter of this was the expression of what David had felt, as indeed verse 50 shews. Still, as I have said, this was merely the occasion. The substance of it applies to Christ. He passes in His mind, as in Gethsemane, through the sorrows of death. This is the groundwork laid for all the rest.

The next point is dependence and entreaty. In His distress He calls upon Jehovah and cries to His God. He hears Him as in the midst of Israel, His cry comes before Him. Now comes the results. Christ but represented Israel here, for we have nothing to do with the assembly here. From verse 7-16 we have the deliverance of Israel from Egypt by the mighty acts of Jehovah. But these were not all Israel's difficulties. The power of his enemies was to be annulled, who were stronger than he as regards flesh. This also was accomplished, and he was brought into a wealthy place.

But this introduces another principle—the righteousness in which God delighted; and which, while found absolutely and perfectly only in Christ as a living man, yet characterises the remnant of Israel in whose hearts the delight in God's law is written. This principle is brought out from the latter part of verses 19-26. Christ is the foundation of this, but it is as entering into the condition and sorrows of His people. He is the Israel in spirit; and hence, while all the value of His perfectness is before God for them, the perfectness of that One whose whole life, as identified with the remnant, was well-pleasing to Him, yet we must take the place and

state of the remnant, as of David himself. For, though Christ entered into this place of the remnant in His own perfectness, to give the value of that perfectness to them before God, as agreeable in His sight, yet the state of those to whom it was to be applied is that which is substantially before us in the psalm. Hence we find, “I kept myself from mine iniquity.”

This is most important in judging of the literal use of the Psalms. Christ could have said, “from iniquity”; but personally, “from mine iniquity,” He could not. But the Spirit of godliness (of Christ) in the remnant thus working guards them from following the flesh. They own, that if Israel goes astray (and so they did all but universally in principle), this wickedness was theirs, in themselves; but they were kept from it. Now this is truth in the inward parts—just what God wants. It is the government of God which we have here distinctly brought out in its unchangeable principle (v. 25, 26). Now Christ, having taken up their cause, as associated with them, with these “excellent of the earth,” all the value of what awakened God’s delight in Him, and which, by grace, animated them, was their place of acceptance before God, though the atonement was the final ground of it. But in their case this integrity and divine inward nature were shewn in keeping themselves from their natural course. But there was another part of this government, tender care of the afflicted ones, saving them and bringing down all man’s pride (v. 27). In darkness there would be light. To the righteous there arises light in the darkness.

Now another scene dawns on us—the coming in of power in their behalf. And, as Christ had taken the sorrow at the beginning, and then we had the remnant

in their own condition,' yet Christ not separated from them in the way of interest and association (for it is not union here, that is the assembly's portion), so here He must take the power in Person too; just as in Mark He was engaged in the sowing and engaged in the harvest, all the intermediate time going on without His personal intervention or seeming care, though the crop was always His. God's word had stood good all through, and Jehovah Himself was a buckler to those that trusted in Him. But now He gives strength and victory to His anointed for Israel from verse 29 to the end. Doubtless the language is that of David, but it is substantially the introduction of the kingdom of Christ.

A very few remarks will suffice to give the details, this general character of the latter part of the psalm being seized. The general strain is resistless victory. But in verse 43 there are particulars to be noted. Three classes of persons are here introduced: the people—He is delivered from their strivings; the heathen—He is made their head; then a people, not before known with which He had not been in relation as in Israel, shall serve Him. That is, Messiah delivered from the strivings and revoltings of ungodly Jews; made the head of the heathen; and then a people hitherto strangers should serve Him— become now a people to Him. Submission will be immediate, so evident is His glory and power now. And even where there is no sincerity, or at least no proof of it, they will at once serve, bowing down to Him. This is the introduction of what is millennial. Here Jehovah is again recognised.

We return, so to speak, to the original thesis of the psalm, having arrived with Israel, or the Jews at least, across all the difficulties of the way. I do not see the

Antichrist here. The only word which might seem to speak of him is in verse 48— the man of violence; but I apprehend it is an enemy from without. Hence he praises among the heathen. The destruction of Antichrist would make him praise among the Jews. Here, it is to be remarked, though clothed with strength by God, Christ is seen as the dependent man, and on earth, whether suffering or victorious. We find Him (as we may have seen from the study of the details in verses 4-6, at the beginning of the psalm) in His sorrow and trial; and though David be partly in the scene, yet substantially Messiah again from verse 32. Between the two, it is Israel, first delivered as a nation, then in sorrow and calamity. Then the principles of God's government are stated, and the deliverance comes in. It is very interesting to see, after the Person of Messiah has been introduced, and His association with the godly remnant shewn, the whole public history of Israel dependent from first to last on His interest in them, His having entered into their sorrows, afflicted in all their afflictions.

We now come (it is just the same order of thought in John 17) to the testimonies given in the world or to Israel. Psalm 19 gives us two: the creation, particularly that in the heavens, which is above man and has not been corrupted by him (this a testimony to God as such). Then the law (v. 7). This is the law of Jehovah. Here, in lowliness, the godly Jew takes two views of sin. First, he cannot tell his: so much lies hidden from him. Here he desires to be cleansed. Secondly, presumptuous sins: from these he desires to be kept. Thus he would be kept from any falling away from Jehovah. {Ps 20}

In Psalm 20 we have, in the midst of sorrows and evil come in as regards the two preceding testimonies, the faithful witness, the living witness Himself. He is seen in the day of His distress, for He is come down into the midst of an ungodly people. The remnant is prophetically designated by the fact that they in heart enter into His distress, assured that Jehovah will hear His Anointed.

Conscience then characterises the remnant, truth in the inward parts in presence of the law, and taking that law spiritually; interest of heart in Messiah, when He is the despised and rejected of men. Still we are in Israel, and the help is sought from the God of Israel, and still as dwelling amongst them, having His sanctuary there. {Ps 16}

In Psalm 16 the Lord identified Himself with the remnant. Here they associate themselves in heart with Him thus suffering, and in His conflict here, though they may see as but the outside of it, yet be assured of His acceptance with Jehovah. They look for His offerings to be accepted, the desire of His heart and His counsels to be fulfilled, all His petitions accomplished. Their joy is in the full deliverance of this blessed but dependent One. In verse 6 we have the assurance of faith as to it, that from heaven itself Jehovah has heard, the mighty are fallen, the poor of the flock are raised up and maintained before Him.

In verse 9 Messiah takes another place. While Jehovah had delivered Him as the dependent One in the day of His distress, the remnant now look to His hearing them when they call. Jehovah is still looked to as the Saviour, but Messiah the king is invoked. They now know that the

Anointed is exalted. No part of scripture opens out the Person of Christ as the Psalms do, unless the first two chapters of Hebrews, which quote and serve as a key to them: here Messiah connected with the remnant in the dependent One, but exalted too as the king to be invoked of Israel. A little farther on we shall find that He is Jehovah Himself. I see no reason to alter the text according to the Septuagint, followed by others, such as the Latin. The Targum, and Syriac, and all Jewish interpretations, read as it is read in English. The other reading is, "Jehovah save the king"—"hear us," etc. Already in Psalm 21 Jehovah and the king are associated in judgment, as indeed we have seen they were already in Psalm 2. It is the very main point of instruction in the Psalms—the mystery of the manifestation of Christ in flesh. {Ps 21}

In Psalm 21 we get the full answer to Psalm 20 and its desires, in the exaltation of Christ, throwing its light back on the true character of that psalm. The king rejoices in Jehovah's strength and exults in deliverance through it. What this is is then unfolded. The faithful longing of the remnant was that Jehovah would grant the suffering Messiah according to His own heart, that He would fulfil His petitions. Now in the exaltation of Christ they can say—the Spirit says for them— Thou, Jehovah, hast given Him His heart's desire, and not withholden the request of His lips. Nay, He was met by Jehovah's free and willing love towards Him, with the blessing of goodness, and was gloriously crowned by Him. But what had really passed and been done is more minutely revealed. He had asked life of Jehovah (compare Heb. 5). He gave it Him, but it was length of days for ever and ever, the abiding eternal life of the

risen glorified man. That was the answer to the cry of the suffering Messiah when death was before Him. And this is clearly seen in what follows. His glory is great in this' deliverance by Jehovah's delight. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Jehovah has laid honour and majesty upon Him. He has made Him most blessed for ever and glad with Jehovah's countenance. Such was the suffering Messiah's deliverance, the divine answer to His cry. His being glorified as the suffering man. It is not the wrath of God which He is here viewed as undergoing; on the contrary, help is looked for from Jehovah when He is brought low. We have already seen the result of this—judgment on His enemies. Man's enmity and devices are seen. Man's judgment follows. The king's right hand finds out all His enemies. Jehovah shall swallow them up. It is not His atoning sufferings which are seen here, but the mischievous devices of men. Hence His sufferings do not bring peace, but judgment.

We have here, then, Christ suffering and crying to Jehovah; Christ exalted as man, crowned with glory and honour; Christ executing judgment on His enemies. In the three psalms we have the witness of creation, the witness of law, and the Messiah's (the Faithful and True Witness) sufferings and exaltation—the true final witness of the righteous ways of God. This must be a revelation of all importance to the remnant in the latter day for suffering or for assured deliverance. Christ has suffered as man from men and for faithfulness; and judgment on man will be the consequence; meanwhile He is exalted on high. But He has suffered for sin from God. The facts connected with this last suffering are unfolded to us in Psalm 22 with its results also.

Here the sufferings of Christ have another and deeper character. We have before us that great work which is the foundation of all the blessing developed in the other psalms, and of every blessing and eternal glory, making the interest He takes in the saints possible, because it makes it righteous, and the very way of glorifying God. This psalm, as it has been already observed to be a common principle of their structure, gives us the theme in verse 1. Christ had suffered from man—from men alike heartless and violent: dogs had compassed Him, fat bulls of Bashan closed Him in. But if the measure of this was extreme, and felt more and otherwise than ordinary sufferings from men because it was wholly unrighteous and for Jehovah's sake, for whose name He suffered reproach; yet others had in some measure borne the suffering of violence and reproach from heartless men too, and for Jehovah's sake. If He in grace was the leader and finisher of faith, others through grace had trodden—it was their granted privilege, but His willing grace—some steps of that divinely marked-out path. But they trusted in Jehovah and they were delivered. Jehovah never left or forsook them. He had promised He would not. They knew in their consciences that He had never failed in one good or gracious thing He had promised.

But here was a suffering out of the reach of promise, yea, which was to lay the ground of its righteous accomplishment. It was a new scene, which none had been ever like, nor ever will be, in the history of eternity; which stands alone, The Righteous One forsaken of God. It cannot be repeated a second time; it would have lost its character and the repetition destroy or deny the witness of the first—God perfectly glorified,

morally glorified, about evil; He has not been, if it has to be repeated. It is once for all, complete and perfect. The nature of God has been made good in testimony, morally, in the universe. How should that be repeated? I say again, if it had to be, neither had done it; but it is done. The divine glory is perfectly, eternally, made good. But for this in respect of good and evil—that righteousness and grace, or love, where feebleness and evil are, should be made good—all that God is against evil must be verified and made good. Against whom? Who should endure it? Against the sinner it were everlasting misery, nor was love then displayed; what God is, not manifested. But the Lord gives Himself for this;—He who was able to bear it, and, in the lowest humiliation of those He took up, to accomplish it in their nature, He bears in His soul all that God is against evil. Tremendous moment!

It is this alone which makes us in any way apprehend what righteousness and judgment are. This is what is shewn to us here. It is shewn in the utterance of Christ, shewing the fact and His sense of it. What it was in its depths no human heart can fathom. It is the fact which is given here, but as felt by Him. Yet we see the consciously righteous One, but the perfectly submissive One; the sense of His own nothingness as to His position, of the certain and immutable perfectness of Jehovah. He is righteous; He can say, “why?”—submissive: “yet thou continuest holy”; no working of will, calling God’s ways into question; the clear and perfect state thus, which sees God’s perfectness, come what will. For it was the one righteous One who had glorified God in all His ways, an exception from all God’s ways in righteous grace with such. He is forsaken, cries,

and is not heard. He is a worm and no man. But this could not last for ever, no more than He could be holden of death, having perfectly glorified God in going to the close of trial and awaiting His time. He who was the very delight of Jehovah all through could undefined undefined undefinedundefined undefined undefined undefinedundefinednot be heard till all was accomplished; though more gloriously, and deservedly more gloriously, Jehovah's delight than any living righteousness, though ever so perfect, could claim to be. In that living righteousness He had glorified God about good, perfect in His obedience as man, and perfect in manifesting His Father's name of grace, declaring what God was, cost what it might. The reproaches of those that reproached God fell on Him. But now He glorified God in the place of evil as made sin. This, as we have seen, stands alone. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." There in the place of sin before God, that is, as made sin, yet in that wherein obedience was absolute and perfect in entire self-devotedness to God—the contrary of sin—where God's righteousness found a motive for love, yet where it was made good in forsaking Him; there the foundation was laid of everlasting righteousness and everlasting blessing; there God perfectly glorified, the foundation laid for the accomplishment of all His counsels in glory.48 Then, when the work is complete, the moral work of glorifying God, He is heard from the horns of the unicorn. Man and all around was hidden, by a darkened heaven, from view, when all of God, and of the power, and powerlessness, of evil as against the sovereign goodness and righteousness of God, was brought to this divine issue, and God glorified about it. And all is between the soul of

Him who is an offering for sin and the righteous Jehovah. And it was closed. He was perfect, had secured the glory of God, had glorified Him when He could not be heard, and was heard and it was finished. He goes down indeed into the grave, that trusty and irrefutable witness that all was closed of this great question of which death was the appointed witness, but only to rise without one element wanting that the work of propitiation and of glorifying God in respect of sin was completed, and the victory over every and the last enemy fully won. He was heard. Who could call it in question who knew that He was risen? And now what remained? Not sin; it was as regards the work to be accomplished for that purpose wholly and for ever put away as in God's sight, though not in full result yet, but perfectly for those who had a part with Him.49 Wrath for such? The cup had been drunk. Judgment against the sin, or of the sinner for it, where faith is? He had undergone it. The power of death upon the soul? It was overcome. Of Satan who wielded it? It was destroyed. But there was the full light of the Father's countenance and love, the delight of God in divine righteousness, and for us. Into this relationship Jesus now entered as established there in righteousness on the ground of what He had accomplished to glorify His Father; not merely in the everlasting delight which God had in His Person. Hence it was immutable for those who had a part with Him in this place, and for eternal blessedness in the new heavens and the new earth. The place was won for sinners in the putting away of their sin, and founded on the righteousness of God Himself. Into the full blessedness of this name (that is, true relationship with God revealed according to it) He now entered as man50 But He had His brethren—those at least, with

whom He associated Himself and whom He had at heart first of all after His Father's glory. He was entered into this cloudless place of delight. What remained for His heart was to declare the name which expressed it, and to know which was the being brought into it, to His brethren. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." And this most precious witness of His love was exactly what He did after His resurrection: "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God." Remark, He was heard from the horns of the unicorn. It was on the completing the work, or His subjection of soul to death as divine judgment, that He was heard. When the obedience unto death was complete, hearing became righteous and necessary. The resurrection was the proof to man. But He could say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and deliver it up to Him, and assure the thief he should be that day with Him in paradise.

I have already remarked an infinitely important characteristic of this psalm, so opposed to those which speak of Christ's suffering from man: I mean that all is grace—no word of judgment. Who was to be judged, when God had been the One to inflict the suffering—the hiding of whose face rather was the suffering—and the men who had a part in it, believing, had their sins put away by it? It was as to them the judgment, and the judgment executed and passed. Hence what follows is the wide out-spreading of wave beyond wave of blessing and nought else. We may remark, however, that the blessing here is all on earth: so much does the Lord confine Himself to Israel and the Jews in the Psalms. And though we have seen His own resurrection, and we shall see His ascension brought in, and the path of life

thus opened up to faith into the presence of God Himself, yet the heavenly place for the saints is not unfolded. We know well that the truths on which the blessing is based carry us farther; but the psalm does not speak of them.

“In the midst of the congregation will I sing to thee.” The remnant then gathered is the first circle gathered into the place of praise; then millennial blessing—all Israel. Those that fear Jehovah are to praise Him. Men fear Jehovah, and only fear; but this work makes those that fear praise. Those that feared Jehovah in that day and suffered might take courage, Father, and so before in Gethsemane); after His resurrection, Father and God: one, in His personal relationship and the Father’s delight; the other, in divine righteousness, bringing us into it. for Christ was their warrant for deliverance and confidence (and could be, having made atonement), but for positive deliverance also; for Jehovah had not turned a deaf ear to the affliction of the afflicted, nor hid His face from him. When He cried, Jehovah heard. He had been for a time there: that had only wrought atonement. And now, heard when that was accomplished, He could assure others of deliverance also. The meek of the earth should now eat and be satisfied, and be at peace. But the blessing would not limit itself to Israel. All the ends of the world would remember themselves, and turn to Jehovah, and worship before Him; for the kingdom will then be Jehovah’s. All should bow before Him. Nor was it confined to that generation: to the people that should be born those should declare that Jehovah had done this.

I cannot, in explaining the Psalms, meditate on the wonderful work on which this psalm is founded. I say founded, because the psalm speaks directly of the

feelings of Christ under it, rather than of the work itself. I can only desire that this constant and exhaustless theme of the saint may have all the power on my reader's soul, as upon my own, that poor, but renewed, human beings, even by the power of the Holy Ghost, can be capable of. Our comfort as to peace is that God (as indeed His love gave it) estimates it fully; and, while He has glorified Jesus, has Himself accepted that work for our peace. My part here is to unfold, as well as I can, the structure of the psalm itself.

As to the outward sufferings the reader will remark how deep they were. But Christ alone, of all the righteous, must undergo forsaking of God; and, having often declared His confidence in, and intimacy with Jehovah, and taught His disciples to trust in Him, as ever hearing prayer, has publicly now to proclaim that He is not heard, but forsaken. What a tale it tells of what that hour was! But what is important is, as has been already remarked, that His sufferings from man bring judgment on His enemies; His forsaking of God, being expiatory, is a bearing of the judgment, and all that flows from it is unmingled grace. This work being expiatory, once He is heard from the horns of the unicorns, all is grace. A stream of grace flows out for the remnant, then for Israel, for the world, for the generation to come—all from the sure and divinely perfect work of atonement in the death of Christ. In the work, in the suffering, He was alone. Once that was finished, He takes His place in the congregation with which He surrounds Himself. Remark how perfect must Christ's knowledge of, and consequent joy be in, the name of God and Father, into the enjoyment of which He entered as man, consequent upon having put away sin, and the delight of God in Him

and His work: all that God was against Him then, for Him, according to the virtue of this work, now. How well He must know what the deliverance out of His sufferings on the cross into this light is! Now this is the source of His praise. Such must be the character of ours, founded on the blessed certainty of being come out of the place of sin, death, and judgment, into the perfectness of divine favour. All that is not thus in the spirit of it is out of tune with Him who leads our praises. {Ps 23, 24}

Psalms 23, 24 go in a certain sense by themselves, giving the perfect confidence in the Shepherd, Jehovah, founded on the experience of what He is in all circumstances; and, secondly, the character of those who would have a part with Jacob. The two principles we have seen brought out as to Christ in Psalms 16,17 (and shewn in many others); confidence in the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the practical righteousness which characterises those who will stand in Jehovah's holy place in the time of His millennial glory. But Jehovah Himself takes His place there as King of glory. This gives us the divine side in all its perfectness, of the principle of the path and the result in glory— glory on earth both as to the remnant, Christ, and Jehovah— with the blessed witness that on one side He took a place and part with the remnant in their divinely-given path, and on the other with Jehovah, for He was really a man, but really Jehovah; the daysman that laid his hand upon both.

But we must examine them a little more closely. The comfort of Psalm 23 is not in what Jehovah gives, but in Himself. He does—it is the natural fruit of His grace at all times and will be the result—make us to lie down in green pastures, and lead us beside the waters of peace:

pleasant food where there can be no drought, security in enjoying it, and guidance in divine refreshings in peace. Such is the portion given by His shepherd care; but still it is Himself as that which gives confidence and takes away care. Evil is come in: we have to feel it—we in ourselves, Christ in all that was around Him; so that He could be full of sorrow and troubled—we alas! more than that. The Good Shepherd (and Christ is such for us) restores the soul, and leads us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The blessing depends on what He is, not on what we have got. I have blessing indeed, and learn it in green pastures; but, if troubled or gone astray, He restores. And not only sorrow and evil had come in with sin, but death too. Then He comes and leads me through it and comforts me. But there are enemies to meet. I have a table spread, on which I feast in their very presence. And how comforting this is to the Christian also! Hence, as it is Jehovah Himself, and not our circumstances, the soul has to depend on, it can say "Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over." When I have contemplated all the pains and difficulties of the way, I have Jehovah Himself more distinctly as the blessing. Hence I can count on it for ever, for He changes not. Experienced in the past, in all the effects of the power of the enemy, and knowing what He Himself has been for me in them, I can reckon on it in the future and at all times. The end of the Lord's dealings will be our dwelling with Him for ever. The blessing thus, though less apparent, is much deeper and more personal, at the close; and, as we have said, the soul rests on Jehovah known in all circumstances, not in the blessing it was natural to Him to give.

An exercised soul thus has in result a far deeper blessing than an outwardly blessed one. So the result for Israel—still more for us—is more than the green pastures, in which originally Jehovah set him. It is the deep knowledge in a tried heart of the faithfulness of Jehovah: and thus, according to the blessing of His own nature, the rest will be His rest. The green pastures were suited to sheep; but the anointed head, and the cup running over, and the house of Jehovah for ever, were what suited Him who dwelt there. Such is the result, for the remnant, of trusting Jehovah, when the green pastures are for the time, at any rate, lost. Such will follow the Lamb. For us Christ is the Shepherd. We suffer with Him, and we have yet better blessing. The Shepherd's care is there meanwhile under another form. {Ps 24}

Psalm 24 gives, as we have seen, the other part of the condition of the remnant as to the good that is working in them—what grace produced in them. Jehovah was the Shepherd by the way. At the end the earth and the fulness of it are His—the world and those who dwell therein. Heaven does not here directly enter into the scene on the road, nor at the end of it; but Jehovah has a special place, a hill more especially His own, in the earth. Who shall ascend into it? We then get their character—clean hands, a pure heart. No idol-following heart, no false oath with his neighbour. Such shall be blessed. That is the generation, the real character of those who seek Jacob; for in Jacob is God's seat. They seek Jacob as the blessed people of Jehovah; but, if such ascend into the holy hill, and enter into the holy place, the crowning blessing is that Jehovah Himself enters in at the unfolded gates to dwell there. The victorious Lord

Jehovah of hosts enters in. It is Christ Himself who took the place of His sheep to go before them, and has the place of Jehovah, as that which is His by right, and in which He is owned when the fulness of blessing comes in and is revealed.

This closes the development of Christ's place in connection with the remnant, first formally entered upon in Psalm 16. We have now to go through the position of the remnant on a new ground and a different footing.

Christ has been introduced, not indeed yet in glory, but associating Himself with the remnant, and suffering even unto death for them. Hence their whole case can be prophetically gone into. And here for the first time we meet the confession of sins. It is not merely position—that we had from Psalms 3-7; nor the sense of circumstances which Psalms 11-15 gave, founded on Psalms 9, 10; but the whole case of the remnant, as they will feel, entered into. The first word characterises them: "Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I lift up my soul." The godly man expresses his trust in his God, and prays that he may not be ashamed, but that those may that are wilfully wicked. The remnant are distinguished thus in verse 3. There is the desire to be shewn Jehovah's ways, to be taught in His truth, for He was the God of their salvation: they always waited on Him.

Next, verse 6, he casts himself on what God is in mercy, as He had shewn Himself, and pleads that He may not remember Israel's past sins, but himself according to His mercy. He knows Jehovah, that He is good and upright, and will therefore teach sinners in the way. His dealing with them is according to His own nature and character where He works in grace, goodness, and

uprightness. This is an all-important point. Next, we get the present character of the remnant: they are the meek of the earth; these Jehovah would guide in judgment. All Jehovah's ways were mercy towards such; and faithfulness to promises and righteousness infallibly marked them. In it we have the fullest confession by the godly man of his own sin, not merely the former sins of Israel. He looks only for mercy, his iniquity is so great, and founds his hope on Jehovah's name. This is exceedingly beautiful. Jehovah's name, as revealed in Israel, had in the previous verses of this psalm been fully entered into; His ways of mercy and truth in Israel. The answer to this cry, in the effectual work of Christ, though testified of in the prophets, and forming in God's sight the ground-work of all, is not, I apprehend, at this time known by the godly remnant, nor till they look on Him whom they have pierced; but they have the ways of God, His promises, and the abundant declarations and invitations, yea, pleadings, of Jehovah in the prophets, that if their sins had been as scarlet, they should be as white as snow. All this revelation was Jehovah's name to them; and to this they look, something in the state, though not exactly, of the poor woman in the city that was a sinner before she received the Lord's answer of peace.

In verses 12-14 we get the prophetic answer of the Spirit in hope; in verses 15-21, the meek one. He lays his whole case before Jehovah. The great result and true application is seen in the last verse. This psalm lays the whole case of the remnant before Jehovah in the expression to Him of a heart attracted and taught by grace. It is a very full and distinct expression of their place and pleadings before Him, and according to what

He is. Some very definite points are brought out: —the confession of Israel's past sins, the confession of his own by him who speaks. Mercy is looked to as the only resource. Yet from so gracious a God they can count on His teaching sinners. But these sinners are the meek of the earth who are to inherit it. Integrity of heart characterises them, and they trust in and wait for Jehovah. Compare with this the incomparable picture of the remnant in the beginning of Luke. The psalm is both beautiful and very fully characteristic.

Psalm 26 is especially the pleading of integrity and trust in Jehovah. Having trusted Him, the godly would surely not slide. He invites Jehovah to search his inmost heart, as Peter did even though fallen. Here, still the goodness of Jehovah was his first motive. Then the separation of the godly from the ungodly body of the nation is fully brought out and taken as a plea that they might not have their souls gathered with the ungodly. Still, though integrity was pleaded, redemption is sought, and mercy. The end would be blessing. Their foot stood in an even place. They would, in the full assembly, bless Jehovah. This is substantially the entire separation of the godly from the nation, and the former becoming the congregation of God.

Thus in these two psalms we have the confession of sins and the pleading of integrity, both marking the real renewal of mind. Though the possibility of government in forgiveness and mercy is founded on the atonement which has been presented in Psalm 22, and is owned fully in Isaiah 53 by Israel subsequent to the period of these psalms; yet the aspect in which all is viewed by the remnant in these two psalms is the known character and government of Jehovah in Israel; and the feelings of

a renewed heart are expressed in reference to that government—to Jehovah's ways. His name is the key to their thoughts, and awakens their best and truest affections. It is the faith of a godly Israelite in the last days. The moral state of the remnant is especially brought out in all this part, and more especially their own with Jehovah, circumstances comparatively little; though the enemies without and the transgressors around form necessarily the occasion of those feelings in respect of deliverance and redemption. The heart of the godly one has the key to all Israel's history and Jehovah's dealings with them, because grace is looked to, and sin confessed. This it is that ever gives understanding. And so it is here. Jehovah's ways have been—are—perfect. He is called upon to remember His own mercies, and not the early sins of His people. The enemies of His people are presented to Him. The hope of forgiveness is founded on Jehovah's name (it is, as we have seen, connected with His government; they have not yet looked on Christ, and understood atonement); the faithful looks to be guided in the way, and Jehovah's faithfulness to him is reckoned on. His sins, sorrows, and enemies are all presented to Him with an open heart. Covenant mercies can be seen, looked to, because Jehovah is, in truth by an upright confessing sinner. {Ps 27}

In Psalm 27 we have two distinct parts, and, I apprehend, then in the last two verses the result for the mind of the saint as taught of God. The first part, verses 1-6, is the confidence of the believer, and that absolutely, whatever enemies there were. In the second part, 7-12, we find the cry of distress. In the former, singleness of eye lays the ground of confidence; in the second, the call

of Jehovah to seek His face. Enemies without or oppressors within (for the remnant of the Jews will find both against them), a host and war arising, awake no fear. Jehovah is the light and salvation of the soul; its only desire, dwelling in the house of Jehovah to see His beauty and inquire in His temple. He had known Him casting confusion on the enemies of the faithful. He sought Him as the desire of his heart. In the time of trouble He would hide him, and the assault of foes would only be the occasion of lifting up his head above them, and then he would offer sacrifices of joy.

From the seventh verse things are otherwise. It is not his state, as thinking of the Lord in faith; distress is there, and he cries. Here he appeals, not to his integrity, but that Jehovah had said, Seek my face. Was He going after that to turn it away? He looks to be guided in a straight path. There is integrity, but he looks to the call of God. Finally, he looks for, and trusts for temporal deliverance in the land of the living; meanwhile he must wait on Jehovah. He would interfere at the right time; He would strengthen the heart meanwhile. It is an additional and instructive picture of the state of the faithful remnant; their abstract confidence and their ground of hope in distress when Jehovah must be waited for. {Ps 28}

Psalm 28. The godly Jew pleads, in the time of trouble come on the nation, that he may not be confounded with the wicked. If Jehovah did not appear in his behalf, so much was he in the same distress with them, death would drag him into its jaws. He looks for judgment on the wicked. They slight Jehovah. Jehovah should reward their doings. The psalm furnishes to the remnant not only the cry, but the prophetic witness that Jehovah has

heard it. The heart trusts in Jehovah, had found help, and thus joy and praise. Then Messiah is fully joined with the righteous. Jehovah is their strength, He is Messiah's. This once settled, the prophetic desire of the godly, according to the Spirit of Christ, expresses itself that Jehovah should have His people and bless His inheritance (for the faith of covenant blessing and relationship runs through all this part of the Psalms), that He should also feed them and lift them up for ever. Deliverance, blessing, feeding, and unaltered exaltation, such are the fruits looked for of Jehovah's coming in in power. {Ps 25, 26}

In Psalms 25, 26 we have seen the great moral principles of trust in Jehovah (even when confessing sins) and integrity. In these last we have more the personal sense of condition, and way or ground of relationship with God, beautifully shewn in the first part of Psalm 27 in the one desire of the heart; and in the second part, in the touching plea, You taught me to seek Thy face; my heart, in those times of divine instructions, said, I will seek it: Lord, will you turn it away now that I am in trouble, when You taught me to seek and trust it? The truth is the same, but in the first part it is the one moral desire of the heart; in the last, the exhortation of God to do it becomes a resource to the soul. Jehovah Himself is their refuge, and has taught them to look for it. {Ps 28}

In Psalm 28 the pressure of evil is more felt, and coming judgment and the separation of the remnant looked for. This separation characterises the whole testimony of God connected with the coming of Messiah, a circumstance which will aid us in seeing the unity of the remnant in the mind of God. Not only was it

prophetically announced, as in Isaiah 65, but John the Baptist characterises the coming of Messiah by it, their being children of Abraham being of no avail (Matt. 3:9); as indeed it spiritually took place: only that He being rejected and not yet coming in power, they were then added as “the saved,” Acts 2:47, to the assembly. For that, however, Peter takes it up (Acts 2:40). The Lord Himself receives them as His sheep (John 10). Paul rests his argument in Romans 11 upon it too. {Ps 29}

Psalm 29 summons the mighty to hear the mightier voice of Jehovah, to own Him and worship before Him according to the holy order of His house, celebrating the power of His voice in universal creation; but there is a place of intelligent worship where His glory is understood—His temple where men are to come. But this Jehovah is above the haughty raging of the surges of created strength; He sits King for ever above and in spite of all. And He, this mighty Jehovah, will give strength to His people and bless them with peace. It is a positive encouragement for the faithful; not their complaint or appeal, but a testimony for them to encourage their hearts in presence of the mighty. He that cares for them is mightier than they. {Ps 30}

In Psalm 30 we have the contrast between trust in prosperity —even in that given of God—and in God Himself. He has come in and lifted up the poor, and not left him to his foes. His favour is life. If angry, it is but for a little moment, and for the good of His saints: the favour is for ever. In the morning it is light, if heaviness endure for a night. He may let them down as to the grave’s mouth, but only to shew His power in infallible deliverance. He, the godly man, Israel themselves, as a people, had trusted in given prosperity. Now, in the

depth of adversity, he has found Jehovah in deliverance. The power of evil overcome is better than good we may lose. It is security, and in the blessing and arms of Jehovah for us; for He is the deliverer. We see plainly here that it is a living people to be blessed on earth (v. 3, 9). And though there may be analogous mercies in all times, for there is a government of God as regards Christians, to apply it to the saints now would be a dangerous mistake. It speaks of temporal deliverance for peace in this world (compare Isaiah 64:7, 8). No mountain, even if we own it to be made strong by Jehovah, is like Jehovah Himself, even if I am at the pit's mouth. It is my mountain for my heart when I think of it. {Ps 31}

Psalm 31 is a proof how Jesus could use devout and holy expressions of a psalm, and indeed pass through all in spirit, without its having a literal application to Him. Here is found the expression He used, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit," which was in the fullest sense true. But the psalm continues, "For thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah God of truth."—He added Father. Yet I doubt not that His spirit had got into the comfort of divine delight again. Still the words, "thou hast redeemed me," cannot apply.51 So the whole complaint of the psalm is, besides David, the complaint and confidence of the remnant—connecting the two principles, trust and righteousness, and looking for guidance for Jehovah's name's sake, and deliverance when surrounded by enemies. The godly man had called on Jehovah. His name was in question. On His goodness, laid up for them that trusted in Him, he counted; and this in the midst of a life spent in sighing. Distress pressed upon him, and drank up his strength. Yet, tried for faithfulness, friends and

acquaintances fled from him. Such will be the condition of the remnant. How truly Christ entered into it, I need not say. But the time of deliverance, and of all that in any time the saint should be under and pass through, were in God's hand—not the enemy's, though he might rage. And in the adversities Jehovah knew his soul, for he walks in the knowledge of covenant-relationship. The presence of Jehovah was a tabernacle and a hiding-place. In the pressure of his spirit, the godly thought himself cast off; but when he cried, Jehovah heard. In all the rage around (v. 13, 14) he cried to Jehovah as his God. The result he now celebrates, and encourages the saints in the last two verses, and all that hope in Jehovah. Whatever sorrows they are in, Jehovah helps the faithful and judges the proud.

This, in a certain sense, closes and sums up the experimental expression by the Spirit of the state of the remnant, and fully unfolds it. In the psalm that follows, forgiveness in grace is spoken of. Then there is a clearer apprehension and more objective confidence and judgment of all around, till we come to Psalms 38, 39, which have a peculiar character of their own. Of course, deliverance is not yet come; but the sentiment expressed is become more that of favour in light than confidence out of the depths. How fully this Psalm 31 is the expression of the Spirit of Christ must be obvious to every divinely-taught reader. Yet His own relationship was different. He was Son, and commends His spirit to His Father in death, not to Jehovah to save Him from it; and, as we have seen in the preface, prays for His enemies who crucified Him, instead of demanding vengeance upon them. This demand of His Spirit in the remnant is according to His mind in that day. In Him

personally it must have been otherwise; for He came in grace, and was giving His life a ransom for Israel and for many. Hence He passed through all in perfection with His Father in Gethsemane, and gives Himself up then, as being His will, to death. Yet, as to the sorrow and trial, He went through all. And the prophetic Spirit in the Psalms expresses in the denunciatory words what will certainly be accomplished as the consequence of the wicked enmity of the Jews and heathens too at the close; and will become living demands in the mouth of the remnant, whose only and necessary deliverance these judgments will be.

Christ did ask life, and it was given in resurrection and glory, as Psalm 21 shews; but not, as we know, in His being spared here. The path of life led for Him through death in the accomplishment of redemption, though He could not be holden of it. Thus in spirit He entered into all their affliction. The literal application in the writer's mind was to his own feelings; the prophetical is to the godly remnant in the latter day. The word translated "iniquity," in verse 10, should, I doubt not, be "distress." But the fulness of the various motives and feelings brought together in this psalm require a further brief notice. I have already remarked how the two grounds, so frequently found, of the appeal of the saint's trust in God, and righteousness as the motive and ground of it, are both brought together here. The name's sake of Jehovah is also added here. In verses 3-6 we have His utter rejection of the followers of idolatrous vanities. In verse 7 Jehovah's goodness is recognised as mercy. He has known the soul of the believer in adversities—a sweet thought, how dark soever all may have been. And deliverance was granted (v. 9, 10). He pleads his

extreme present distress. The first eight verses are a kind of preface of general principles; now it is the pressure of his present state. He was a reproach to enemies, specially to neighbours—a fear to his acquaintance; so mean, despised, and yet hated and rejected, was he. It is the portion of a divine character, of God Himself, to be both. Man neglects a despised person; but he never does God, or what is of Him.52 They will bring Him low if He puts Himself low, or those that are His; but will fear and hate Him too. He is forgotten, yet slandered, and the active enemy plotting against his life. Thus verses 9-13 give the condition the Spirit of Christ, or Christ Himself, holds in the world.

It is a most striking picture in verse 14. He trusts in Jehovah. All that is to befall him is, after all, in His hand. Another motive now is pleaded. He has called on Jehovah. It is the lying lips which should be put to silence (v. 18). Confidence in goodness laid up for them is there, and the hiding in God's presence for the time of evil (v. 20). Verse 21 celebrates the faithfulness of Jehovah. Verses 23, 24, encourage the saints by it. Thus, with the extremest distress, all the pleas of the faithful are beautifully brought together here. All these past psalms have been the feelings of Israel under the pressure of distress, and sought deliverance from it. And this Israel will do. {Ps 32}

Now (Psalm 32) we have what he wants still more—the forgiveness of sins. The pressure of affliction turns him to God's law, but to the consciousness of having broken it. Righteousness in that sense he could not plead: forgiveness was his need, and that Jehovah should not impute the iniquity he had, and was brought to acknowledge. Long he had striven against this; but

Jehovah gave him no rest. But he confesses sin, and guile is gone from his heart: impossible till then. We are hiding iniquity in it. Forgiveness in grace draws the godly man to God. In the water-floods they do not come nigh him. Jehovah is the hiding-place of the soul—preserves, blesses, guides. Only they are warned to be intelligent through obedience, and not to be without understanding, so that God must guide by providential power.

Remark here that while forgiveness is celebrated (and the remnant will deeply need it), yet the great distinctive truth which separates them from the mass of the people is kept up distinctly—trust, righteousness, and integrity of heart. To the wicked there are sorrows.

In principle, such a psalm, blessed be God, has the widest application. For the remnant it is prophetic, to induce truth in the inward parts, and encourage them by goodness to that confession of sin in which alone God can bless, as is ever the case. For forgiveness and no guile go together. They will only know full acceptance when they look upon Him whom they have pierced, who comes as Jehovah to deliver. But let us lay to heart the great principle of this psalm. Full absolute forgiveness, the not imputing sin at all, is what takes guile from the heart. Else we flee from God, excuse, palliate, if we dare not justify. Where full pardon is before us, we have courage to be true in heart. Who will not declare all his debts when their discharge by another is the only thing in question? who not tell his malady for a certain cure? Grace brings truth into the heart brought to confess its transgressions. He finds all the burden of his sins gone. The humble and godly are encouraged to draw near to a God thus known. “There is forgiveness with thee, that

thou mightest be feared." The psalm will encourage the remnant thus to true confession. When possessed, they will enter into full blessing. We thus see how it is a prophetic preparation and school for them, drawing out before them what will not all be accomplished when they are thus brought to look to Jehovah, but which they thus know will be. Hence these psalms speak of Jehovah's character, as it has been proved with the inspired composers; in principle, often in letter, with Christ, in order to draw out the confidence of the Jews in the day of distress, and to comfort every uneasy soul. Thus the celebration of complete deliverance is mixed with the cry for it, because it is prophetic and has had fulfilments. {Ps 33}

Psalm 33 has its just place after the forgiveness of the people. Before we pass on to these psalms, remark how the guilelessness of heart produced by complete forgiveness leads to that intimacy with God which gives us to be guided by His eye. We have His mind with Himself, and that in the perfectness of His own nature in which He reveals it. Forgiveness leads to full blessing. {Ps 33}

In Psalm 33 the full result of deliverance is celebrated. The upright are called on to rejoice. Jehovah's character. His word and works, are made manifest, and the earth is now full of His goodness. He is the glorious Creator; the earth is to fear Him; all man's devices and counsels come to nothing before Him; His counsel stands. Blessed the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people He has chosen for His inheritance. It is Jehovah who has looked down on men and disposed of all; but His eye is on them that fear Him and hope in His mercy. Thus the great result of the intervention of Jehovah is brought before

the faith of the remnant, chanted as if all were come. The last three verses shew the confidence this produces in them. {Ps 34}

Psalm 34. The sure government of God enables faith to bless at all times. He has proved His faithfulness to them that were in distress. The psalmist, Christ in spirit, calls on the remnant to praise, for Jehovah has manifested His deliverance in his case. The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and His ear open to their prayers; His face set against them that do evil, and to cut them off from the earth (v. 17-19). The broken heart, the afflicted and the contrite, to such Jehovah is nigh. The righteous must look for suffering while man has his day, but Jehovah delivers him. While evil slays the wicked, Jehovah redeems the soul of His servant, and none that trust Him shall be desolate. It is the full assurance of the government of Jehovah in favour of the humble in heart. This enables to bless, not only when they are blessed (that is not faith), but at all times, for they are heard, preserved, redeemed, when they are in trouble. Christ is the great example of this. I doubt that He speaks personally, though He does in spirit in the beginning. The faith of the remnant takes His case up as an encouragement in verse 6. Verse 20 was accomplished also literally in Him. It is the secret of faith alone, the test of it, to bless at all times. Peter applies this psalm to the constant principles of the government of God. This is the first psalm in which we have found the interlocutory character, which sometimes occurs (as in Psalms 91,145), though doubtless the psalmist's experience, who again speaks in verse 11. Yet, I apprehend, it is Christ in spirit who opens out God's ways in this psalm. "O magnify with me." "I

sought Jehovah." It is the fullest encouragement to the humble righteous. {Ps 35}

Psalm 35 is an urgent appeal for the judgment of Jehovah against relentless and insidious persecutors who seek after the soul of the righteous. Insult, craft, violence, all were used against him. They pretended to have found him out. Deliverance is sought that Jehovah may be praised in the great congregation, that is, the full assembly of restored Israel. In verses 13, 14, we see the grace in which the godly (Christ Himself) dealt with these enemies. Though generally true of the godly, Christ specially comes in here in spirit. {Ps 36}

Psalm 36. We have a needed warning as to the wicked, particularly the enemies of righteousness, the instruments of Satan's power. There is no conscience to be expected; nothing that will stop them in their evil plans. The power and goodness of Jehovah are the sure refuge of those that trust in Him. In result the wicked are cast down. {Ps 37}

Psalm 37. In this interesting psalm the great point pressed on the remnant, a lesson for every soul, is waiting on Jehovah, and not having the spirit disturbed by evil; they will soon be cut down like grass. They are not to fret themselves, but trust in Jehovah and do good; to delight in Him—they will have their desires; to commit their way to Him—He will justify them; to rest in Him and wait patiently for Him— Jehovah will soon interfere, the wicked doers be cut off, and the meek inherit the land. The other character of the remnant is also largely unfolded—the righteous man—from verse 12 onward. Jehovah does not forsake His saints: they are preserved. The righteous shall inherit the land. The final

word is, Wait on Jehovah and keep His way. The righteous suffer, but are not forsaken; the ungodly are in great prosperity, and soon their place knows them no more. How this, as to the righteous, points to the deep character of the suffering One who was forsaken, though the perfection of righteousness! This psalm also helps to shew the connection between the disciples and this remnant (see Matt. 5:5)—yet, to shew the difference; the Son was there. They could suffer for His name: this brought in heaven (Matt. 5:12). He could reveal the Father, which He does, in that discourse. The light goes out to the world, as well as being the salt of the earth. Details of grace also are brought in, of which the latter-day remnant know nothing, because of this revelation of the Father, who acts in grace. Still, de facto, it is the same remnant. {Ps 38, 39}

Psalms 38 and 39 have, as I have said, a distinct and peculiar character. The deliverance has been sought and looked for by the upright, and forgiveness of sins granted for blessing. But in these psalms the governmental rebuking for sins lies on the remnant; there is the sense of why they surfer from the divine hand. In Psalm 6 the chastening in anger was deprecated as a part of the sorrow that might belong to their position; but here they are under full chastening for sin: the rod has reached the flock outwardly, their soul inwardly. When I say they, it is individual, but still the remnant. Friends shrank from such a case; enemies, without compassion, plot against his life. Still he is before Jehovah, and all his desire and groaning. He is true in heart with God, and owns Him—is silent with man. The sorrows are, for his soul, Jehovah’s; and to Jehovah he turns. This is all right (see v. 13-16). He will

bow under it. His enemies are busy and strong. But though Jehovah smites, he trusts Him; because the smiting is owned by the humble soul to be righteous. But he can look to deliverance from his enemies. They were glad he slipped and rejoiced over him. But he declares and owns his sin: no excuse—no hiding in his soul from God. His cry is to Him for speedy help.

It is a beautiful psalm as to the state of soul; for the Spirit provides for every case—the failure of the upright, which may call down severe chastening, and cause joy to the wicked. But he accepts the punishment of his iniquity, and places himself openly before God, owning his sin, but looking to Him against the wicked. However sad such a case may be, nothing more shews truth before God and confidence in Him. How confess one's sin, and look for help from God, when one has been unfaithful, He dishonoured, and the enemy triumphing in it? No excuse, no attempt to hide—none: he owns all, and casts himself on God. The picture of the remnant would not have been complete without this, nor the gracious instruction for every soul at every time.

The question then arises, How far does the Spirit of Christ enter into it? Fully, I believe; though of course He never could have been personally there. No doubt it arose from some deep chastening of the writer—a chastening which was openly manifested. Such cases may in the full extent arise among the remnant. The principle is of universal application. Christ of course could have nothing to be chastened for; but, having the full bearing of sin before Him, and meeting in His path all the sorrow which will beset the people, He can enter, though the green tree, into the judgment which will come upon the dry.53 He could not say what is said

here, but He can perfectly sympathise with those who have to say it. He has provided the words which will express it by His Spirit in their hearts. Had He not suffered the full anger for these very iniquities which press on their consciences, and from which in its full extent as wrath they escape, it would not have been merely needed chastening in which they plead with Jehovah. Hence He can more than feel it when it has that character. And in all the sorrow of the circumstances He has borne the largest part. {Ps 39}

In Psalm 39, the godly man is still under the stroke of God; but there is more the sense of the emptiness of all flesh under the hand of God than disgrace and shame and fear. He bows before God rather than let his spirit rise and speak foolishly with his tongue. He might have retorted—been fretted to do evil; but, restraint, when under the hand of God, was his fitting place. It is ever so. He refrains even from good; and sorrow is stirred up in him. In beautiful language he shews this. At last his heart bursts forth; but it is to present to God the nothingness of which the sense was thus matured. He desires to know his days. How little he is! He sees all is vanity; but he sees his own trangression and sin in the presence of One whose rebuke consumes the beauty of man as a moth. To Jehovah he looks for deliverance. His stroke is what he cares for. He trusts Him not to make him the reproach of the foolish. There is great beauty in vanity finding its level in self-annihilation, and then God trusted in to deliver from the pride of men. He has to say to our transgressions.

Here the moral history of the remnant closes, as in connection on covenant ground with Jehovah (that is, as employing His name, as connected with Him). Hence we

have much of Christ personally in the psalms of this first book. His taking the place in which He should be associated with them, according to the counsels of God, is stated in the next psalm. The understanding of this place is then shewn to be the really blessed one. {Ps 40}

In Psalm 40 then Christ is seen, not only in His passage through the sorrows which beset His way, if He took up the cause of the disobedient and guilty people of His love—sorrows which gave Him the tongue of the learned, and enabled Him to enter into those of the tried and spared ones in the latter days, and give a voice to their cry suited to their condition before God; but primarily the deliverance in which, having waited on Jehovah in these sorrows, Jehovah's faithfulness was proved, so that He came out from them for the encouragement of many, and then the blessed key to His whole history in His having undertaken to do the will of Jehovah, the whole Jewish system under the law being thus closed and set aside. He has been perfectly faithful to Jehovah in the face of the whole congregation of Israel, yet is in the deepest sorrow and trial. So the psalm closes, and it is important it should, because the thesis of it is complete deliverance. Hence the application of this very deliverance to the sorrows of Christ, which were analogous to that of the remnant, is most precious for the remnant when they are in them.

But this principle is brought out in a very distinct way in the psalm, and makes it one of the most remarkable in this wonderful book. It brings out the connection of Christ with Israel in the remnant in the most striking way possible—lays it down as a foundation for the whole teaching of the Psalms, though the circumstances are altered after Psalm 41. That Christ is personally spoken

of in it, I need hardly say, as the apostle quotes it as His words, undertaking that blessed work by which figures and symbols were set aside, and which has perfected, as he tells us, the believer for ever. “Lo, I come “is the word of the Son’s free offering of Himself to accomplish the whole will of God in His work here below according to the everlasting counsels of the Godhead. It is the blessed Lord’s undertaking the work. His work was to obey; but He in perfect free voluntariness offers Himself for it in the delight of willingly undertaken obedience. In the great congregation of Israel, in pursuing His service to Jehovah, He had not shrunk (whatever reception He met with) from preaching righteousness—had not refrained His lips. He had been faithful to His service at all cost; and it was Jehovah He thus proclaimed. His righteousness, His faithfulness, His salvation, His lovingkindness, and His truth, He had not refrained from declaring before the whole body of Israel. Such had been His service.

Then, all changes with this faithful One; for innumerable evils have compassed Him about. He looks for Jehovah’s lovingkindness and truth, to whom He had been faithful. Nor is it all that evils had compassed Him, that men sought after His soul to destroy it. “Mine iniquities have taken hold on me.” He says, “so that I am not able to look up.” Of course, with Christ they were those of others—of all the redeemed, and also particularly of Israel viewed as a nation. In this state He desires that those that seek Jehovah may be able to praise, to say continually, Let Jehovah be magnified; and that the others may be ashamed and confounded. He separates the godly remnant who seek Jehovah from those who, when He is faithfully and lovingly presented, are

enemies to Him who manifests His name. Thus Christ closes His experience in this world, poor and needy, yet assured that Jehovah thinks upon Him.

He is not forsaken in what is presented here, but comes into that place, through a life of faithfulness, in which He was to undergo that dreadful moment. It is the cry when, so to speak, He confesses the sins before the victim is consumed or slain. He is in the deep sorrow of the position crying to Jehovah, not in the wrath shewn in the time of His not being heard. The psalm depicts not that wrath, but the faithfulness of Christ in waiting for Jehovah when in the sorrow, rather than seek ease, or have twelve legions of angels, or drink the stupefying myrrh, or shrink back from suffering the will of God any more than He did from facing man when He preached it. He waited patiently for Jehovah; and He inclined unto Him and heard His cry. This was His perfection: no outlet from obedience sought, no shrinking, no turning back or aside. He waited for Jehovah's time in the path of perfect obedience, and it came. The time, as said of Joseph, came that His cause was known; it is not said here how or when. The object of the Spirit here was to shew to the tried ones that One had gone before them in the path of sorrow and had been heard. We can say that it was fully in resurrection; but even on the cross the dark hour was passed, and with a loud voice He could commend His own spirit to His Father, and His mother to His beloved disciple.

But these are details history has given us, not prophecy; they would not have been available for the remnant. They want to know that they will be heard when waiting patiently for Jehovah. If killed, the answer will be for them in resurrection; if not, to have Israel's place in

blessing, I doubt not with the Lamb on Mount Zion, as having gone through (however feebly or infirmly) like trials and sorrows in faithfulness to Jehovah in the great congregation. Do their iniquities alarm them? they are not left out. They do not yet know atonement, but they know that One, who could say, “Mine iniquities have taken hold of me,” waited patiently, was heard and delivered. They wait, trusting the mercy of Jehovah, though peace be not yet known. Their iniquities have taken hold of them, so that they feel: how can they hope Jehovah will deliver them? There is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. And the psalm assures them that One in like depths has been set free. When they look upon Him, they will judge their sins in the light of His having borne them and they will find peace; but the foundation of peace is laid in hope for them here. A heart failing under iniquities, laying hold of it, can look for deliverance. It has been found (and however obscure their light, and it will be), the ground of hope is laid. Compare Isaiah 50:10, 11, which describes this very state, consequent, as to the remnant, on Christ’s being justified and helped.

But this is not all. Messiah puts Himself in this association with them. “He hath put a new song in my mouth, praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in Jehovah.” Blessed is the man that makes Jehovah his trust and does not trust outward prosperity nor apostatise to lying vanities. So in verse 5, to usward. That is, in verse 1, we have Christ, who has waited on Jehovah, and been heard, and brought up out of a horrible pit and miry clay. I doubt not that David’s heart sung it: still it is surely Christ in prophetic purpose. But then Christ identifies Himself (though, as

we have seen, distinguishing the remnant) with Israel. Praise, He says, unto our God. The effect of this is that many see it, fear, and trust in Jehovah. It acts on the remnant in the latter day, and leads them to trust in Jehovah. They can trust for deliverance too; many will. His preaching righteousness to the great congregation gathered a little flock. His deliverance as the suffering One will be blessed to many. Who hath begotten me all these? says Zion in that day. This may take in the ten tribes too; still, as a principle, a multitude will be there. It was not so at Christ's first coming. He was to be a despised and rejected One in His own history and trial.

Verse 5. These are the thoughts of Jehovah in blessing. This leads to the great thought, the centre and groundwork of it all—Christ coming to do Jehovah's will. Now, we can comment, or, still better, the Spirit of God has commented for us, on the value of His doing Jehovah's will. Here we have much more the faithfulness of Christ in doing it, His being overwhelmed with iniquities taking hold of Him in His own spirit, as we see in Gethsemane, but deliverance. We must remember that the confession of sins over the head of the sacrifice was not the slaying, or casting into the fire, of the victim. So Christ's acknowledging thus, or confessing the iniquities with which He was charging Himself as His, was not His enduring the wrath, nor His being cut off out of the land of the living. Dreadful indeed it must have been to Him, as we see in the Gospels, and He saw all that was coming upon Him by reason of it; still it was essentially different—confessing the sins and bearing the wrath due to them. His confession of sins* His people must (I will not say imitate, but) take up in the knowledge that those He confessed were their own; and

may, till grace is fully known, do it with dreadful anguish and apprehension of the wrath to come. It is this which particularly, besides outward trials, constitutes the analogy between the Jewish remnant and the Lord. The wrath endured in atonement, we know, He endured that we never might.

In this psalm then we see Christ, according to the eternal counsels of God, come to do God's will in human nature, taking His place in the midst of the great congregation of Israel, suffering most deeply in consequence, getting into the horrible pit, but His trust is firm in Jehovah. He waited patiently for Him, and He is brought up, and a new song put into His mouth. The first three verses state the great fact: Jehovah heard and delivered out of the horrible pit. It is a lesson for all the remnant. How blessed is the man who trusts Jehovah, and does not look at the appearance of persons to turn aside after vanity! Then we get the course of events. Wonderful have been Jehovah's counsels. Christ comes to do His will as a man, delights to do it, declares Jehovah's righteousness before all. This brings Him into the greatest distress. Evils come upon Him unnumbered, and, besides that, His iniquities (those of His people) come upon Him; but patience has its perfect work, and He is perfect and complete in all the will of God; and, as the psalm shews at the beginning, He is delivered, as we well know. But, as already said, the psalm recites His faithfulness especially. Hence we see Him up to the close of the trial still under it. What He asks for is that the ungodly, being found His enemies, may be set aside; but that the poor of the flock may be able to praise, rejoice, and be glad in Jehovah.

It is beautiful to see His perfect patience in the trial, that the whole will of God may be accomplished, and seeking the joy and full blessing of the poor remnant; yet Himself taking the place of complete dependence on Jehovah, and praying for His coming in as God. Obedience and dependence are the two characteristics of the acting of the divine life in man towards God. It may be remarked here that the testimony in the congregation is closed when the innumerable evils come upon Him. The preface of the psalm speaks of the horrible pit when He is out of it, and we know whereunto He was obedient; but His death is not spoken of here. In the body of the psalm we have, as come to do God's will, His faithfulness in life as witness, and the evils that came upon Him at the close when He had to meet the burden of the iniquity of His people. The fourth verse applies to the remnant the result of Christ's faithfulness for instruction and encouragement.

A few words on the expression, "opened my ears." The word is not the same as in Exodus 21. There it is attaching the ear with an awl to the door post; the man thus became a servant for ever. Nor is it the same as in Isaiah 50, where it has the signification of being so completely a servant to His Master's will that He received His commands morning by morning. Here it is "digged ears" (that is, took the place of a servant). But this He did, as may be seen in Philippians 2, by becoming a man. Hence the Spirit accepts the interpretation of the LXX—"a body hast thou prepared me." Compare John 13 (which answers in point of time to Exodus 21); Luke 12:37, and 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Psalm 41 shews the blessedness of the man who understands this position of the poor of the flock and

enters into it (compare Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20). It is spoken in the person of one of the suffering remnant—doubtless with the psalmist's own experience. It is one of the psalms in which Christ takes up an expression to shew how, in the close of His life, when He entered into their sorrows, He tasted fully their bitterness. Still the poor man is upheld in his integrity, and set before Jehovah's face. The apparent triumph of the wicked is short.

This closes the book. It is the experience, as a whole, of the remnant before they are driven out, or at the least of those who are not so. And the covenant name of Jehovah is used. Hence, the place of Christ is entered into, so far as He came and set Himself amongst the poor of the flock upon earth, and led the life of sorrow and integrity in the midst of evil. Of this last psalm He is not the subject, as verse 4 shews.

We have seen an introduction in the first eight psalms, in which the whole scene is brought before us in its principles and result in the purpose of God; then in Psalms 9, 10, the actual historical circumstances of the Jews in the latter day. Thus, as to historical facts, their state forms the groundwork and subject of the whole book; while the way in which Christ could enter into their sorrows, and they be encouraged by His example, is fully introduced. His whole life amidst the nation is passed in review; but particularly the close, when, after declaring God's righteousness in the great congregation, He passed into the deep sufferings of the last hours of His passage on earth, going on to His being forsaken of God. Yet it was for Him—surely for us, blessed be God—the path of life.

Psalm 40 has this peculiar interest, that it gives us, not merely the history of Christ, His faithfulness, but His freely offering Himself to accomplish all that the Father's counsels required of Him; and then shews Him waiting in obedience till Jehovah was pleased to come in. And then He has the new song to sing. Of this intervention of God the resurrection was the grand witness; through which, as we have seen in Psalm 22, He has awakened, or rather created, it in so many other hearts. As is common, the first three verses give the thesis—the rest all that led up to this: only here it is traced from His first offering Himself to do it.

The reader will remark in Psalm 41 what we have noticed as characterising the remnant—the acknowledgment of sin (v. 4), and the declaration of integrity (v. 12). We have Christ using it as to Himself, shewing, though the psalm be not of Him, how He took the place to which the spirit of the whole applies. The proud and wicked could despise and trample upon the meek and lowly, and perhaps chastened, remnant. Here it is more the false and treacherous spirit of those whom he ought to have been able to trust. Blessedness is with those who understand, the meek and lowly ones who are chastened, for they understand the Lord's ways; the meek one himself looks to the Lord when His hand is upon him. The point of the psalm is the blessedness of those who understand and enter into the position of those with whom Jehovah is dealing. This place, Christ fully took, though not chastened with sickness.

## Psalms (Book 2)

In the second book, the remnant is viewed as outside Jerusalem, and the city as given up to wickedness. This is seen throughout it. The covenant connection of the Jews with Jehovah is lost, but God is trusted. When Messiah comes in, all is changed. We have further, more distinctly, the exaltation of Christ on high as the means of their deliverance, and His rejection and sorrow when down here. It closes with the millennial reign of Messiah in peace under the figure of Solomon. The spirit of the godly man is tested by these circumstances. And, as all hope of finding good in the people is given up, the soul of the believing remnant is more entirely looking to God Himself and attached to Him. It is with this that the book opens.

The godly man had been going with the multitude to the house of God, but that is all over. He is driven away, and his cry is from Jordan—the land of the Hermonites, and the hill Mizar. All God's waves are gone over him. It was terrible to see an enemy in possession of the sanctuary, and the true one of Jehovah cast out and His name blasphemed. The heathen, as stated in Joel, had come in in power, and taunted those who had trusted in Jehovah's faithfulness with the cry, "Where is thy God? "(Joel 2:17). It was, of course, a dreadful trial (so with Christ upon the cross; and with Him yet more, for He declared He was forsaken); so that what God was to them by faith was put to the test. This faith is what this psalm now expresses. The heart of the godly pants after God. It was not merely for His blessings; they were gone. The preciousness of what He Himself was, was

only so much the more vividly brought out. The main distress was the cry “Where is thy God?” But if the saint is not in Jerusalem, God is the confidence of the saint. Faith says, “I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” The heart too can appeal to Him (v. 9), and, under the pressure of the repeated taunt, hope in God Himself, and He will be the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. The reader will remark that in verse 5 it is the help of God’s countenance: in verse 11 He becomes the health of the countenance of him that trusts in Him. This making God Himself to become everything by the deprivation of all blessings, and the exercise of faith in it casting the soul entirely on God Himself, is very precious.

The enemy in Psalm 42 is the outward enemy and oppressor —the Gentile. Though in circumstances, of course, and not in the depths of atonement, it is interesting to see the analogy in verse 3 with what the Lord said upon the cross. Psalm 43 is a supplementary psalm to the former: only that here the ungodly nation, the Jews, are before us, and the deceitful and unjust man, the wicked one; though the Gentile oppressor be yet there (v. 2). We know they will both be there in that day. From the Jewish nation being now in the scene, the return to the holy hill and tabernacle and altar of God are more before the mind of the remnant. Verses 3, 4 form the groundwork of the book. {Ps 44}

Psalm 44 gives a full and vivid picture of the state of the nation, as in the conscience of the remnant. They had heard with their ears. Faith rested in the memorial of all the old mighty deliverances wrought by God, and how He had put them in possession of the land by His power, not theirs (v. 1-8). In verses 9-16 their present state is

recounted. They are cast off and scattered. The enemy and avenger is among them; they scattered among the heathen—sold of God for no price (v. 17-22). Yet they have, in no wise, swerved from their integrity. On the contrary, it is for His sake they are killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter. (Note, the moment Messiah was rejected, this began in principle: compare Rom. 8:36). Verses 23-26 contain the appeal to God to wake up to redeem them for His mercies' sake. Why should He forget them for ever? We have still God, not Jehovah, in this psalm; for they are outside. {Ps 45}

Psalm 45 introduces Messiah, and, as we shall see, changes everything. I know not, interesting and full of bright energy as the psalm is, that I have much to note upon it, by reason of its force being so very plain. It will be remarked that it is Messiah in judgment and taking the throne. He had already proved that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity—was fit to govern. He is saluted as God. Yet His disciples (the remnant) are called His fellows (compare Zech. 13:7, where He is seen in His humiliation and smitten, but owned to be Jehovah's fellow). I apprehend the queen is Jerusalem. Tyre and others own her with presents. She is gloriously received into the chambers of the king himself. This, I apprehend, is the force of within. She is in the closest relationship with the king. The virgins her companions are, I suppose, the cities of Judah. The glory of Israel is no longer now their fathers. The presence of Messiah (the fulfiller of promise) has eclipsed the depositaries of promise of old. Instead of fathers, they have children to be made princes in all lands. The coming in of Messiah in glory and judgment, brings in the full triumph and glory, amongst the nations, of Jerusalem and the Jewish

people. The psalm is full of Messiah, and exclusively, yet as man, and God is only alluded to as his God. But Messiah is God. {Ps 46}

Psalm 46. The remnant, now that Messiah has appeared in glory, can celebrate what God is in favour of His people, and with the special knowledge acquired through what He has been for them in trouble. There may be yet an assault: indeed according to prophecy I believe there will be. But as the whole effect of Messiah's coming in blessing was celebrated in Psalm 45, so here the great result in divine government. The spared remnant have Jehovah with them as the God of Israel (v. 7). For here Jehovah is again introduced as a present thing. Here it is specially (and suitably, after what we have been studying, needs not to be said) as refuge and deliverance. Earth, mountains, and waters may tremble, or swell and roar: His people need not fear. God is with them. Nor is this all. He has His city on the earth, where He who is the Most High dwells, and has His tabernacles gladdened by that river which, everywhere in these descriptions, is the sign of blessing; as in the heavenly Jerusalem, and in the earthly in Ezekiel—nay, in paradise, and in figures, in the believer, and in the assembly, who calls to the water of life him who thirsts. But even then the river is there. God is there—the sure and best of answers to the taunting demand "Where is thy God?" She shall not be moved, but helped right early.

Verse 6 gives in magnificent abruptness the great result. All is decided. Then they say, "Jehovah Sabaoth is with us." The God of the whole people is the refuge of this feeble remnant (v. 8, 9), they summon the earth to see what the works of Jehovah are, what is come of the

impotent rage and violence of men; for He will be exalted among the heathen and exalted in the earth. The place of faith is to be still and wait on Him and know that He is God, as the remnant of Jacob will with joy—that Jehovah of hosts, the God of Jacob, is with them. {Ps 47}

Psalm 47 only pursues this deliverance to its bright results for Israel according to God's glory in the earth. Jehovah is now a great King over all the earth (compare Zech. 14). He subdues the nations under Israel and Himself chooses their inheritance. This is triumphantly celebrated from verses 5-9, and the association of the princes of the peoples now owning God, with the people of the God of Abraham. He is specially Israel's (the remnant's) King, but if He is, He is King of all the earth. In these verses God Himself is celebrated, but He is the God of Israel. It is the celebration of the earthly part of the millennial glory of God: Israel owned in the delivered remnant being the centre. I apprehend verse 9 should be "have joined themselves to the people." {Ps 48}

Psalm 48 completes this series. Jehovah is fully established as Israel's God in Zion, now the praise of the whole earth, the city of the great King, and in whose palaces God is well known as a refuge. The kings were assembled; they found another sort of power there than they thought of, marvelled, were troubled, and hasted away. The power of the sea was broken by the east wind, and Jehovah's hand manifested there too. The psalm beautifully refers to the beginning of Psalm 44, where they had said in their distress, We have heard with our ears… the mighty works of the fathers' days. Now they say, As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of

Jehovah Sabaoth, the city of our God. They do not now say, as in Psalm 42, “I had gone with the multitude,” but now cry to thee from Jordan; but in sweet and unendangered peace, “we have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.” God’s name they had trusted, but now His praise was according to it. He had come in power. It was so to the ends of the earth. He calls on Mount Zion to rejoice because of these judgments, with the joyful assurance that this God is their God for ever and ever; their life long will He guide and bless them. It is an earthly blessing, and death, the last enemy, is not destroyed (v. 11-14). {Ps 49}

Psalm 49 is a moral conclusion for all, founded on these judgments of God. Wealth, elevation, all that is exalted in man, is nothing. Man expects to endure, gives his own name to his lands, blesses himself, is praised by posterity, and spoken well of as prudent and wise, seeing he has done well to himself. They are laid in sheol like sheep. The hope of the man of the world does not last; he leaves the world he was great in; his reputation, which lives, is nought for him, deception for others. Satan’s power is for this life; there is no deceiving after it. Man in honour without understanding is like the beasts that perish, but the righteous remnant trusts in God: his soul is redeemed from the power of the grave. God shall accept him. The preservation on earth, or heavenly blessing is left somewhat vague here. The immediate hope would be of preserving life; but it would meet those that might be slain with the fullest and securest hope. It is even so in Luke 21:19, “gain your souls,” and in Matthew 24:13. The ambiguity is preserved there too designedly. {Ps 50}

In Psalm 50 we enter on new ground—God's judgment of the people. Jehovah the mighty God summons the whole earth; as in Psalm 51 we have their confession of killing Christ.

The introduction of Psalm 50 is magnificent, but requires little comment, God shining out of Zion the perfection of beauty. Only remark that the first two verses are the thesis; from verse 3 is the bringing it about. But heaven is called in to stand by, a witness of righteousness, and the earth; but the judgment is the special judgment of the people. In verses 5, 6, He takes up and accepts and gathers the remnant, His "godly ones," who have now entered into covenant with Him by sacrifice. It is in view, I apprehend, of their seeing Christ whom they had pierced, that these words are uttered. The heavens (though in result God be seated in Zion) bring in their display of the righteousness of God; distinct in itself note, from His judgment. This is general. It is not in itself the judgment of God. I doubt not, He shines forth in glory therein, but in a particular manner. We can say it is the glorified saints who display this, of course with Christ Himself; yea, so fully that they shall judge the earth. It is not judgment through secondary causes: God is now judge Himself—hence gathers His saints too. In verse 7 the people are judged. God does not want sacrifice, He wants righteousness. He will not have wickedness, nor, now, the wicked among His people. So we read in the very same way in Isaiah 48 and 57. Man fancies God is such as he himself is; but all shall be set in order before Him. This is God's judgment. {Ps 51}

Psalm 51 is the true remnant's confession. They have fully entered into the mind of God (see v. 16). There is

true and complete humiliation for sin before God, yet confidence in Him. He is looked to cleanse and deliver, with the true faith of God's people. The whole sin of the heart and nature is acknowledged, and the dreadful crime of Christ's death owned (v. 14). The humiliation is accepted, but with the sense of God's cleansing being perfect. He creates too a clean heart. He prays that that Spirit (which Haggai declares abode with them after all their faults, and in spite of the Babylonish captivity), might not be taken from him, nor he lose the sense of the presence of his God. Persons have found difficulty in this verse; I see not any. No good could have been wrought by the Old Testament saints without the Holy Ghost: withdrawn from them, all their joy and comfort ceased and gave place to darkness. This he prays might not be. There cannot for a moment be a doubt that the Spirit wrought in the Old Testament saints. The question is, whether He was present in the same manner, and dwelling in them, in virtue of Christ's work and glory, uniting them to a risen Head in heaven. This, of course, could not be. The work was not yet wrought, the glory not yet entered into by the man Jesus. The New Testament is clear on this point. He was not; but He must have wrought in and with the saints. He acts in everything good; the agent in all divine action in the creature, as in the creation He moved on the face of the waters, but specially in the hearts of men for any good that is there, and to be the source of joy and strength to the saints. So in the prophets and others.

An intelligent saint now could not say what is said in this psalm (v. 11); he knows God will not take His Spirit from him. He might indeed perhaps in anguish say it, and with a true heart, and be heard; but not intelligently.

This repentance of Israel, as so constantly taught in scripture (see Acts 3), is the path to Zion's blessing there. Will God accept their offerings? In these two psalms we have the separative judgment in Israel connected with wickedness, sin against Jehovah—a judgment which is real deliverance for the remnant; and now (when He has appeared) the full confession, and that even of having shed the blood of the Saviour.

These two psalms complete the setting, as to circumstances, of the whole scene before us, which forms the groundwork of this book. The series of psalms now commences (as we have seen in other instances), to supply and unfold the expressions of feeling for the remnant under these circumstances. It will be found, accordingly, that it is not so much trial by being in the midst of evil, as from seeing it dominant and prevailing in the place even that belonged to Jehovah. Hence in general, they are addressed to God and the Most High, the God of promise —not to Jehovah, the God of present covenant blessings, for they are out of the place of them. When otherwise, I purpose noticing it in its place. After all this is gone through up to the full inshining of hope, the position of Christ exalted on high, and once suffering in Israel as that in virtue of which He could help and deliver them, is brought out. This (with the application of it to the remnant and the employment of David's last appeal in his sorrow, as now fatigued with years, to Israel's own state at the end) ushers in the millennial reign of Christ under the figure of Solomon.

In Psalm 52 we find faith as regards the power of the wicked man, who was in presence of the godly. The goodness of God endured. God would destroy the proud and deceitful man, while the righteous would abide. It

reminds of Shebna—not enemies from without nor even the beast, but within among themselves—the Antichrist of power. {Ps 53}

In Psalm 53 we have the wicked in general, the whole mass of the people, all, save where grace had come in. It is the same as Psalm 14, but does not speak of Jehovah, but of God, for the remnant are no longer in the place of covenant relation. Hence here it is not God is in the generation of the righteous, but the utter ruin of those encamped against them—the public judgment of the external enemies. Those who are in great fear are the ungodly Jews (see Isaiah 33:14; 8:12; and 10:24). In Psalm 14 they despised the poor who trusted in Jehovah. There they were outwardly together. This is not so now. God has put His enemies to shame—not the proud ungodly the poor of the flock. The desire of the full salvation of Israel out of Zion as a centre, not merely God's deliverance by judgment from enemies without, is then expressed. The power which comes from heaven and destroys the faithless oppressor, is a distinct thing from the establishment of the result of covenant power in Zion according to promise. {Ps 54}

Psalm 54 is the cry to God to deliver according to the value of His name, the subject of trust. The double character of the enemies is spoken of—strangers, enemies from without; and oppressors, the proud within, who hunt for the life of the poor. When deliverance comes, then the name of Jehovah is introduced (v. 6, 7). The name of God is the revelation of what He is. This is what is trusted. Jehovah's name, that of their covenant God, will be praised when they get back into the place of association with Him.

Psalm 55 is a distressing picture of wickedness in Jerusalem. The speaker is outside, but has experienced this wickedness in the treachery of his dearest friends. His resource is in God: Jehovah will save. He is looking back, I judge, at all that he had experienced in Jerusalem. Wickedness went about her walls. Wickedness, deceit, and guile were in her midst, nor departed from her streets. He would fain have fled from it all. The enemy was without, the wicked within; but they charged the godly with wickedness, and utterly hated them; but worst of all was the heartless treachery of those within, those with whom the godly had gone in company to the house of God. Still his trust was in God, for where else should he seek help? {Ps 56}

Psalm 56 expresses the sense of the bitter and relentless enmity of the wicked, but the tears of the godly are put in God's bottle. God is owned as the Most High, the title of promise but not of covenant (that of covenant is Jehovah); and here the remnant are cast out. But the word of God is a sure trusting place. It carries the truth of God as its basis to the soul, and contains all the expression of His goodness, and ways, and faithfulness, and interest also in His people. Hence there is no fear of man. The soul of the godly was delivered from death; he had escaped and fled, and now he looks to God that his feet may be kept, that he may walk before God in the light of the living. As the expression of the tried heart driven out, but so escaped, it has a most clear and distinct place. {Ps 57}

Psalm 57 looks more at the evil and the feet being kept, leaning on the word. This psalm, while crying to God in the same spirit and circumstances, and under the same title, is more the expression of confidence in God as a

refuge. His wings are a covert till the evil be overpast, and full deliverance is looked for by His gloriously putting an end to the trial. God will send from heaven and deliver. Hence the end of the psalm is more triumphant than that of Psalm 56. He will praise among the peoples and various tribes of the earth, for God's mercy and truth are great. God's publicly exalting Himself above heaven and over all the earth is looked for. No help was on earth, none to be looked for; but this cast more entirely on God, and thus brought out a fuller confidence in His safeguard, and in the final display of power in deliverance. So it ever is. God would send from heaven. How this directs the remnant upwards, and links them with a heavenly deliverance. Then Jehovah is praised. {Ps 58}

Psalm 58. All righteousness was silent in Israel. The wicked were such and nought else. The godly man looks for judgment on them, for, let favour be shewn to them, they will not learn uprightness. In the land of uprightness will they deal unjustly (Isaiah 26:9, 10). They cannot, says David of the same, be taken with hand; one must be fenced with iron to touch them (2 Sam. 23). Hence the godly looked for judgment—the only possible means, by God's own testimony, of removing the evil; for patience had been fully exercised towards them, hut when even God's hand was lifted up they would not see. And the vengeance of deliverance would come, and men would say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the earth (see Isaiah 26:9). This is the meaning of these terrible judgments: they establish the government and righteous judgment of God in the earth. Grace has taken us out of the world; we are not of it, as Christ was

not of it. Christ will, as to our deliverance, even from suffering, come and take us out of the evil, so that we have in no way need to seek the destruction of our enemies. But for the persecuted remnant, it is the only and promised deliverance; and not only that—it establishes God's government of the earth. {Ps 59}

Psalm 59 gives more the external enemies. The same wickedness is found there, but the might of human power with it. But they also must be judged, that wickedness may be set aside. Nor was it the sin of Israel against them that brought the heathen on them (however God might chasten them for sin against Him, so that He was justified). The suffering remnant look therefore for the intervention of Jehovah to judge them. And Jehovah shall judge all the heathen. They are not destroyed, but scattered, yet practically, as power, consumed; and many, as we know, slain.

This psalm speaks of no restoration of blessing. It is judgment, and judgment going on and not yet finished. And this judgment of the proud and wicked enemies will go on. Though rising up in rage to a head of wickedness, they will be sore smitten and consumed. All the heathen are concerned in it, but I apprehend that it is especially the apostate power animated of Satan—partially the king of Daniel 8 perhaps. It will be remarked here that, the moment it is in contrast with the heathen, the name of Jehovah is introduced. The personal address is still under the name of God, for the people are still outside (see v. 3, 5, 8 for Jehovah, and 1, 9, 10, 17 for the personal address). Note, the result is, that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Verses 14, 15 are, I apprehend, a challenge. Let the heathen be as hungry

dogs about the city, the believer will sing of Jehovah's power. It is at the close of the tribulation.

This psalm presents another phase of the connection of Israel and Messiah, and shews how David became the fitted instrument whom God had attuned to tell Messiah's and the remnant's sufferings. "Slay them not, lest my people forget."54 Now, this is not the language of the king, as such, but of Jehovah. The only case where "my people" is used is 2 Samuel 22:44, or Psalm 18:43, where Christ is the speaker. But when Christ is born, He is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. Now Jesus was the personal verifying of that which was said of Jehovah. In all their affliction He was afflicted, as in Isaiah 63. It is Jehovah who gets the tongue of the learned (Isaiah 50). So that "my people," where not directly of Jehovah which is frequent, is Christ entering into the sorrows of Israel, but in the love of Jehovah to them—no doubt as man (or how could He have actually suffered?) but still in the sympathies of Jehovah—yet, and because He is Jehovah, perfectly entering into them. It is thus He wept over Jerusalem, saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together! "But that was Jehovah. Hence, though He can say "we," because He graciously takes a place among the children, yet, in saying "we," it brings in all His own value and excellency into the cry. "I" and "me" may often take up the case of an individual of the remnant; but in case of such an expression as "my people," we clearly get One who stands in another position—not merely David. He says (like Moses) to Jehovah, "thy people" ever, and that is all right, but One who, in whatever sorrow, could say, as Jehovah, when spoken of by the Spirit, "my people," and enter into their griefs

with divine sympathy, and a righteous call for divine judgment. I apprehend that, though the enemies are the heathen, yet their complete intimacy and affinity with the wicked among the Jewish people is clearly intimated here. The same thing is found in Isaiah 66. They are all melted into one system and state of wickedness. {Ps 60}

In Psalm 60 the remnant acknowledge God's having cast them off. Their only hope is, that He will turn to them again. This is exactly the point of Israel's righteousness as a nation: no going for help elsewhere—no spirit of rebellion. They accept the punishment of their iniquity. Still God had put His ensign among the faithful in Israel. He was their Jehovah-nissi. They now look to Him. The end of the psalm is God asserting His title to the land of promise. Victory will be to Israel through Him. {Ps 61}

Psalm 61. The main point of all these psalms is trust in God when all is against the godly One. The more all circumstances are adverse, the more God is trusted in; but Christ shines through all as taking the dependent godly one's place. Many of the psalms of this book were, it is very likely, composed when David was driven out through Absalom.

This confidence in God which calls Him to hear is expressed in Psalm 61. It is not an appeal of the godly man against enemies, but the sinking of his heart as cast out; but, when at the end of the earth and his spirit overwhelmed, he cries to God and looks for a rock higher than himself from this flood. Thus his confidence was restored. It was a known God whom he thus trusted, whatever his then sorrows. In verse 5 he applies it to present certainty of having been heard. The vows he had sent up Godward had reached His ear above; full

blessings would rest upon him, and in those blessings he would perform them. Verse 6, doubtless, as to the occasion of it, was David, but it looks, I apprehend, clearly to a greater than he, and the abiding life into which He entered as man; and though the godly remnant be thus driven out and their spirit overwhelmed within them, yet the fact that the King had been so would be a cheer and a security to their hearts: His song would become theirs, His having sung it a relief to them when they might have sunk in despondency. Though the being driven out is the occasion and is felt, the psalm does not refer to wickedness, but to nature, the human heart being overwhelmed. {Ps 62}

In Psalm 62 confidence is more expressed. It is not looking from an overwhelmed heart, but a free looking up, so that one is not overwhelmed. His soul waits on God, has none else indeed, but does not desire any other. There is a “how long? “as well as a waiting. God will certainly come in at the right time, and then it will be known to whom power belongs. The psalm is spoken individually and may be in the mouth of any one of the godly remnant. How long would they imagine mischief against a man? What was their object? Why have him thus in hatred, and by falsehood seek to root him out of his place—the place of God’s blessing, in which He had placed the godly in Israel? But this, I doubt not, has special application to Christ as the One who was indeed in this place, and against whom all their malice was directed to cast Him down from His excellency. He invites also the people (Jewish) to trust in God, to pour out their hearts before Him, and, putting Himself with them in this place, says, not only, “my refuge is in God,” but He is “a refuge for us.” In saying “my” He shews

that He had it; but these maschilim (the wise) shall instruct the many and turn to righteousness many of them.55 Above all did that truly understanding One do so. They were not to trust in the great and violent ones of the earth. Power belongs to God, and with Him is mercy. They may trust in Him as a God of righteousness, and walk uprightly and not be turned aside by the prosperity of the wicked; for the Lord (Adonai) will reward every man according to his works. It is the desire to cast down the poor of the flock (because the wicked after all have the consciousness that the excellency of God is with them, and specially with Christ), which draws out this psalm, which expresses the faith of the saint, and the warning to the people to trust God and not the mighty. They are exalted in the earth; but true elevation from God is with Christ, and those who thus walk, who fear God and obey the voice of His servant. {Ps 61}

If Psalm 61 has been the cry of depression, Psalm 62 the confidence and encouragement of trust in God, Psalm 63 is the longing of the soul, still as cast out and far from the sanctuary (so we can speak of heaven, for we have seen the power and glory there by faith); but having, by faith in the lovingkindness itself, praise as its portion even in the wilderness, marrow and fatness to feed upon. It is a beautiful psalm in this respect; for it knows God; praise is thus begotten in the soul and for all times. There are two points: first, a most sweet word— because God’s lovingkindness is better than life, his lips praise God, though life in the wilderness be sorrow; secondly, because He has been his help, therefore he will rejoice in His protection. Verse 8 describes the practical result —his soul followed hard after God, and God’s right hand

upheld him. There was the longing to see the power and the glory as he had seen it; the present satisfying of the soul as with marrow and fatness, and that in the silent watches of the night, when all outward excitement was hushed and the soul left to itself. Those that sought the soul of the righteous to destroy it should go down into hades, but the king shall rejoice in God. Those that own His name should glory, but the false ones who departed from Him should be put to shame. It is again the king, and applies to Christ in a higher sense than to the remnant. For Him it was the desire to see the glory from which He was descended; for the Jew it was in the temple; for us, a Christ who has been revealed by faith to us, who have seen the glory and sanctuary into which He is entered.

There is a difference between Psalm 84 and this psalm: — that is the desire to revisit the sanctuary of God; this, desire after God Himself. There the tabernacles of Jehovah, a covenant God, are amiable; here God Himself is a delight when there are no tabernacles to go to.56 {Ps 64}

Psalm 64 chiefly speaks of the unceasing crafty hatred of the enemy and cries to God: God will shoot at them suddenly. The result of this judgment will be that all shall fear and declare the work of God, for they shall wisely consider of His doing. Then (for judgment is now come) the righteous shall be glad in Jehovah, for His covenant name is now taken, the judgment having removed the power of evil. The upright in heart glory. Thus judgment introduces the millennium. {Ps 65-67}

In Psalms 65-67 we have the bright side, the bright and joyful confidence of the saint who is conscious of being

heard, and who, though not yet in the blessing, counts upon it; whereas up to this it has been the sense of the power of evil, or the cry to God and waiting upon Him. Still in Psalm 65 the door of praise is not yet opened. Praise is silent in Zion; still it surely would not be silent, the vow now made would be performed. There God was the hearer of prayer if praise was yet silent, and all flesh would come to Him. But confidence is very bright here. As to the actual state of the people and the remnant (indeed, the remnant alone enter into their case) iniquities prevailed against them. Still confidence is unshaken, God would purge them away. Blessed the man that Elohim chose (for all was grace) and made to dwell in His courts. They would be satisfied with the goodness of His house. The thing was sure and gave satisfying joy. In verse 5 we have the judgment in favour of the remnant by which the blessing would be introduced—terrible things in righteousness. God is the blesser of the earth in every place. The end of the psalm is the celebration of the earth's blessings, when God comes in in judgment in favour of His people. At the door of Zion, as yet eating the fruit of their sins outside, the plea of the remnant is, that as yet praise was silent in Zion, but it was ready; God had only to bring in the judgment and deliverance, and it would wake up; and Elohim would do this, He who was the one blesser and orderer of the whole earth.

Psalm 66 celebrates this intervention in righteousness. Men are called to see God's works, but (v. 6) it is the very same God who once delivered Israel before out of Egypt. Verse 8 calls upon the nations brought into connection with God, to bless the God of the remnant, that is, of Israel. They had been brought through every

kind of sorrow and oppression, to prove and try them as silver, but now they would go before Him and praise Him. They had cried, been righteous, were heard, and found mercy; their prayer was not turned away, nor God's mercy from them. Thus after the sorrows (seen clearly now as the way and hand of God with them), to the righteous there is arisen up light in the darkness. They can pay the vows uttered in their distress, and tell to others the blessed and sure deliverance of the Lord who cares for the righteous, and has indeed heard their cry. But it is a deliverance by terrible acts of righteousness on God's part, the display of His intervention in judgment in the government of this world. We see, as indeed in so many other psalms, how it is in the Jewish remnant, though not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, that God displays His government of this world; as it is in them, which is the subject of the next psalm, that the blessing of the world takes place. {Ps 67}

Psalm 67 closes this short series by looking for the blessing of the remnant, not only as the righteous and merciful answer to their cry, but as the way of spreading the knowledge of God's ways to all nations. "God be merciful to as, that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus all the peoples will praise God, and the earth be judged and governed righteously. The earth will yield her increase, God's blessing will be upon it, and He will, as the own God of the godly remnant that have trusted in Him, bless them. The result is summed up in the last verse—"God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." For the repentant Jew is the way of blessing, life from the dead for the world. {Ps 68}

Psalm 68 follows on these psalms, being the celebration of the introduction of Israel into the position spoken of in them. Still it has a complete and individual character of its own. It begins with the formula employed when the camp broke up in the wilderness under the guidance of God, the pillar rising up and going before them. So it is now. God takes this place at the head of His people. It is thus introduced suddenly with great majesty. Let God arise—so His enemies are scattered before Him: as wax before the fire, the wicked perish at His presence. The righteous may be glad and rejoice before God, yea, exceedingly rejoice. He shall appear to the shame of the mighty wicked, and the righteous poor will be glorified. Thus the purport of this psalm is most clear. But the character of Him who thus interferes is further most beautifully unfolded. He is a father of the fatherless, a judge of widows. He makes the solitary to dwell in families, the rebellious in a dry land. Judgment is the true and gracious deliverance of the blessed God. And now His people can celebrate this goodness.

History is then recapitulated (v. 7). Such was He when He brought forth Israel from Egypt. At Sinai the earth shook at His presence. But He refreshed the heritage of His weary people, when He had prepared of His goodness for the poor. But now present facts told that tale still more to their hearts. Adonai's word went forth. The glad tidings were chanted by Israel's daughters in a great company (v. 11). Kings fled apace. What a sudden and complete deliverance it was! The quietest home-stayer divided the spoil, for it was the Lord's doing. Then Israel came out in all her beauty, though they had been lying in poverty and wretchedness.57 In all the pretensions and striving of the nations, this is God's will.

God challenges these pretensions of human power; “Why leap ye, ye high hills?” —the seats of human power. Zion was God’s hill, He would make it His perpetual abode. For the sake of His remnant He scattered the kings. In the midst of them He would dwell. But whence all this deliverance? The Lord had ascended on high, received gifts as man and for men; yea, even for rebellious Israel, who was now in question, that Jehovah might dwell among them.

This brings out praises to the God of their salvation; for their God was the God of salvation. Oh! how could Christ witness that? But they were still mortal men down here. The deliverance was earthly and temporal, though of saints. But He would be their guide always, even unto death. But He would destroy the wicked. What was really the occasion of all this burst of joy (of which the heart was too full to tell quietly the occasion) is now however drawn out; yet the exultation still casts its light and joy over it. Israel was set up again in power; her enemies destroyed; the beauty of her temple-order restored. The tribes would come up, the kings bring presents. God had commanded strength, and they look to His strengthening what is wrought. The subjection of every enemy or mighty one follows. Princes would come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God. The kingdoms of the earth are all called upon then to sing praises to Adonai. Strength is to be ascribed to God; but His excellency, that in which He is exalted, is over Israel, and, in the clouds of His dwelling-place is power, His strength watches over His people. It is the full restoration of Israel’s blessing and glory, and indeed much more than restoration; and this consequent upon the exaltation of the Lord to receive gifts as man.

But, while it is the intervention of God in the power of judgment, for the blessing of the remnant and putting down human power and every haughtiness of man's will —"God's arising" before His earthly people and His enemies fleeing— there are some points in it, which are brought out by this, which it is well to notice. First, the use of Adonai. His name Jah is introduced (v. 4 and 18), but it is always Adonai as spoken of. It is not the covenant name of relationship, though Jah recall it, but power in exercise, Lordship—divine Lordship— but still Lordship. It is what Thomas owned when he saw the Lord, it would seem; not, tell my brethren "I ascend unto my Father and your Father" etc. It is God; but as the Lord manifested here in power as Psalm 2:4; only there He is not redescended. Hence here we have His ascension as a past fact. It is not that God gives, but He who is Adonai has gone up and received gifts as, and in respect of, man. In His Adam (last Adam) character He has received them, having led the enemy captive (Acts 2:33-36); here clearly the ascended man, though much more, and as head having received the gifts "in Man"— the human head of glory—He shed forth the gifts (Acts 2, Eph. 4). But though as, and for, and in, man, yet there was also a special object added, yea, even for the rebellious, that Jah Elohim might dwell among them. Here the remnant, the Israel of our psalm, comes in. Hence the apostle does not quote it, but stops half-way at His receiving them for man.

In the following psalms we find the humiliation of this blessed One. What a contrast! Yet how far indeed from being less glorious or of feebler interest in the eyes of us who have learned and know who He is. {Ps 69}

Psalm 69. The state of soul of which this most important psalm is the expression demands the utmost attention and patient inquiry. We have all along seen the remnant of Israel before us, or Christ associated with that remnant. It is the case here. He who speaks is doubtless, first of all, David; but evidently a greater than he. The state described is this:— He is in the deepest distress, sinking in deep mire, has to weigh before God the foolishness and sins which have been the occasion of it. He is in the midst of numerous and mighty enemies, who are such without a cause. Whatever sins may be dealt with, personally He has been faithful. The zeal even of God's house has eaten Him up, and He is suffering reproach for the God of Israel's sake. Hence He prays that this may not be a stumbling-block to others, seeing that One so faithful to God should find such distress and trouble. Yet He is not forsaken of God. On the contrary His prayer is to Jehovah in an acceptable time. He looks to be heard in the multitude of God's mercies and the truth of His salvation. His complaint is of His enemies; yet He sees Himself smitten of God, and among those whom He has wounded. His desire is for vengeance against men; it is not the testimony of grace.

If we look at the godly man in the remnant of Israel, all this answers perfectly. He acknowledges his sins—all the sins of his nation. Yet he suffers reproach and causeless enmity for the name of the God of Israel: and the more faithful he is, the more he suffers it. Faith yet makes him know that he prays in an acceptable time (we have seen this to be the character of the last psalms) to the God of Israel. Yet he is in the deepest distress. His eyes fail while waiting for God. His care for the good of Israel, his submission to injury, only makes him their scorn. He

looks for the destruction of his adversaries and persecutors, for whom no mercy is of avail (they will it not); assured that Jehovah hears the poor and despises not His prisoners. All creation is to praise Him, for God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell therein and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein. All this is exactly and precisely the position and feeling of the godly remnant—the maschilim.

But in verse 21, and indeed, though of more general application, in verse 9, we have what has been literally fulfilled in Christ. The use of verse 22 in the epistle to the Romans leads us to the same conclusion; and many other verses, though applicable to others, have their fullest application to Christ. Yet He is not speaking as forsaken of God at all. Yet, though His life is referred to, His sufferings on the cross, as we have seen, are reached in the description given of them; yet there is no trace of grace and mercy flowing from them. They are man's part in them, not God's forsaking; and judgment on man sought, not righteous grace announced. Yet withal trespasses are confessed before God, and the persecutions are of One whom God has smitten. Hence, I cannot but see in this psalm, after His righteous life, in consequence of which He suffered reproach (and which He rehearses as regards the great principles which had governed it), Christ entering in heart and spirit into the sorrow and distress of Israel, into which, as to God's government, they had brought themselves; yet not the forsaking or the rejecting—that was Christ's alone as bearing and expiating sin. Still, they are smitten of God and wounded by Him; and into this Christ could enter,

because He (in the highest and fullest sense, though it be not the general subject of this psalm in general) was smitten of God. The subject is the persecution by the Jews, but the persecuted One was smitten of God, and felt how terrible was the wickedness that taunted and reproached Him who had taken that bitter cup, which we too had filled by our sins. Christ was smitten of God upon the cross, and felt the reproach and dishonour then cast upon Him.

As regards the trespasses recalled to mind in verse 5,58 I apprehend they are in connection with the government of God as to Israel; and that, though the fact of smiting is referred to, its expiatory power is not at all treated of in this psalm. Only judgment is sought for; that is not the fruit of expiation (compare Psalm 22). But it gives to us, for that very reason, a fuller apprehension of all the personal sufferings of Christ at that time; not that which stands wholly and entirely alone— His atoning and expiatory work. Were this only revealed, it is so immensely great, it would have eclipsed His personal sufferings as a man, as such, gone through at that time; and this it is, blessed be God, which we have in this psalm—what accompanied the great act of the smiting of God. {Ps 70}

Psalm 70 embodies the desire of the Spirit of Christ in connection with His sufferings from man, (but expresses itself, as in the remnant in that day); that His enemies may be confounded—those that say, Aha, aha, as they did when He was on the cross; that those that seek Jehovah may rejoice, and be glad and rejoice, and those who look for His deliverance say, Let God be magnified—that is, enjoy that deliverance. For this, He, as on earth, is content to be poor and needy, and nothing else, to the

end. Still He trusts in Jehovah; He is His help and deliverer. He is assured He will come. He asks He may not tarry. Any saint of the remnant could say it doubtless; but it is a summing up of the principle on which the Spirit of Christ speaks in them, and of His personal association with their sorrows, and thus in principle furnishes a key. It will be remarked that from Psalm 69:13 the covenant name of Jehovah is introduced. {Ps 71}

Psalm 71, founded, I suppose, as much of this book, upon the flight of David on the rebellion of Absalom, presents, I apprehend, the sum of all God's ways with Israel from the commencement of their history, and the display of His faithful care, with the appeal not now to leave them at the last. Christ, I doubt not, in spirit enters into it (see v. 11) as in every case, but it cannot personally apply to Him. The close of His life witnessed exactly similar trials, only faultless and deeper ones; but its application is to the old age of Israel, who will be brought up as from the depths of the earth through the faithful grace of the Holy One of Israel. {Ps 72}

Psalm 72 introduces us, not to David in suffering and conflict, but to the full reign of peace and royal blessing. It is the Son of David we have here, the source and securer of millennial blessings. I know not that this psalm requires much explanation by reason of its clearness. It is the king to whom God gives His judgments, and who is at the same time the king's Son, the Son of David, in His reign of righteousness and peace, as Solomon or Melchisedec. His kingdom has the full extent of promise, but all kings fall down before Him. Blessings of every kind accompany this reign of righteousness. The expression "prayer shall be made

continually for him “shews simply, that the blessings enjoyed through Him raise the desire and request for His glory and continuance in power. While literally spoken of Solomon, I think it would point out Christ reigning as a true man upon earth. Verse 17 shews, I think, it is not uncertainty of duration, but the effects of His rule on the hearts of all that are under it. There will be a prince of the house of David in Jerusalem, I suppose: still this, I think, looks beyond him.

This closes the Book. We have seen in it the godly ones cast out; their distress and confidence in this position; this ending in the certainty and confidence of restoration; and then Messiah’s deliverance and exaltation and previous humiliation —the glorious and yet humbled person being thus brought out— and then the human royal rule established in Israel. This ends the dealings with the remnant in the land, looked at as apart from the rest.

## Psalms (Book 3)

In the Third Book we get out into a larger sphere than the state of the residue of the Jews in the last days, whether in Jerusalem or driven out; and hence we find much less of the personal circumstances and feelings and associations of the Lord, who, in His day, walked among them. The general interests of Israel are in view, and thus Israel's history is entered into. The whole national position is before us, still distinguishing a true-hearted residue. Remark here that, save one, we have no psalms of David in this book. Asaph, sons of Korah, Ethan, are the professed authors; I know of no reason to reject the alleged authorship. It is still the state of Israel in the last days: only that the general facts are spoken of in reference to the whole nation, not the particular details of the Jewish remnant, and of Christ as taking a place among them. It is much more Israel and general principles; there is more reference to their past history and God's dealings with them.

This the first psalm of it shews. Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are of a true heart: but the saint was perplexed at the prosperity of the wicked, and his feet almost gone. The prosperous ungodly are then described; the body of the people join them, and the Most High is scorned; whereas the godly is continually chastened, he had cleansed his hands then in vain. But in speaking thus he would offend against the generation of God's children. Man pondering on it, it was too painful. In the sanctuary of God, where His mind was revealed, all became plain. As a dream when one awakes, so all their pretensions would disappear when

once God awoke. The godly man complains of his want of divine sense in these thoughts and feelings. Still, after all he was ever before God, and God's right hand upheld him; guided by His counsel in that time of darkness, when the glory shall have been revealed, he will be received (read "after the glory, thou wilt receive me": compare Zech. 2:8). The result is blessed. He has none in heaven but the Lord, none on earth whom he desires beside Him: such is the effect of trial. But his flesh and heart fail: that is nature. It must be so, but God is the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. The last two verses declare the result—those far from Jehovah, and apostates, perish; but it is good for the godly to draw near to God. He has put his trust in Him when He did not shew Himself, that he might declare all His works when deliverance came; for those blessed without trial afterwards will not learn this knowledge of God. {Ps 74}

Psalm 74 complains of the hostile desolation of the sanctuary, when rebuilt in the land. God's enemies, as faith here calls them, roar in the congregations. Man's ensigns, not God's, are the signs of power. All public Jewish worship was laid low. Not only this—what might have been a comfort in such a time fails. There are no signs from God to meet it, no prophets, none that know how long (know, that is, by the teaching of God, when He will come in in power). Still there is here faith that God will not forsake His people, and that word, How long? if there be no answer as to it, turns into a cry. It cannot be for ever. God's faithfulness is trusted in. Heretofore He had smitten Egypt and delivered His people through a divided sea. All power in creation was His. The enemy had reproached the name of Jehovah.

Israel is still held to be, in the remnant, as God's turtledove. He is entreated to have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth (or land) are full of the habitations of cruelty. The oppressed, the poor, the needy, are, as ever, presented to the eye and heart of God. We have them ever come before us as those of whom God thinks, in whom Christ delighted in the land. And so it is even as to the spirit we have to be of. He calls on God to arise and plead His own cause. The tumult of those who rose up against Him daily increased. While looked at as the poor and oppressed, it is remarkable how faith identifies the interests of the godly remnant and of God, and pleads their cause with Him. It is spoken of as from without. God is addressed: only God is reminded that His name in Israel has been blasphemed. This name recalls (v. 19, 20) the covenant relationship with, and tender love of Jehovah towards, His people. {Ps 75}

In Psalm 75 Messiah is introduced speaking, though the psalm commences with the remnant giving thanks to God for wondrous works already wrought. Then judgments of God introduce Messiah to the kingdom. He receives the congregation of Israel; then upright judgment will be executed. The earth is dissolved in guilt and confusion. Messiah upholds its pillars. In the following verses He warns the wicked and despisers of God not to exalt themselves, for God is the Judge; He puts up and puts down. The wicked should drink the cup of judgment to the dregs; but the despised Messiah would exalt the God of Jacob and cut off the horns of the wicked; the horn of the righteous would be exalted. {Ps 76}

Psalm 76 is extremely simple in its application to the judgment of the kings, who come up against Jerusalem in their pride, and find, unlooked for, the Lord Himself there (compare Micah 4:11-13 and Zech. 12:2; 14:3, 4). The judgment of God is rehearsed, and God is now celebrated as having His dwelling-place in Zion. He is the God of Jacob and known in Judah: His judgment was heard from heaven. The long-despised Zion is more glorious than the mountains of prey, the high places of human violence. The earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, and to help all the meek upon the earth. {Ps 77}

In Psalm 77 we have spiritual deliverance and restored confidence. He cried with his voice to God, and God gave ear to him. To cry with the voice is more than to have a wish. A cry is the expression of weakness, dependence, recourse had to God, the reference of the soul to God, even of uprightness of heart. In the day of trouble, it was not merely complaint, irritation, anger; but “I sought the Lord,” Adonai, not Jehovah. His first thought was whether the Lord would cast off for ever (v. 7-9); for here he, as often remarked in the Psalms, is going through the process which led to the statements of the first verses.59 In verse 10 he judges himself in the thought, and remembered those years in which the power of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, the Most High of the fathers, was displayed (compare the remark, verse 5). The way of God is always and necessarily according to His own most blessed and holy nature, and understood in the secret place in which He makes known His thoughts to those in communion with Him. His way is according to that place, in which He judges His people according to His present relationship with

them. (Hence the place of the interpreter, one among a thousand). The ways of God are the application of the divine principles of His holy nature, owned as placing Himself in relationship with His people, according to which principles that relationship must be maintained. That is His sanctuary. There is where He is approached. Thence He deals with His people, not merely in outward guidance, but as making good in His majesty the principles of His nature (so far as revealed) in the hidden man of the heart.60 He deals in the holy place of His nature and majesty with us in the truth of our state —our real, moral, inward state. He does not deviate from these ways, nor compromise the majesty they make good. But they (though according to His nature) are carried out in a revealed relationship. They make good His nature and majesty in it, but never infringe it. Man in relationship with Him must suit himself to it, must walk in his inward state with Him in it; but God, if He deals according to it, purifies him for it, shews the evil, hides pride from man in order to bless him, but makes good His own majesty. Hence the heart in the evil turns back to that which formed the relationship in redemption (v. 14-18).

Israel or the godly remnant is not in the enjoyment here of covenant blessings, but, when distressed, looks back by faith to a time which recalls the power of Him who cannot change. The comfort of the soul is, that God’s way is in the sanctuary, according to the nature and ways of God Himself, so far as He is revealed. If I look out to judge as man, His way is in the sea—I cannot trace it; His footsteps are not known, for who can follow out Him who disposes of all things with a thought? We do know God’s own nature and character in relation to

us by faith, and can reckon on it, as to all He does, as faithful and unchangeable; but we cannot know and judge His ways in themselves. Hence the unbeliever is discontented and will blame God; the believer is happy, because he has the key to all, in what the God is whom he knows, and on whose ordering of all things he can count. It must be according to what God is. He does not order all things contrary to what He is; but He is for us and therefore orders all things for us—makes all things work together for good. He leads His people like sheep. In Psalm 73 the tried one learned the end of his outward enemies, who prospered while he was chastened. Here he learns the ways of God with himself.

But this psalm is practically both interesting and instructive. The soul away from the enjoyment of divine blessing, is awakened by grace to cry to God, the sense of the loss of these blessings pressing upon it. He seeks the Lord, and this presses the trouble, as it ever does, on him; he feels where he is, his soul refused comfort; but the thought of God is a source of trouble, for if faith is awakened, conscience is too, which mingled with the loss of blessing, and the spirit overwhelmed; his soul is kept in wakeful consciousness of where he is. He thinks of bright days of old when the “candle of the Lord shone upon “him. Had God given him up, forgotten to be gracious and shut up His lovingkindness in displeasure? Can he think that God has given him up, and he one of His people! This brought God Himself into his mind. How could it be all over with him? It was his own infirmity; and he turns back to the years of the right hand of the Most High He remembers Jehovah’s works In reaching Jehovah with his own humbled spirit, he reached One who was for His people ever and who had

wrought for them and redeemed them of old. He, their God, became the source of his thoughts, not his own state towards Him. Then His being their God made it so dreadful. Then he can think and judge rightly of His ways too. They are in the sea not to be tracked by man's foot, but in the sanctuary always according to His nature and character, and accomplishing His purposes in good. {Ps 78}

In Psalm 78 the conduct of Israel is discussed by wisdom, historically as regards the whole people, but with very important principles brought out. There was not only a redemption of old, to which faith recurred, but a testimony given, and a law to guide Israel's ways, that they should make them known to their children. But the fathers had been a stubborn and rebellious generation. Now, the law and the testimony were given that the children might not be like their fathers; but they were, and their history is here brought out. God, therefore, chastened them; there was direct open government in respect of their ways. For all this they sinned still. At the moment of chastisement they turned to Him. Nevertheless they did but flatter Him with their mouth, their heart was not right with Him, nor they stedfast in His covenant. But He shewed compassion, also forgave, remembered they were but flesh. Yet after Egyptian signs they forgat Him; brought into the land, they turned to idolatry. When God heard this, He was wroth and greatly abhorred Israel. On the ground of this government, under law and testimony and compassionate mercy, Israel was wholly given up, the tabernacle forsaken, the ark delivered into captivity and the enemies' hand. The people also were delivered over to judgment. But Jehovah's love to His people in grace

was not weakened, and the sorrow they were brought into called out that love. He awoke, as one out of sleep, and smote His enemies, and put them to a perpetual shame. But now He had interfered in grace in His own proper love to His people. It was not governmental blessing on condition of obedience, but the interference of grace, when disobedience had, on the principle of government, brought in complete judgment, in spite of compassion and mercy. Sovereign mercy now had its place. Old blessings had put Joseph as natural heir; he had the rich and double portion. God chose Judah. He chose Zion. This gave it its importance. It is the place of love in grace, when all had failed under law, even with the fullest compassionate patience. He built His sanctuary. That is not directly presented as the subject of electing goodness, but He chose David when in the humblest condition, who then fed His people.

In this most beautiful psalm we have the most important principles possible. Viewing Israel as established on the ground of government in Sinai, on law mixed with compassion, Israel had entirely failed, was abhorred, cast off. A total breach had been made; the ark of the covenant, the link between Israel and God, the place of propitiation, and His throne, given up to the enemy. But God, whose sovereign love to His people had come in in power to deliver, had chosen Judah, Zion, David, and set up a link in grace, and by deliverance after failure. Faith can go back to God’s works in redemption, but not to man’s conduct under law. Psalm 78 is the converse of Psalm 77. Yet in Israel all this is declared to produce that which grace will effect in the last day—that value for the law in the heart which will make them teach it to their children (compare Gen. 18:17-19; see Exodus 34).

Mercy put Israel again under the condition of obedience. Here power delivers, after they have failed even under this, and judgment is come, God acting according to His mind of love. Pure law they never were under in fact; the tables never came into the camp (compare 2 Cor. 3). Moses' face shone only when he had seen God, when he went up the second time accepted in grace; but for Israel, this was putting them back under law. It is grace, and law brought in after it, which is death and condemnation. This is impossible with substitution; but this place, of course, Moses could not take. "Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your souls." "Blot me out, I pray you." No, was the answer; the soul that sins, it will I blot out. This was law and (as we see here, and as is definitely stated in 2 Corinthians 3) ruin. {Ps 79}

Psalm 79 refers, in the plainest terms, to the inroad of the heathen, especially the northern army (Joel 2 refers to a second attack, in which the cry of the psalm is answered; Isaiah speaks of both), who had laid waste Jerusalem and the temple, and shed the blood of the servants of Jehovah. There is the owning of former sins, and mercy looked to—tender mercies. The plea is the plea called for in Joel 2, and referred to in previous psalms (42 and 43), "why should the heathen say Where is their God? "and it demands that He may be known by the avenging the blood of His servants. Thus His people and the sheep of His pasture would give Him thanks for ever. Jehovah's anger is seen, and so far there is faith to say—How long? That is, though covenant mercies are not enjoyed by the remnant (yea, quite the contrary), yet faith looks to them, and sees Jehovah angry with His people; hence if such, and He thus in relationship with

them, He cannot give them up. It is only “How long? “Yet the direct cry is to God, even here, not Jehovah. Israel is not restored to his covenant place. There he will be in known covenant relationship, and then in grace, nor will this ever be lost sight of. Here they were not, but cast out on their failure under a conditional covenant, and though faith in promises sustained them, the new covenant was not entered into; they stood outside blessing, looking backward and forward, having nothing now. This is never the Christian’s state. In applying it to himself he makes himself a Jew. For while Christ is hidden on high as to them, the Holy Ghost is come down to us while He is there, and we know that He is accepted and glorified as having stood for us, and that we are in Him. {Ps 80}

In Psalm 80 it is remarkable how we are upon the ground of Israel here, their past or future historical associations, not Christ (though all depends on Him, of course) or the godly Jew in the midst of the apostate assembly. We may have Jerusalem taken, confederacies, ancient deliverances of Israel, in a word, national history or prophecy concerning national circumstances; but all is external, not trials within so that Christ should come personally on the scene, save when He receives the congregation, though the godly in Israel are distinguished. Jehovah also is not referred to, save prospectively, when they enter into the new covenant, until the judgment of the last confederacy, which makes Jehovah known as Most High over all the earth. These psalms do not, I apprehend, exclude the Jews—they are part of Israel; and then in Judah, Jehovah will be revealed: only all Israel, including Joseph, is historically brought in—the nation. In this psalm God is addressed

as the Shepherd of Israel, who leads Joseph like a flock, and dwells between the cherubim. This is, again, historic Israel. It is not God calling from heaven, nor coming. He is seen by faith only when He is there, having taken His place in Israel.

The psalm is a remarkable one. It sees God in Israel—His throne of right there, and looks to His shining forth, stirring up His strength to help them; but still, as in Israel of old in the desert, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were immediately next the ark behind the tabernacle, and the sanctuary went immediately before them on the march of the camp (Num. 10). This was Jehovah, God of hosts. Faith looks for His presence in power with His people as it was then. The touching inquiry is, How long—the urgency of faith—wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? This is also viewed in faith. The vine brought out of Egypt was laid waste; its hedge (as, indeed, Isaiah had threatened them) was broken down. Tears were the drink of Jehovah's people. They beseech God to look down from heaven and visit the vine, the vineyard, and the branch made strong for God Himself— David's family, I suppose. Still it was God's rebuke; but further, it looks that the divine hand of power should be upon the man of that power—the Son of man whom God had made strong for Himself. We can understand from this, and not merely from Daniel 7 (which merely gives a peculiar place to the Son of man), why the Lord gives Himself habitually the title of Son of man. He is the One, then, indeed rejected, but upon whom God's right hand is to be in power. To this the Lord refers, Luke 22:69 (only reading "henceforth" for "hereafter"). Come down in grace, His mission there was closed; from that hour they would

only know Him in exalted judicial power. It gives large importance to the name, and taking in Psalm 8 brings the deliverance of the remnant of Israel into the wide scope of His power; for as Son of man He takes manhood up in His own Person according to the counsels of God, only is over all the works of God's hand. He is Lord of all, but as such, and in virtue of His own work for them, effectuates this deliverance of the remnant of Israel. Thus the people of Jehovah would be kept. Such is the cry of this psalm—the coming in of power from Jehovah, the God of Israel—power laid upon the Son of man. The cry is occasioned by the great distress in Israel; still Jehovah is looked for, and faith sets Him in Israel. When He thus visited them, they would not go back from Him; when He quickens them out of the dust, they will call on His name (compare Psalm 2, Messiah).

Verses 3, 7, 19 give the theme of desire: still outward deliverance is looked for. Verse 17 demands special attention in the point of view already noticed, as shewing what was in the Lord's mind when presenting the immense anomaly that this Son of man should suffer. Psalm 8, of course, gives the key, in the purposes of God, as to both humiliation and exaltation, and man's place. It was this humiliation the Lord pressed upon His disciples. Now they look for the display of divine power in Him. The assembly, and its union with Christ, and adoption individually known, are the only things I am aware of not revealed in the Old Testament; all as to Christ was. Perhaps we may add His present position as priest. Neither of these is mentioned in the titles given to Christ in the first chapter of John's Gospel, nor His being the Christ. {Ps 81}

Psalm 81, while celebrating in figure the restoration of Israel, again returns to historical ground, specially introducing Joseph, who represents the ten tribes (see Ezek. 37:16). Otherwise Judah, the Jews, might have claimed everything. But in the restoration (although there are special events connected with the Jews, and it was amongst them that Jesus was conversant, entering especially into their circumstances in the latter day, producing the association, so profoundly interesting, which we have been studying in the first two books) yet it is evident that in the full purposes of God the stick of Joseph must have its place and become one in the Son of man's hand, and as all Israel. Now the new moon was the symbol of the reappearance of Israel in the sun's light, hailed with joy by the people and connected with redemption in the thought of faith (see v. 5 of the psalm). Then Israel called in trouble, and God delivered him; but then another important principle comes in. God answered them when in trouble; but He proved them also. They tempted God then, doubting His care and power. He was putting them to the test by difficulties, which seemed to say there was want of care or power; and they said, Is Jehovah among us! But Jehovah answered in grace (Exodus 17). This, I apprehend, is the case referred to. But even in the second Meribah—called so because Israel strove again with Jehovah, when Moses (Num. 20) spake unadvisedly with his lips and was shut out from Canaan (for, from Sinai on, they were under legal though gracious government)—Jehovah was sanctified in giving them water in a grace which was above even Moses' failure. Still, while grace and faithfulness to His promises to His people were found in the government of God (Exodus 34:6, 7), they were put to the test legally on the very terms of that mercy. It was

a testing government though a merciful one, and so indeed in some sense is the divine government. God puts this test to them— if faithful to God, no strange god among them (He was Jehovah their God, which brought them out of the land of Egypt), blessing was prepared. They had only to open their mouth wide, and He would fill it. But Israel would not hearken, and they were given up to their own hearts' lusts. Still we see God's yearning love over them and the delight He would have had in blessing them and putting aside all their enemies. His righteous government would have been manifested in them (compare Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:42). Oh that they had hearkened! Thus we get the ground of Israel's ruin. They were placed as redeemed from Egypt under the test of obedience and fidelity to God. They had failed. Still they would appear again, to reflect the light of Jehovah's countenance. This love of Jehovah for the people breaks out even in their failure.

A very important principle for every soul is brought before us here. Redemption, with conditional blessing after it, only ends in the loss of the blessing, just as creation did. It is the same thing or worse. It depends on us to secure the blessing; and now as fallen beings (instead of innocent and free ones), grace alone can keep us, and so it will be with Israel. The gracious and tender character and thoughts of God towards His people come out most beautifully in this psalm. The passages I have referred to in the Gospels shew the same tenderness, but, further, that Jesus is this very Jehovah. {Ps 82}

Psalm 82. We find God assuming the government into His own hands. He had set up authority in the earth and especially in Israel. Directed by His word in judgment

and armed with His authority, the judges in Israel had borne the name of God (Elohim). But none would understand or deal righteously. All the foundations of the earth were out of course. All magistrates had received power and authority of God—the Jewish, His word also; but even these would not know or understand. They were men, and would die like men, and fall like one of the uncircumcised princes of this world. God who had given the authority judged among the gods. He must have righteousness. This judgment the Spirit of prophecy then calls for in the understanding one. “Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.” {Ps 83}

Psalm 83 requires only to call attention to its subject. It is the last confederacy of the nations surrounding Canaan, with Assur helping them. At the close of the psalm, though the cry be to God as such (for Israel is not yet established in covenant blessing), Jehovah’s name is brought in. Judgment is to be executed, that the rebellious nations may seek Jehovah’s name. It is not, know the Father, nor, know there is a God; but, know Jehovah. When His judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Men will know that He whose name alone is Jehovah (He who is, and was, and is to come) is the Most High over all the earth; that is, Jehovah (the one true God), the God of Israel, is the One above all, the One supreme over the earth. It is in this name He takes possession of the earth, as Melchisedec pronounces the blessing in the name of the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And Nebuchadnezzar, the humbled head of the Gentiles, praises and blesses the Most High. It is His millennial name in which He takes to Him His great power and

reigns, and the true Melchisedec is priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace between both. This establishes prophetically Jehovah, the God of Israel, supreme in the earth. His people, now restored to relationship, look for a full blessing and the name of Jehovah is again used. Up to this, save as looking back or looking forward, the cry of the people is addressed to God, the people not being in possession of covenant blessings. {Ps 84}

Psalm 84 contemplates the blessedness of going up to the courts of Jehovah, yet, in the figurative allusion to the road thither, refers to the path of tears which His people have had to tread towards their blessings. Thus it has a full moral force, and is instructive for Christians as for Jews. In Psalm 63 the people cast out were longing for God Himself, and found, in spite of all, even in the dry and thirsty land, marrow and fatness in Him. In this psalm it is the joys of His house that occupy their soul, as entering into the enjoyment of covenant blessings. Not but that the living God is longed for; but it is in His courts. “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee.” Brought in there, such is the blessing. They will have nought to do but praise. This is the first great theme of blessing. It is blessing, perfect and complete in its nature. It is at the end.

But there is the way. “Blessed is he whose strength is in Jehovah”—in whose heart are the known ways that lead to the house. This characterises the state of soul—their strength in Jehovah—their heart in the ways that lead to Him. This path of blessing is through trial; for hence is the need of strength. And the way is loved and taken, whatever it may be, that leads to Him. They pass through the vale of tears—it becomes a well to them; for

by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit. Besides, from on high the rain fills the pools in that thirsty land. They use their strength, no doubt. It is put to the test; but they renew it— go from strength to strength, till all appear before God in Zion. They are a praying people. Dependence is exercised in confidence in grace.

The covenant name here is again introduced—Jehovah of hosts—God of Jacob. He is His people's shield: they seek that He should look upon His anointed. This was now the link between Jehovah and His people, not the law they had broken. They appear before God in Zion. But that is the place of royal deliverance in grace. Nor can the interests of the people and the anointed be now separated. The blessing rested on Him, and on them because of Him. The heart's interest in the kind of blessing is then sweetly and strongly expressed, and the sum of what Jehovah is, which makes it such, is declared from the heart. He is light, protection, gives grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them who walk uprightly. "The thought of what Jehovah is makes him resume all in one conscious word. "O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in thee."

It is a most beautiful returning celebration of Jehovah their covenant God with their heart, when the way, though through sorrow, is now opened to them into His known presence. Psalm 63 was joy in God in the desert, when they had nothing else—the real character of one enhancing the depth and sweetness of the blessing of the other. This is joy in Him when brought, or going up, to the enjoyment of Him in the midst of what surrounds His presence. The following psalm takes up the blessing of the land, and delivered people. In those that follow

after we shall find Christ Himself, as far as connected with the people, still with a view to the covenant relation subsisting between Jehovah and His people.

I have long hesitated, in reading Psalm 85, whether the first part referred to external deliverance and the grace shewn in it, and the following to the causing the people to enter into the enjoyment of it by the restoration of their own souls; or, as we have seen is often the case, the statement of the great result as the theme of the psalm, and then going through the sorrows of the remnant and divine workings which led to this result. There will be a restoring work in the souls of the people after their outward deliverance. Nor do I now speak of this psalm with very great certainty on this point. On the whole, I am disposed to think that they look for their enjoyment of divine favour in it, as between themselves and God, when delivered from all their enemies, and shewn to be forgiven by that deliverance. Thus the first three verses lay this ground, that God has been favourable to His land, and brought back the captivity of Jacob. This was the great public truth. But in verse 4 the restored people have need of other blessing in the reality of their own relationship with God. “Turn us, O God of our salvation.” Jehovah was the God of their salvation; but they needed His blessing in the midst of the land. They would that His people should rejoice in Him. How true this is often of the soul which knows forgiveness! It looks for Jehovah’s mercy and salvation, being thus restored to Him, and listens to know what Elohim Jehovah will speak; for they reckon on mercy. He will speak peace to His people—their public character—and to His saints—the remnant who are to enjoy it. Faith has then the certainty in every way that His salvation is

nigh them that fear Him, that the glory of Jehovah may dwell in the land. The last verses celebrate, in remarkable terms, the divine principles on which their blessings are then established. God's mercy and truth had now met. His promises, always true, had now been fulfilled by mercy. It is to be remarked that in the psalms mercy always precedes righteousness and truth. For Israel had forfeited all title to promise in rejecting the Lord—had come under full guilt—had no righteousness on which to lean—had been concluded in unbelief, that they also might be objects of mere mercy. But then through Christ's work these promises would now be fulfilled, and mercy and truth met. But more than this. Jehovah was their righteousness, through grace; and hence that righteousness was peace for them; and that which in judgment would have been their ruin, was in grace their peace—righteousness and peace kissed each other. I need hardly say how true these great principles are for any sinner for yet better and heavenly blessings; here they are applied to earthly ones. Truth shall spring out of the earth (that is, the full fruit and effect of God's truth and faithfulness shall be manifest in blessings, full blessings, on the earth). But it was not by a righteousness that man had wrought legally here below. Righteousness looked down from heaven. It was God's righteousness, Jehovah their righteousness. But this made it stable. Jehovah gives that which is good, and the land is blessed. Righteousness traces the path of blessing for Jehovah and Himself in the land— His own no doubt. Still His rule shall be so characterised. "A king shall reign in righteousness"—no more oppression. Justice is no longer fallen in the streets, as Isaiah 59:14 speaks; judgment is returned to it, and the government has this character. "And the fruit of righteousness shall

be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." This last, indeed, is practical; but it is the result of righteousness having looked down from heaven, yea, of its being established on the earth (compare Psalm 72:1-7, where this state is described). {Ps 86}

Psalm 86. This psalm is the meek yet confiding and confident appeal of a soul conscious of its godly feelings towards Jehovah and looking to the results of relationship with Him. We have had Jehovah since Psalm 84, which is founded on these covenant relationships in which the remnant feel themselves to be, though awaiting full blessing in the land. Still it is yet in distress, for the people are not revived nor set in their covenant blessings in the land. Holy (v. 2) is pious or gracious (chasid, not kodesh, holy). The three requests of the psalm are, "Bow down thine ear and hear me "(v. 1). The gracious attention of Jehovah is called for to give ear to the prayer of the suppliant; then to attend to the voice of his supplication (v. 6); that is, he looks for his request being granted; thirdly, to be taught in the way of truth (v. 11). Jehovah's mercies in the terrible conflict of the remnant are then owned; but he who thus cried, still looked for His interference in his behalf, that they that hate him may be ashamed, because Jehovah has helped and comforted him. How the state of the remnant, like Job, brings out the great conflict between the power of Satan and divine deliverance, but in which, however low he may be brought, the godly soul owns the source of all to be Jehovah, though his feet may well nigh slip in seeing the prosperity of the ungodly! It is not a psalm of complaint nor bitterness of soul, but of one who is yet

poor and needy, but has tasted the comfort of Jehovah's goodness.

It is to be remarked that, save the cases noticed, Lord is Adonai, not Jehovah. This is not the same as Jehovah, that is, the covenant name of God with Israel in eternal faithfulness— here Adonai, one who has taken power and is in the relationship of lordship to those who call. Hence in fact we own Christ to be in this place—"our Lord Jesus Christ"; and so it will be for Jews, though, till they see Him, they will not own Him fully thus. This Adonai is Elohim. Death and human power were before the thoughts of the godly, but the comfort of a known Jehovah as a support. They had found deliverance, but it was not complete in blessing. The psalm is essentially the pious appeal to Jehovah of the returned remnant of Israel in the land; but in the main its spirit is that into which Christ fully entered, but it is not directly applicable to Him. {Ps 87}

Psalm 87 views Zion as founded of God, a city which has foundations. Men had cities, and boasted of them; but God had a city He founded in the holy mountains. Even here it was not Joseph or the richness of nature; God was its riches, its place the holy mountains, what was consecrated to Himself. In the power of the Spirit the godly is not ashamed of it (glorious things are spoken of it), nay, not in the presence of all the earth's seats of boasting. Egypt and Babylon in vain vaunted themselves; Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, who had all had their day. The godly could talk of them without fear of comparison. It was accounted the birthplace of the man of God; the birthplace of the beloved ones of Jehovah. The Highest established her. When Jehovah made the registry of the people, He reckoned this man

as born there. Joy and the celebration of His praise was found there, and all the fresh springs of Jehovah. I have little doubt that “this man “refers to Christ. Zion boasts of her heroes. The word translated “man” (v. 5), refers to great men, not the poor and miserable. They are the children of the once desolate (compare Isaiah 49:21, 22). {Ps 88}

Psalm 88 puts the remnant under the deep and dreadful sense of a broken law, and God’s fierce wrath, which, in justice comes upon those who have done so. It is not now outward sorrows or oppression of enemies, but that which is far, far deeper between the soul and God. And though the judgments of God have brought him into lowliness, (and so it ever is morally with the soul when thus visited of God, for what can man then do, if he would help?) yet this was only a part of the trouble, viewing it as a full expression of God’s wrath; but death and wrath are the true burden of the psalm—God’s terrors on the soul. Nor is there, as a present thing, any comfort, or a prospect of deliverance as from human oppression, however dark for faith. The psalm closes in distress; its dealings are wholly with God; and so God must be known, till grace is known. Israel under law must come under a sense of divine wrath for a broken law; it is right it should. But remark further, it is still a God with whom they are in relationship. They have been delivered, brought back into the land, nearer to God, and hence into the sense of what their deserved position is in respect of this relationship. This is much to be observed, and observed for ourselves too; for a God of salvation may be really known in a general way, and truly, without the conscience being searched out, and divine wrath known in, and removed from, the

conscience. “O Jehovah, God of my salvation! “is the address of this psalm. This gives it its weight and true character, and makes it much more terrible. The full blessing of liberty in grace may not be known, but the relationship with the God of salvation—He Himself—the consciousness of having to say to Him is sufficiently known to make the privation of His favour and the sense of His wrath dreadful beyond all—the one dreadful thing.

With the Jews, under the law, circumstances and government may more enter into this case, because their relationship with Jehovah is connected with them. Still Jehovah’s fierce wrath is the great and terrible burden; and this terror of the Almighty, or more accurately, of Jehovah, drinking up the spirit, is the subject of this psalm—the sense the remnant will have of wrath, under a broken law, in that day. Sorrow had visited them before. They had been afflicted and ready to die from youth; for such indeed had been their portion as cast off but now restored, and so far brought into connection with Jehovah, the God of their salvation, they must feel the depths of their moral position between Himself and them alone—the wrath of Jehovah that was due to them. The real recovery, the righteous bringing into blessing, could not be without this. Not that, indeed, the wrath would abide on them. Hence there is faith, hope, though no comfort, in the psalm; for it is when mercy has been shewn and known, that this distress comes on them; when they have entered on the relationship by that mercy that its value, as has been said, may be felt; just like Job already blest, and then made to know himself—what man was, as between him and Jehovah, when the question of acceptance, of

righteousness, was raised. The wrath will not abide upon them because the true cup of it has been drunk by Christ; but they must enter into the understanding of it, as under law, for they had been under law, and pretended to righteousness under it—at least, that question was not solved for them. How truly Christ entered into this in the closing epoch of His life, I need not say. It is the great fact of His history.

It is to be remarked that, even as to the direct subject of the psalm, the terrors have not been always on the sufferer. Afflicted and ready to die he had been;61 such had been his life; but now he felt his soul cast off, and lover and friend even, whom he previously had had, put far from him by the hand of God. So, indeed, it was with Christ. His disciples could not then continue with Him in His temptations. He bore witness to them, that till then they had; but now, sifted as wheat, desertion or denial was the part of the best of them. Such was our Saviour's portion: only that, unspared and then undelivered, He indeed drank the cup which shall make the remnant escape the death they are fearing. It may press upon them as a lesson to know righteousness and deliverance, but the cup of wrath they will not drink. They are heard and set free on the earth. This psalm then is wrath under law; the next, mercy and favour in Christ, but as yet resting in promise. Actual deliverance is in the next book, by the full bringing in of Jehovah-Messiah for the world, and Israel's sabbath. {Ps 89}

Psalm 89. We have seen that Psalm 88 puts Israel in the presence of Jehovah (when guilty of having been unfaithful to Him), under the judgment of Jehovah, with the sense of wrath, yet in faith in Jehovah Himself—a place Christ most especially took, though of course for

others, in particular for Israel, but not for that nation only. Psalm 89 takes the other side of Jehovah's relationship with Israel; not the nation's, Israel's, which was under law, but Jehovah's promises to David. It is not, remark here, guilt which is brought forward—surely in both cases it was the ground of the state spoken of—but wrath, instead of salvation. For Jehovah had been Israel's Saviour, and so faith viewed Him still; yet instead of the fulfilment of promise, as made to David, there was desertion of him. There is no trace of confession of sin. Psalm 88 is complaint of death and wrath; and this (89), when mercy was to be built up for ever, shews the covenant made void and the crown profaned. Isaiah (40-58) pleads against Israel to convict them of guilt: first, against Jehovah, by having idols; secondly, by rejecting Christ (40-48, 49-58). But here the plaint is Israel's against Jehovah Himself, not unholily, I apprehend, as blame, but as an appeal to Himself on the ground of what He had been for Israel. Jehovah is establishing these relationships here, as indeed we have seen. Israel is Israel, and in the land (Psalm 85). The heathen are there—all is not restored; the last confederacy is in view, but it is against Israel. God is standing in the congregation of the mighty, judging among the gods (Psalm 82). Jehovah has been Himself recalling His former mercies (Psalm 81:10-16). The ark is remembered, and God as the dweller between the cherubim, as once in the wilderness (Psalm 80). In a word, the whole book is the condition of a restored people in the land, but attacked, destroyed; the temple which exists again ruined and broken down (Psalms 74-76, 79). Not a mere Jewish remnant complaining of antichristian wickedness within, with which they were associated externally, or which had cast them out; but

Israel the nation (represented by the remnant) with enemies who destroy what is dear to them, with encouraging prophecies of the result, having instruction as to sovereign grace in David when they had failed in their own faithfulness as a nation (Psalms 78, 79), which looks to God (Elohim) as such in contrast with man— to the Most High, but returns to Jehovah (as His own out of Egypt) with prayer, and demand that His hand might be on the Son of man, the branch62 made so strong for Himself (Psalm 80). The whole book, in a word, is Israel taking the ground of being a people, and actually in the land, and with a temple, entering into the relationship by faith, but subject to the destructive inroads of hostile powers—the Assyrian and allies, to whom indeed, because of success, the people return (Psalm 73:10; for Isaiah 10:5-23 is not yet fulfilled. Compare Isaiah 18, particularly v. 5-7).

Now these two last psalms of the book present the whole pressure of this state of things on the spirit of the faithful. Instead of a blessed people, it is loneliness under wrath. Yet Jehovah is the God of their salvation. The throne cast down and profaned, though immutable promises in mercy, not to be set aside by faults, had been given to David. The result is in the next book, in the manifestation of Jehovah, the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. In all this book we are on prophetic ground with Israel; not the special condition in which the Jewish remnant will be with Antichrist, because they rejected Christ—their sorrows therefore coming much more fully out when that condition is treated of. This, we have seen, is in the first and second books. Hence, in the following books we get to the recognition of Jehovah having been their dwelling-place

in all generations. It is their history which ends by the appearing of Jehovah-Messiah in glory.

A few words now on Psalm 89 in detail. Its subject is the mercies of Jehovah (His graciousness, chasdee, towards Israel), and their unchangeableness—the sure mercies. There was faith to say, “for ever,” for it was grace. This gave the appeal, elsewhere noticed. How long should it be otherwise, and even apparently for ever? Jehovah was faithful. For he had said in faith, Mercy, manifested goodness, shall be built up for ever, and faithfulness was established where nothing could reach it. And so it will be, Satan being cast down. It is the very description of the millennium. He then recites the covenant originally made with David, which is the expression of mercy, and that to which Jehovah was to be faithful, the sure mercies of David. He turns then, and continues his praises of Jehovah (v. 5-18), recalling the ancient deliverance from Egypt, and looking to the praise necessarily flowing from what He was, and the blessedness of the people that know the joyful sound. In His name they would rejoice all the day, in His (for we are in grace here) righteousness be exalted. He was the glory of their strength; and in His favour their horn will be exalted.

Such was the blessedness of association with Jehovah in favour. But this blessing was in the faithful mercy to David. And where was this? (v. 18). Jehovah, the Holy One (kodesh) of Israel, is their King. But, then, He had spoken of, not a kodesh, but a chasid, in whom all the chasdee (the same word in the plural as chesed, mercy), all the mercies, were to be concentrated, and to whom the unchangeable faithfulness was to be shewn—the sure mercies of David. Read “of thy holy One “(chasid) in

verse 19. Here he returns to the covenant made with David, shewing it never to be altered (v. 34-37). But all was different. But there was faith, founded on this promise, to say, How long, Jehovah? If He hides for ever, and His wrath burns like fire, what is man to abide it, and not go down into death? (v. 48).

The former lovingkindness to David is appealed to, as in the person of David himself, but, I doubt not from verse 50, applicable to all the faithful. Still, the Spirit of Christ falls in here, as He did with the wrath, to take the whole reality of the burden. He of course in that day will suffer nothing. But He has anticipated that day of suffering, that His Spirit might speak as with His voice in His people; for the reproach of the mighty ones and apostates in that day will reproach the footsteps of God's anointed. And if the faithful walk in them, they will share the reproach from the enemies of Jehovah. Such is their then position—walking in His footsteps, looking for Israelitish covenant blessings, feeling wrath, yet in faith, but looking to God's promise in mercy to David (which was already pure grace, for the ark of the covenant was gone, and Israel Ichabod), and yet waiting for the answer. This is in the following book. We are here, as I have said, in prophetic times, in Isaiah's scenes with the Assyrian and a devastated temple. The wicked are there: people flock with them in prosperity. If we are in Daniel, it is chapter 8, not 7. The beast and the Antichrist are not on the scene, but the land, guilty Israel, promises—not the question of a rejected Christ. This psalm closes the third Book.

## Psalms (Book 4)

The fourth Book is not so markedly separated from the third, as the preceding three from one another; and specially the third from the first two, because the third, while prophetically announcing the blessing, describes a state of things which leaves the expectation of divine interference to bring in the blessing in full play. The first had given the great principles of the position of the Jewish remnant in connection with the history of Christ; in the second, they are viewed as outside Jerusalem; the third turns to the condition of Israel as a nation restored to their land, but not yet in the full blessing of Jehovah; the fourth, as I have said, completes this by the coming of Messiah. This connects the nation and Christ, as well as the nation and Jehovah. Thus the book is introduced with the nation's connection with Jehovah, looking to His returning and finally blessing them, that His beauty may be upon them. The second psalm of the book shews Christ's connection with the nation as man in this world; the third psalm (92) gives, in prophetic celebration, the great result, into the whole establishment of which the Psalms 93 to 100 enter; then some deeply interesting details as to Christ (Psalms 101, 102); while the general result, as displaying Jehovah's ways, is treated in the praises of Psalms 103, 104, as to Israel and the earth; Jehovah's dealings from the beginning, and Israel's ways, on the contrary, with Him, in Psalms 105, 106, which close the book. {Ps 90}

The first psalm (90) of the book places the people—that is, the godly believing part of it—on the ground of faith in Jehovah, and expresses the desire of deliverance and

blessing from His hand. First, the godly Israelite owns Jehovah to have been the dwelling-place of Israel for all generations, their shelter and their home; next, He was the everlasting God before the world was, and turned and returned man in a moment, as seemed to Him good: time was no time to Him. Now Israel was consumed by His anger. But this was not all. Though His power was absolute, its use was not arbitrary. It was true and holy moral government; and unfeigned confession is made, not merely of open faults, but of that holy government of God which sets secret sins in the light of His countenance (for so, blessed be God, He does). Their days were passed in this wrath. They look that the pride of their heart may be so broken, their feeble mortality remembered, that the self-sufficiency, so natural to our heart, might be done away with, and that heart applied to wisdom—the fear of God. This putting of man in his place and God in His, connected with faith, as Israel's in Jehovah, is full of instruction as to the moral position suited for the remnant in that day—in its principle ever true. Thus Jehovah is looked to to return for deliverance, with the word of faith—how long? and, as regards His servants, that His work might appear, as the affliction came from Him; and that the beauty of Jehovah their God might be upon them, and their work established by Him. It is the true faith of relationship, but of relationship with the supreme God in His holy government upon earth. But, if so, Jehovah is the God of Israel. {Ps 91}

We have now (Psalm 91) another most important principle introduced; Messiah's taking His place with Israel, the place of trust in Jehovah, so as to afford the channel for the full blessing of the people. Three names

of Elohim (God) come before us in this psalm: one that by which He was in relationship with Abraham, the Almighty; another which Abraham through the testimony of Melchisedec may have known prophetically, the millennial title of Elohim when He takes His full title over the earth (compare Gen. 14:18-20), the Most High. Both, as all the names of God, have their proper meaning: one complete power; the other absolute supremacy. The question then arises, Who is the God who has this place? Who is this supreme God over all to the earth? Who shall find His secret place to dwell in? He who has found this shall be completely protected by almighty power. Messiah (Jesus) says, I will take the God of Israel as that place, Jehovah. In verses 3-8 we have the answer. Doubtless it is true of every godly Israelite, and they are in view, but led by the Spirit of Jesus, the one perfect faithful One who took this place indeed.

In verse 9 I apprehend Israel speaks (that is, the Spirit personifying Israel addressing Messiah): “Because thou hast taken Jehovah, which is my refuge,… as thy habitation,” almighty power shall guard thee. This continues to verse 13. In verse 14 Jehovah Himself speaks of Him as the One who has set His love upon Him. The form of the psalm is striking. The Spirit of God proposes the problem. He who finds the secret place of the supreme God (of the millennium) will have all the full blessing of Abraham’s God, the Almighty. Messiah says, I take Jehovah the God of Israel. Then the answer; so it was and He (v. 3-8) would enjoy the fruit of it. In verse 9 Israel speaks and declares by the Spirit He would have the blessings. In verse 14 Jehovah sets His seal on all this, and the solver of the great riddle of God will find the full blessing of Jehovah, on whom He had

set His love, whose name He had known—even Jehovah the God of Israel. It is a very interesting psalm in this way. But we have to remark that all is viewed on earth, the character of God in all respects. How Christ, as a present thing, relinquished the title to deliverance flowing from this, for perfect obedience, trusting His Father absolutely, belongs to deeper views of the purposes of God and of the paths of the blessed One Himself. Satan would have just used this to take Him out of the path of obedience, and into that of distrust and His own will: blessed be God, in vain, as we know. The sure mercies of David were to be in an obedient and risen One—this point is treated in a psalm of unexampled beauty farther on—and thus deeper blessings and higher glories brought out. But He who went in that perfect path of submission, has not the less made good all the fruit of all that is here, for those who shall walk after Him in the place of this trust in Jehovah upon earth. This principle we see indeed, in various forms, all through the Psalms. Indeed the atonement of Christ was needed, which implied His resigning personally this blessing, in order that others might walk in that path in which He could personally walk, of course, without it. Psalm 21 gives a divine revelation as to the way in which the promise of life was fulfilled to the Lord. {Ps 92}

Psalm 92 takes up these names of God, Jehovah and Most High; only it is no longer a secret place, known only to fidelity and faith. Almighty power secured blessing and answers faith; verses 7, 8 explain how. What is celebrated is not the disciplinary exercise of faith, but the answer to it, shewing that Jehovah (v. 15) is upright, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Psalms 90, 91, 92 go together as an introduction to the great theme that follows, Jehovah reigns. Already power had been displayed; and the full result in the judgment of all enemies and abiding blessing is looked for now, not merely as hope, but as founded on the manifested intervention of God. It is spoken in the place which Messiah had taken in the previous psalm, identified there in spirit with Israel in the latter days, Israel restored by divine power, but not yet in the full peaceful enjoyment of divine blessing, just as we have seen in Book in. Messiah takes therefore the lead in praises, and looks to His horn being exalted with honour (compare Psalm 75:10). But Jehovah's thoughts are deeper. He sees far, even the end from the beginning, and accomplishes all His purposes and His word. This is what faith has to remember. {Ps 93}

Psalm 93 states the grand and blessed results. Jehovah reigns. Ever indeed was His throne established, but the floods had lifted up their voice. The waves of ungodly men had risen up high. Jehovah on high was mightier. Two other great principles complete this short but remarkable summary of the whole history of God and man in government. Jehovah's testimonies are very sure. Faith could count upon them, come what would; but, further, another great truth came out as to the character of God. There could be no peace to the wicked. Holiness became His house. But I apprehend this last phrase describes the comely holiness of God's house for the now lasting period for which the earth was established.

We have now the details of the coming in of the Only-begotten into the world to establish the glory and divine order in the world, introduced by the cry of the remnant in Israel. {Ps 94}

Psalm 94 gives us this cry, which is at the same time the expression of the fullest intelligence of their position, of the dealings of God, of the position of the wicked, and the result about to be produced, and, as all the psalms in this book, founded on known relationship with Jehovah. We have seen that Psalm 91 is Christ's taking this place with the people, that full blessing may come on them as thus associated with Him. Psalm 94 addresses itself to Jehovah as the God of vengeance, and demands that He should shew Himself—lift Himself up as Judge of the earth and give a reward to the proud. The "how long" is made pressing and urgent. The conduct and impiety of the wicked is stated. Verses 4-11 address the unbelieving Israelites on the folly of this. Verses 12-15 give a most instructive explanation of the ways of Jehovah. Blessed is the man whom Jehovah chastens and teaches out of His law. This is the position of the suffering remnant, to give him quiet from the days of evil until the pit be digged for the ungodly.

No doubt, as indeed is expressed in the Psalms, the godly had sometimes well-nigh forgotten this (Psalm 73), not always (Psalm 27:5); but faith does not, and this is the true meaning of the remnant's sorrows—of ours too under our Father. The heart in the midst of evil has to say to God, not only in submission, but as a cup given of Jehovah (of our Father). Hence the distraction and distress felt in meeting man's will in our will without resource is gone; and God, the will being subdued (the great hindrance), teaches the submissive heart, which is in a true position before Him.63 For faith it was withal a settled thing that Jehovah would never cast off His people. But judgment would return to righteousness, and the upright in heart would follow it. This is the great

and all-important principle of the change which takes place in these psalms. Judgment, long separated from righteousness, now returns to it. Judgment was in Pilate, righteousness in Christ. There the opposition was perfect—more or less everywhere else. Suffering for righteousness' sake and divine righteousness established in the heavens may be, and assuredly is, a yet better portion. It is Christ's as man, now glorified, but it is not the maintenance of righteousness on the earth. This will now be effectually maintained. But who shall be found to make it good? Who will take up the cause of the godly one, or stand up for the remnant against the mighty workers of iniquity? If Jehovah had not, their souls had soon gone down to silence. How true this was (as to men) of Christ, how fully He can enter into this, I need hardly say. Even when the remnant feared falling, Jehovah helped them. And in the overwhelming of thought, where all the power of evil was, Jehovah's comforts delighted his soul. In verse 20 a most remarkable appeal is made. Were the throne of iniquity and Jehovah's throne about to join together? If not, the days of the throne of iniquity were numbered. That wickedness was there, was now patent. But Jehovah, the defence of the godly, the Judge of the wicked, whose iniquity He would bring on themselves—Jehovah would cut them off. Thus the fullest review, as I have said, of the whole position and of Jehovah's ways is remarkably given to us in this psalm. {Ps 95-100}

From Psalms 95 to 100 we have the progress of the introduction of the Only-begotten into the world most distinctly brought out; but here, all through, seen as Jehovah coming from heaven in judgment, and at length taking His place between the cherubim, and calling up

the world to worship Him there. It puts the setting up of Israel in blessing by power, in contrast with their old failure when first delivered. {Ps 95}

Psalm 95 summons Israel to come with joyful songs and thanksgiving before Jehovah (verses 3, 4 describing His excellency above the gods and as Creator). But Jehovah is Israel's Maker, his God also; and now they may look for rest even after so long time and continued failure. Till power comes in to judgment, while it is called to-day —for in that great to-morrow no evil and no rebellious will be allowed—they are called upon not to harden their hearts as of old in the wilderness, when God sware that they should not enter into His rest. But now, after all, grace says To-day, and invites to come before His presence who is the rock of their salvation.

Psalm 96 summons all the earth to come in, in the spirit of the everlasting gospel. They are to own Jehovah; the gods of the nations are mere vanity. Psalm 95 invites as of the company—"Come, let us sing." Now it is said to those who are afar off, Sing unto Jehovah, and His glory is to be declared among the nations. Jehovah is Creator (v. 5). His excellency is then spoken of, but He is known in the sanctuary in Israel on the earth (v. 7, 8). They are again summoned to own Him there, to worship Him according to the order of His house on the earth, for Jehovah reigns and the world is established, and Jehovah will judge the peoples righteously. This introduces a summons to a chorus of celebration of all this created world to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the world with righteousness and His people with truth; for Israel had the place of promise and the revelation of His ways. {Ps 97}

In Psalm 97 the coming itself is celebrated; Jehovah has taken to Him His great power and His reign. The earth and the multitude of isles are to rejoice. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, for it is the revelation of His judgments in power, not of Himself. Righteousness and judgment ever characterise His throne. The fire of judgment goes before Him and consumes His enemies. Jehovah, the Lord of the whole earth, comes forth out of His place. The heavens (for on earth there is none) in power declare His righteousness. The peoples see His glory. The effect of the judgment is then stated. Idol worship is confounded before Him, and all power and authority, from angels downwards, are now to own Him. But another fact comes out—this was joy and deliverance to Zion. The judgment of evil was her deliverance, for it was the glorious exaltation of Jehovah, her God.64 In verses 10-12 we see the blessed objects of the deliverance— the godly remnant. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. It is a very complete statement of the character of the Lord's coming to earth. {Ps 98}

Psalm 98 is the result celebrated by Israel on earth. Jehovah has made known His salvation, and remembered His mercy and truth towards Israel. All the land (or earth) is summoned to celebrate Jehovah as king. The heavens are not summoned here, as in Psalm 96. They are already filled with His glory, and the angels have been called to worship; but the sea and its fulness, and the world and its inhabitants are to rejoice before Jehovah, who comes to judge the earth and the whole world. {Ps 99}

Psalm 99, though simple in its character, embraces some important principles. Jehovah now reigns, not only in

making manifest heavenly power, but in the establishment of that power as king upon the earth. He now sits between the cherubim as heretofore in Israel. He is great in Zion and high above all peoples. I have no doubt this word people (ammim), generally translated “people “in the Authorised Version, which confounds it with Israel, is used, not as goim (Psalm 98:2 and often) in opposition with Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah, but for nations not Israel, but brought into relationship with Israel, and so with Jehovah Himself. Israel is called goi (Psalm 43) when judged and rejected. Further, the King (Messiah, but still Jehovah) loves judgment, and establishes equity, executing judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Thus Jehovah, the God of Jacob, was to be exalted, and in Jerusalem.

But another touching and important principle is then brought out: Israel had utterly failed, cast off Jehovah, rejected Messiah, was judged and cast off. But Jehovah had never given up His faithfulness and grace. Hence the Spirit turns back here to recognise the saints under the old covenant who had, through grace, been faithful (the remnant was always acknowledged; in one aspect we are it still, all children of Jerusalem the desolate, and waiting under discipline and government, only a Father’s). Moses and Aaron among His priests, Samuel among those who called on His name, the true prophets with no office, whatever their measure—these called on Jehovah, and He heard them. The relationship of faith was there. Jehovah answered them, but governed His people, taking vengeance of their inventions. So, at the end, whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved; but how surely are their inventions punished! These are the two hinges of all God’s ways—grace and

the ear of goodness to the cry of the meek and needy, and government as holy and true. So with us: only we have a Father's government (still God's) after salvation and adoption. Thus new-born Israel is identified with the faithful Israel of old. The child of Ruth and Boaz is a son born to Naomi. Mara is known no more. {Ps 100}

Psalm 100 is the summons to universal worship of Jehovah with gladness and praise. Jehovah is good. Verse 5 gives in principle the great truth so often laid down as Israel's hope— His mercy endureth for ever— which gave them too to say, How long? "All ye lands "is free as a translation; it is rather "all the land" (of Israel) or "all the earth." The claim of Israel to be His people and the sheep of His pasture seems to extend it to the earth. It is, however, to me very doubtful if it is not simply "all the land of Israel." This closes the remarkable series picturing the coming of Jehovah (Christ) to establish righteousness and judgment in the earth and His throne in Israel. {Ps 101}

Psalm 101 states the principles on which the King will govern His house and the land when He takes the kingdom in the name of Jehovah. {Ps 93}

Psalm 93 is the thesis, Jehovah reigns: the rage of men, the supreme authority of Jehovah, the holiness that becomes His house. Psalm 94 begins the series with the cry of the remnant when iniquity is still on the throne. Psalm 95 Israel (the remnant) summoned in the closing day. Psalm 96 the Gentiles called, Jehovah coming to judge the earth. Psalm 97 Jehovah is on His way. Psalm 98 He has executed judgment on the earth and remembered Israel. Psalm 99 He has taken His throne on earth in Zion. Psalm 100 Israel is there as His people;

but it is a call to worship Jehovah. Still a house of prayer for all the earth: for Israel, mercy, for they had sinned; truth, for God had promised, and, as said elsewhere, they had now met together. Psalm 101 when the earthly throne is taken up, it is mercy and judgment. {Ps 102}

Psalm 102 is one of the most, perhaps the most, remarkable of all the psalms, and presents Christ in a way divinely admirable. Verse 10 gives the occasion of the cry with which the psalm begins. Christ is fully looked at as man chosen out of the people and exalted to be Messiah, and now, instead of taking the kingdom, He is rejected and cast off.65 The time is the immediate approach of the cross, but was, we know, perhaps often, anticipated in thought, as John 12. He looks to Jehovah, who cast down Him whom He had called to the place of Messiah, but who now meets indignation and wrath. We are far, here, beyond looking at sufferings as coming from man. They did, and were felt, but men are not before Him in judgment; nor is it His expiatory work, though that which wrought it is here if we take it in its full effect on the cross—the indignation and wrath. It is Himself—His own being cut off as man. He is in trouble; His heart smitten like a pelican of the wilderness and an owl of the desert; His days as a shadow that declines, withered like grass. Such was Messiah, to whom all the promises were. Jehovah endured for ever. His promises were certain. He would arise, and have mercy on Zion, and the set time was come.

The whole scene, from Christ on earth to the remnant in the last days, is one. When Zion was restored, the heathen would fear the name of Jehovah. Jehovah will appear, and, when He builds up Zion, hear and answer the poor remnant, and thus declare His name in Zion,

and His praise in Jerusalem, when all nations would be gathered together there. But where was Messiah then? His strength had been weakened in His journey, His days shortened. He had cried to Him able to deliver, to save from death. Was Zion to be restored and no Messiah—He weakened and cut off? Then comes the wondrous and glorious answer: He was Himself the creator of the heavens and the earth. He was ever the same. His years would not fail when the created universe was rolled up like a garment. The children of His servants would continue and their seed be established before Him. The Christ, the despised and rejected Jesus, is Jehovah the Creator. The Jehovah we have heard of coming, is the Christ that came. The Ancient of days comes, and Christ is He, though Son of man. This contrast of the extreme humiliation and isolation of Christ, and His divine nature, is incomparably striking.

But it is Christ's personal sense of rejection, and that in connection with the remnant, not His bearing the judgment of sin in His soul for men. Look at the difference of the consequences in Psalm 22, though that perfect work was needed for "the nation," too, or their deliverance could not have taken place. {Ps 103-106}

Psalms 103-106 give us the results—and the covenant—in grace and in responsibility, of Israel's history. {Ps 103}

Psalm 103 is the voice of Messiah in Israel in praise according to God's dealing with them; Psalm 104, the same in creation; Psalm 105, God's ways in grace, from Abraham up to the giving of the land (now to be possessed in peace); Psalm 106, the acknowledgment of

Israel's ways from first to last, but owning Jehovah's mercy, and looking for it, for it endures for ever. Grace and favour are the one foundation on which hope can be built leading to obedience. This closes the book. {Ps 103, 104}

Psalms 103, 104 call for a few observations on the details. No doubt the Spirit of Christ leads these praises, for His praise shall be of Jehovah in the great congregation; but it is in the name of all Israel the psalm is spoken. They have forgiveness and mercy through the tender compassions and mercy of Jehovah. As for man, he is as grass; and the people had been as grass and withered (Isaiah 40). But the mercy of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, the obedient ones. Thus all is ascribed to goodness, yet faithfulness, from the very nature and name of Jehovah; but to the obedient ones, the godly remnant. Now Jehovah owned them with lovingkindness and tender mercies. All their sins were utterly removed from them. Jehovah's throne was prepared in the heavens—the only possible means of securing blessing. And now His kingdom ruled over all. It was not only His title, but established in fact. It is Israel's praise, consequent on the intervention of Jehovah, of which the previous psalms have spoken. Matthew 9:1-6 marks Jesus out as the Jehovah who now at the close healed all Israel (v. 3). The more intimately we know scripture, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. {Ps 104}

Psalm 104, which celebrates Jehovah as Creator, requires very few remarks. It will be noticed that it is occupied almost entirely with the earth. He is clothed with the glory of the heavens, which is described in most

beautiful language; but the earth is the subject. It is looked at as existing as the abode of men, as it is, but all depended on Jehovah's sovereign will. It is not the earth which is celebrated, but Jehovah, the Creator of it. It is not paradise, but this earth, as we see it in man's hand. But the psalm looks to sinners being consumed out of it, and the wicked being no more. This gives the psalm, evidently, a peculiar character, and connects it with the introduction of the first-begotten into the world. {Ps 105}

Psalm 105 offers thanksgiving to Jehovah, and calls on the seed of Abraham and Jacob to remember Him and glory in His name Verses 7, 8 give the occasion. He is Jehovah, their God. His judgments are in all the earth. And He has remembered His covenant for ever. It was to be permanent. It was commanded to a thousand generations. He had now remembered it. The psalm then recites how God had cared for the fathers, and judged Egypt for the deliverance of His people; and, in spite of bondage, there was not a feeble person among their tribes. "He remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant,66 and he brought forth his people with joy and his chosen with gladness, and gave them the lands of the heathen, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws." All their subsequent failure is not touched on. For now again (v. 8) He had remembered His covenant with Abraham and had delivered His people by judgments; for it is the accomplishment of promise. And the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The following psalm will tell us Israel's ways, but only so to bring out His mercy and never-failing goodness; for this is the theme. {Ps 106}

Psalm 106. “Hallelujah. Give thanks to Jehovah, for it is good (or He is good). His mercy endureth for ever.” This last we have often seen—the expression of this unfailing faithful mercy of Jehovah, which secures Israel. It then recites the character of those that are blessed; and personally looks, as in the mouth of a godly Israelite at the close, to be remembered with the favour Jehovah shews His people—desiring withal to see the good of Jehovah’s chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of His nation and glory with His inheritance. It is the expression of genuine piety, which then turns to confess the sinfulness of the people—not they have sinned, though that is owned, as shewing how Jehovah’s mercy has endured; but “we have sinned with our fathers.” It is the practical piety which proves, in its own confession, enduring mercy. It then goes through all the history of Israel with this view; and at the close shews that, in spite of all, Jehovah, remembering His covenant, thought on their affliction, and caused them to be pitied of the heathen, among whom they were. For this mercy he now looks, that they may triumph in the praise of Jehovah. This closes the fourth Book.

It will be remarked that, as we had seen in the third, the fourth also speaks of all Israel, and, though the humiliation of Christ is brought out and His eternal divinity contrasted with it in a remarkable way, yet it does not enter into Jewish circumstances particularly, nor the association of Christ with them, though His Spirit be in it all. In Psalm 104 Antichrist is presented to us, but it is for his destruction by the coming in of Messiah the King, as Jehovah the Judge.

## Psalms (Book 5)

In the fifth Book the people are looked at as brought back, and a general survey of God's ways taken, with a kind of divine commentary on it all, ending, as all His ways surely will, in praise. {Ps 107}

Psalm 107 is a kind of heading or introduction to all this. It celebrates the enduring of God's mercy for ever—that blessed formula of faith—in the unchanging goodness of Jehovah in all ages from the display of grace in David's time. It is restored Israel's part especially to chant it. The psalm celebrates the two parts of that deliverance in which the mercy has been shewn. They are redeemed from the hand of the enemy; they are gathered back from east, west, north, and south. This is the double character of the restoration of Israel—deliverance in the land, and the gathering from amongst the heathen on every side. But the proper theme of the psalm is the goodness of Jehovah. The various circumstances of deliverance of every kind (and that as an answer to the cry of distress of man who has brought himself low by his folly) are gone through, with the desire that men would praise Jehovah for His goodness, His wonderful works for the children of men. Israel is he in whom it may be fully learnt. It goes on to their chastisement in the land after their return, but adds the complete ruin of the pride of men as the result. He pours contempt on princes, and sets the poor on high from affliction, giving him families like a flock. The great result of God's government is then shewn: the righteous rejoice; all iniquity has its mouth stopped. Whoso is wise and will consider these ways of God will understand the

lovingkindness of Jehovah. It is to be remarked how entirely the goodness of God, here rehearsed, is shewn in temporal things. It does not for that cease to be His goodness and to have its sweetness, but it gives very clearly the character of the ground on which these teachings go. {Ps 108}

Psalm 108 is a psalm of a peculiar character, being composed of the ends of two others, the earlier and the latter parts of which, the cry of deep distress, and the answer to the cry in faith and hope, have been here put together. The former part of this, the end of Psalm 57, expresses the fixed assurance of the godly heart, who can now give praise and will praise among the peoples (ammin), united now in relation with Israel and in the various races of people. But all the results of God's favour are not yet produced, and the same faith, taking up Psalm 60, leaving out the cry of distress, celebrates the going out of Him whose mercy is above the heavens, to bring into subjection all those who are yet in possession of different parts of the territory of Israel.

It may be remarked here that the general character of this, as indeed of the previous book, as far as regards the position of Israel, is that of the people being restored by God to the land and delivered, but not free yet from attack, nor in possession of all the promised land; so that there is thanksgiving and praise, for God has interfered, and the state of Israel is changed; but there remains the need of help and securing against enemies yet undestroyed, and the full blessing of God in peace. A very few psalms at the end are of unmingled praise, and only praise called for. This state of deliverance, and yet full security waited for, is expressed

at the end of Psalm 107; as to final deliverance, the fact only is stated.

The connection of the two parts of this psalm is not without interest. The first part praises Jehovah for what He is as known to the heart in faith; but God in contrast with man. His mercy is great above the heavens and His truth reaches to the clouds, mercy being as ever first as the root of all. The second part begins with looking for Jehovah to rise up as God above the heavens and His glory above all the earth. He is to take His place and vindicate His name as God, that His beloved may be delivered. Verse 7 brings out the answer of God, taking up in detail all Israel's rights as His. Thus Jehovah has war with the nations possessing their land, but it is in Israel, and through God they will do valiantly. Hence here it is God, not Jehovah, because it is not the covenant relation, but what He, who is so, is in contrast with man whose help is vain. {Ps 109}

Psalm 109. It is certain that this psalm applies to Judas; but we shall see, in reading it, that we cannot apply all of it exclusively to him. And this is a help to us, to understand the way in which the psalms are written. There is the general condition of the saints in the latter day, and that even in a way which cannot apply to Christ personally at all, as Psalm 118:10, 11—passages of general application to the righteous, and others which may be, and some with prophetical purpose and exactitude, applied to Christ, and the circumstances in which He was. All this has to be before the mind, and divine teaching sought. I have said that the application of the psalm was not exclusively to Judas. The greater part of it is in the plural number. Up to verse 5 from the outset, the enmity of the wicked, of the band of Jews

hostile to Christ, and hostile to the godly remnant, is spoken of. Judas was a special instance of this wicked hatred against Christ. But I have no doubt of the general application of even this part, and that the judgments called for are general, and no prophetic revelation that Judas had wife and children or anything of the sort. Verse 20 makes indeed the generalisation of the application of these deprecations certain. So we can have no doubt that the blessed Lord stood in this sorrow, but I have none the less, that it is merely as taking in grace the place of the remnant, and that the psalm applies to the remnant, who go through similar sorrows. Verses 30, 31 shew it. Still it is most certain Christ entered fully into it—and this is of the deepest interest to us—nay, that His being in it gave it its true character.

Psalm no, though of the very highest interest, is in application so simple that it needs but brief comment. The despised and poor man, hated for his love, is David's Lord, and called to sit at the right hand of Jehovah. It is of deep interest to see how in Isaiah 6 Adonai is Jehovah of hosts in the fullest sense, and in this psalm, being David's Son, sits at the right hand of Jehovah, and strikes through kings in the day of His wrath. Compare Psalm 2. All the truth, in regard to the assembly of association with Him on high is passed over, and the psalm passes from the session of Christ at God's right hand to the sending the rod of His strength out of Zion. This shews how entirely all is Jewish in these psalms. Note, further, it is the answer to His rejection on earth. It is not His coming from heaven to destroy Antichrist. What is in view is His having already taken possession of Zion, and the rod of His strength goes out thence. This answers to the whole position of this book, where we

have seen the Jews restored, but the dominion of Israel or of Christ in Zion not yet made good. But the people are now willing (Amminadib) in the day of His power (see Song of Songs 6:12). Alas! how different in the day of His humiliation! That was depicted in Psalm 109. But this is the morning of a new day, in which we have not fathers, but the children of grace. Then we have the certain. oath of Jehovah for Christ sitting thus a priest on His throne on earth. This is promise and prophecy. The day too of His wrath is looked forward to. Adonai, who is at Jehovah's right hand, has a coming day of wrath—one already noticed, when His enemies are made His footstool. While sitting at the right hand of Jehovah, it is not so. It is then the time of mercy, the accepted time. Christ has been heard and exalted, and His work amongst men is the result of His atonement in grace. Now the time of wrath is come, in which the judgment written will be executed. I suppose in verse 6 it is "the head over a great country" —the head of power in the earth, not Antichrist, nor even the beast. These are destroyed on His coming from heaven. Self-exalting man is brought low. Christ, who in humble dependence on His Father took the refreshment given Him according to God's will on the way, shall have His head high exalted in the earth. These psalms give the groundwork of the whole scene. What now follows is a review of the circumstances, and indeed from of old, and such as are to come, with reflections (so to speak) on them, and praise as to the result. {Ps 111-113}

Psalms 111-113 go together as a hallelujah in reference to Jehovah's ways with Israel in their deliverance. First, Psalm in, the works of Jehovah, glorious in themselves, He has made to be remembered by His mighty

intervention in righteousness; yet shewing Him full of compassion, mindful of His covenant also. He has shewn His people the power of His works, to give them the heritage of the heathen: moreover, His works last. The occasion of the praise, a knowledge of His name, is that He has sent redemption to His people. Jehovah being such, the fear of Him is the beginning of wisdom. This gives good understanding in our walk. Faith knows this. The Lord's appearing in judgment will indeed prove it to the world. Psalm 112 on the other hand, gives the character of those who fear Jehovah, and the blessing that comes upon such when the government of God is made good. This shews how impossible it is to apply these psalms to the position of the saints now, though the exercise of faith and piety may be often in the spring of it the same. Still then, it is the deliverance of Israel which brings out Jehovah's name (v. 9, 10). {Ps 113}

Psalm 113 is more general and full universal praise, but on the same occasion. It is from this time forth for evermore. It is now wide spread over all the earth; but He is Israel's God who dwells on high, yet looks down so low, but to exalt those He loves, to set them with the princes of His people, and fill the hopeless with joy in their habitation. {Ps 114}

Psalm 114 is of the highest style of poetry, but is important to us as directly connecting the ancient deliverance of Israel out of Egypt with the present deliverance of the people, and seeing the same Jehovah in both calling the earth to tremble at the presence of Jehovah. It was right in those days. At Jacob's deliverance then, the sea fled and Jordan was driven back. What was this? Was it affright before the presence of man? The earth was now to tremble before Him who

appeared for the deliverance of His people then, and for their sakes turned the sea into dry land, and the flint stone into a springing well. {Ps 115}

Psalm 115 gives the true and full ground of this deliverance, as seen in the heart of faith. It is not that they, but that Jehovah may be praised, specially in His mercy, and then His faithfulness to promise. The godly one, that is, the Spirit, then refers to that cry which was the bitter grief spoken of in Joel, and referred to in Psalms 42, 43. Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God? So in the same spirit Moses— "the Egyptians shall hear of it, and what wilt thou do to thy great name?" What a blessed boldness of faith! This character of sorrow shews, how it was on the cross and in those last sorrows that Christ came into this character of sorrow. For the Jews practically said this to Him then, but never could have done so before. The believing Israelite's answer is, Our God is in heaven.

He then contrasts Him with idols. And Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that fear Jehovah, are called to trust Him. This last would open the door to all Gentiles who sought Jacob's face. It then recites, what we have seen to be the ground these psalms go on, that He had been mindful of, and would bless them; yea, increase them more and more, them and their children. They were the blessed of Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth. Heaven was His, the earth had He given to men. This marks how distinctly the earthly blessing is the scene before us, for He has not given us the earth, but the cross in it; and heaven, and what is there, as our own things. We seek the things which are above, not the things which are on the earth. So, in even almost a stronger manner, the dead do not praise Jehovah; but we

(says the Spirit in them) will praise from this, the time of their final deliverance, for evermore. We say “to depart and to be with Christ is far better.” {Ps 116}

Psalm 116 celebrates this deliverance when they were at the very point of death. Jehovah had heard them, and they would walk before the Lord in the land of the living. In this view it is a continual recital of the gracious mercy of Jehovah: they were brought low and He helped them. It drew out their love to Him. Such was Jehovah’s character. He preserves the simple. The soul so sorely tried could return to its rest. The death of His saints was precious in His sight; and now, before all His people, in the courts of Jehovah’s house, in the midst of Jerusalem, he would pay the vows made in his distress when he called on Jehovah. He would offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The quotation of the apostle shews how these psalms can be used as containing holy principles of life for every saint. In spite of suffering and trial, trust in Jehovah opened the mouth of the believer. The passage does not apply to Paul, nor did he say in his haste that all men were liars, though there be something like it in “all seek their own;” but the general and important principle the apostle can adopt. The word, translated “haste,” is not haste in the sense of moral defect, hastiness, but in distress—rather sudden distress or alarm from the pressure of circumstances, and hence hasting away. {Ps 117}

Psalm 117 is the calling the other nations and peoples to come and praise Jehovah, who will be now King over all the earth. They join and are brought happily into this relationship, Jehovah being made known to them by His ways with Israel. Merciful kindness is here, as ever, first;

and truth enduring for ever, which no failure has made to fail. This, as the last, is a hallelujah. {Ps 118}

Psalm 118 is also, though not formally so, rendering praise and thanksgiving as promised, connected with, or rather founded on, the known formula—His mercy endureth for ever. The same that in Psalm 115 were called to trust in Jehovah are now called to praise Him. From verse 5 the Holy Spirit speaks in the person of delivered Israel, and speaks of this faithfulness of Jehovah, and now, He being on their side, man need not be feared; Jehovah is better than man, Jehovah better than princes. Verses 10-18 unfold the circumstances and dealings through which Israel has passed. All nations had compassed them; in Jehovah's name he would destroy them. They are quenched as fire. Verse 13, the enemy had thrust sore at them that they might fall; Jehovah helped them. The result in rejoicing and joy is chanted in verses 14-17. Another aspect of their trial is given in verse 18. It was withal Jehovah's chastening, and He had chastened them sore, but not given them over to death, which was the power of the enemy for them. Thus we have the full character of trial, as we have seen it even in Job: instruments, men, even all nations; next, the enemy by them, and acting on the spirit, thrusting sore at the soul; but behind it, and before it too, is God chastening, but not giving over. This is full of instruction for us in many circumstances we pass through, where all these elements are found in what we are passing through.

Now the gates of righteousness are open before Israel. The turning to this at once, as the result of trial, is beautiful: he will go in and praise Jehovah. It is withal the gate of Jehovah, and the righteous enter into it.

Israel there will praise, for Jehovah has heard him and become his salvation; but further and deeper truth comes out here. There is no restoration of Israel without Messiah, and Israel now owns Him once despised. “The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is Jehovah’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.” We see, in the expression “our eyes,” who is the real speaker, and, though the voice had been one, who they are that now take part in the psalm of praise. This is the day Jehovah has made; it is His day, the blessing of His people in connection with Messiah, and His people rejoice in it. And now they cry, Hosanna to the Son of David, the Jehovah of Israel; and say, Blessed be he that comes in His name. This gives us the witness from the Lord’s own teaching, who it is that speaks in the psalms, and to what time it applies; for the house was left desolate, and they were not to see Him again till they said, Blessed be he that cometh. So that it is Israel, that is, the remnant, who speak, and in the day of their repentance, under grace, when they are to see Messiah again. They bless Him that comes out of the house of Jehovah. Jehovah is the God of strength, He has given Israel light; and now worship and sacrifice are offered to Him that has delivered and blessed. Now they say, Thou art my God, and praise and exalt Him.

The psalm closes with the well-known verse of Israel’s thankful praise: “Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever,” with which it had commenced. Thus the spiritual apprehension of God’s dealings, the coming to worship Jehovah in righteousness, and the owning the despised and rejected Messiah, are all unfolded in connection with the deliverance and blessing of Israel, and the full

manifestation of Jehovah's nature and character. Various verses of this psalm are quoted at the close of the Saviour's trials; no psalm indeed so often, as connecting Him with the sorrows of, and promises to, Israel. {Ps 119}

Psalm 119 is in general the law written in the heart. This gives it an important place in the series of psalms. It is found distinctly connected too with Israel's sorrows in the last days and their previous departure from God. The different divisions of the psalm shew, I think, each a different phase of the exercises of heart connected with the law being written on it, though the general principle runs of course through it. I will very briefly notice the main bearing of each.

The first part presents to us naturally the great general principle. It is the third general "Blessed is the man"—the return of the soul in trial and distress to the great truth of Psalm 1, where the effect is seen under the immediate government of God. Psalm 32 gives the blessedness of forgiveness; this, of the walk with God on the return of the wanderer in spite of all difficulties and contempt. We have indeed another special blessing at the end of the first book, where Christ is so fully brought in. In the last psalm of that book he is pronounced blessed who understands His position, be it in Himself or in those who walk in His footsteps; for the first psalm supposed blessedness under the government of God, making good all His will towards the just, and the reverse seemed to be true. In fact, as we know, to man's eye this wholly failed (bringing in a heavenly and divine righteousness and redemption). Hence true blessedness was shewn in discerning, in understanding, the position in which that true blessed One was as rejected by men—

that true poor man—taking Himself practically the place He describes as blessed, as we have seen in the sermon on the mount, while the great truth of the law in the heart is laid down. Yet the circumstances also come out in this first part—“forsake me not utterly.”

Secondly the word associates with God. Not only is one blessed who keeps it, but it is cleansing: the desire of the heart is positively fixed on it (see the connection of Jehovah and His word, v. 10, 11).

In the third part we find very distinctly the leaning on divine mercy in trial, connected with the law in the heart. The godly Israelite looks to Jehovah’s bountiful dealing, but with a view to hearty obedience (v. 17). Verse 19 shews his state; verse 21, as we have seen in all this book, Jehovah’s intervention, already known in deliverance, though not in complete blessing; verses 22, 23, the contempt the poor remnant undergo. Jehovah’s law had been his delight and comfort under it.

In the fourth part the trial is more inward. His soul is cleaving to the dust, but he looks to divine relief according to the word. His desire looks to the effect of that living water from God. He has been open before God—has declared his own ways: so it ever is. He desires all way of evil to be removed by God from him. He has held fast by the word— looks that God should not put him to shame. But he is looking for enlargement of heart, that he may run freely in God’s ways. Such is the sure effect when under the discipline of God. A soul who has found delight in His will and holiness is yet looking to run in liberty. Though in the heart, the word here referred to is more of an outwardly expressed will, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, a beautiful moral expression of

the remnant. With the Christian it will be more absolute and inward, more holiness than testimonies (though it may begin by them perhaps), whether in his first divine calling or under discipline. It is for him walking in the light as God is in the light—not the “ordinances and commandments of Jehovah.” Yet it is in principle essentially the same. To apply this psalm directly is to lower the divine standard of thought for the saint now. But the nature of the moral exercise may be most instructively used; just as subjection and confidence in trial is always right, though the forms of it in the Jew are wholly below the Christian’s (compare with this Philippians, where we have christian experience).

The fifth part looks for divine guidance and teaching in the ways and law of God; the sixth, for manifest mercies in that path, that he may have courage before adversaries and hold fast the law of God. In the seventh, having been quickened by the word, he reckons on it, for God had caused him to trust it as His; so that now he leans on all its assurances. In troubles, when there was no outward cheering of nature, it sustained his heart. This brings him to the eighth. Jehovah was thus his portion. He had sought Him, judged himself, turned his feet to Jehovah’s testimonies. He reckoned on Him, and would thank Him in the secret watches of the night, when his heart was left to itself. He was the companion of those that feared Jehovah. This brightens up his thoughts, and he sees His power in mercy around. This is a beautiful picture of the working of the heart.

The ninth brings out the circumstances of the psalm. In the comfort of the last part he can look with God’s eye and mind at these circumstances. These are much before our view (that is, feelings about them) in this part

of the psalm. Jehovah has already dealt well with him according to His word, and he looks for divine teaching to understand the mind of God well. He had been under discipline: but before this he had gone astray, but now had got into the spirit and path of obedience. He sees the proud lying against him, and their heart fat as grease (no link in state or obedience with Jehovah); and sees how good it was to have been afflicted, that he might learn Jehovah's statutes. Nothing marks more the setting right of the soul than this—the turning to Jehovah's will—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" — and counting all good that leads to this, and gives God's will as authority, and morally its place in the heart.

The tenth part has two main thoughts. Jehovah is his Creator—has formed him. He looks to Him to guide His own poor creature as a faithful Creator. Those that fear Jehovah will be glad when they see Him, because they hope in His word. Secondly, he knows that thus in very faithfulness He has caused him to be afflicted, and now looks for mercies to come unto him, and the proud to be ashamed, and that those that fear Jehovah may turn to him. All this is linked with soundness in Jehovah's statutes.

In the eleventh the cry becomes more urgent. He is under the pressure of trial, his soul fainting for deliverance—looking for Jehovah to execute judgment, for he is walking in Jehovah's precepts. And the proud persecute him wrongfully—they heed not Jehovah nor His law.

But, twelfth, creation is a witness to the abiding faithfulness of God; His word is settled in heaven, where nothing can reach or shake it. But for Jehovah's law,

which sustained his heart, he had perished in the pressure of affliction. In truth, how precious to have the word in such a world! We have more than commandments. But we can say, I have seen an end of all perfection. Another and more confident thought grows up out of all this exercise—"I am thine."

In the thirteenth he expresses his own internal delight in Jehovah's law, and its effect in spiritual intelligence.

In the fourteenth it guides his path. Afflicted and oppressed, he looks for comfort to Him whose judgments he has taken as his path in spite of enemies and their snares.

The fifteenth gives the horror of vain thoughts, and looking to God as his hiding-place, with his rejection of evildoers. He looks to Jehovah to uphold him, that he may not be ashamed in his hope; and looks with solemn trembling on the sure judgment of the wicked.

In the sixteenth he presses more earnestly the interference of Jehovah in deliverance. The way in which the wicked have made void Jehovah's law only makes him cling the closer to it. It was time for Jehovah to work.

The following parts all bring out the effects of his strong attachment to Jehovah's law and testimonies, its value in every aspect for his heart; the trial he was in still in this path of righteousness; and how he would walk in Jehovah's ways when set free; his grief at transgressors. He looks for teaching, quickening, keeping; and recalls the everlasting character of God's testimonies; so that he held fast, though oppressed by the wicked.

The last part is more general as a closing one, though in the same spirit. It sums up, so to speak, the whole. It desires that the cry of the oppressed delighter in the law may come up before Jehovah; asks for understanding according to His word —for deliverance according to it; and assures praise when taught His statutes. His tongue will speak of His word. He has the sense of their righteousness—looks for the hand of Jehovah to help, because he has chosen His precepts. Jehovah's salvation has been longed for (man not trusted in). Jehovah's law has been his delight, not his own will, nor the prosperous man's ways. He looks for life, that he may praise, and that Jehovah's judgment may help him; for the power of death and evil was before him. He owns finally his having gone astray, and looks for Jehovah as the Shepherd of Israel to seek him, for he has not forgotten His commandments. Such is the moral state of Israel in the last days when (in their land, I apprehend) the law is written in their heart, but full deliverance and final blessing are not come. The psalm is, in fact, the moral development of the hearts of those that fear God in the circumstances prophetically brought out in Psalm 118. {Ps 120-134}

We now come, Psalms 120-134, to the songs of degrees, which depict, I doubt not, the outward circumstances of the same period, when Israel is in the land, but the power of Gog not yet destroyed. The first of this series begins with the statement of the cry sent up by the godly in his distress to Jehovah who heard. The special charge here is deceit and falsehood. Judgment should come on it. But it is against the godly himself, not the violence and oppression done to Jerusalem, or the apostate oppression of the people. His woe is to dwell in

Mesech, and among the tents of Kedar. Wrong is in their hearts; and, when the godly spoke of peace, they prepared for battle. It does not seem to me to be the oppression of Antichrist, or the beast at Jerusalem, but to apply to those who in the land found themselves where the last hostile power which had pretended to favour them,67 and had led many to apostatise for quietness and prosperity, now shewed himself as only a deceitful oppressor. {Ps 121}

In Psalm 121 Jehovah is assuredly declared to be his protection. He who never slumbers nor sleeps—He will not suffer his foot to be moved. The general intention is plain. I am not quite sure what is the force of verse 1, unless to identify Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, with the hill of Zion,68 and the city of the great King. However this may be, Jehovah (as the great security) is the subject of the psalm. This is very distinct, and His name reiterated for the purpose. He is referred to in the double character, Creator of heaven and earth, and the Keeper of Israel, especially of the godly: Jehovah would preserve him in all circumstances and for ever.

Psalm 122 celebrates Jerusalem. The saint is glad to go there. The tribes go there; the thrones of judgment, of the house of David, are there. His brethren and companions, and the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel, their God, made his heart cling to it. It is a restoring of the associations with Jerusalem, recalling the old and establishing the new ones.

The series then returns (Psalm 123) to their sorrows and resource. Blessing is not fully come; but Jehovah is looked to in the heavens, but as the God of Israel; the

remnant say “our God “now. But they are filled yet with the contempt of those that are at ease and of the proud.

The power of the enemy had been just now (Psalm 124) fully displayed against them—the godly in the land who trusted in Jehovah. But they had escaped, but only by Jehovah being on their side, or they had been utterly swallowed up, by the last power of the enemy, I apprehend, when the apostate beast and Antichrist were gone from the scene. {Ps 125}

Psalm 125. The position of those who trust in Jehovah is celebrated, in virtue of this intervention of Jehovah, who would now protect them for ever, and they abide for ever. Peace would be on Israel. Those that turned to their crooked ways— Jehovah would lead them forth with the open evildoers in judgment. The rod of wickedness would not rest upon the lot of the righteous. There would be an exclusion of the rod of wickedness (what represented the wicked as a tribe), separation from its mischief, that the righteous might not go astray. All this, I apprehend, refers to the last inroad of the final power of Gog, or the last condition of the Assyrian, perhaps to Daniel 8 (only that that gives its whole character, not merely its final one); also to the final king of the north, who comes in after the wilful king in Daniel 11. {Ps 126}

Psalm 126. The heart of the godly now finds its centre in Zion, when deliverance has been learnt; for so it will be (compare Isaiah 29:4, 7). How low she was brought, according to Psalm 124! (Isaiah 29:4. Compare Isaiah 17:12-14, and other passages). It was a dream—so full, so unlooked-for, the joy. The very heathen now owned Jehovah’s hand. But the godly look for the full blessing,

and the captivity to be turned again in the fulness of possessed blessing. Still God had manifested Himself; and to the faithful, who had taken up His testimony in sorrow, and when it was shame and reproach, it was now a harvest of joy. So it ever is; for full joy only comes through sorrow: for the testimony of God is in a world of evil.

These full blessings thus sought, the building the house, the keeping the city, the desired abundance of children, are all (Psalm 127) Jehovah's doing and gift, or man labours and watches in vain. The blessing is distinctly Jewish.

A numerous progeny are distinctly God's gift: happy the man that has his quiver full of them (Psalm 128). The blessings spoken of are declared to be the portion of whoever fears Jehovah. It is present temporal blessing—blessings out of Zion; and, the desire of the godly's heart, Jerusalem in prosperity all their days. Although the direct object be the remnant, the godly Gentile, so fearing Jehovah, owning Israel's God, would, as a principle, enjoy the blessing, and rejoice with His people. {Ps 129}

Psalm 129 recurs now with joy to the sorrows and trials through which the children of Zion have gone. But Jehovah is righteous, and has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. The haters of Zion (for Zion is here always the central thought) are withered, without resource, and without being desired. {Ps 130}

Psalm 130 takes up another subject, of the place of which we have found clear traces before—the sins of Israel as between the people and God. It is not, however, now merely legal distress. Confidence in Jehovah

characterises it, though accompanied by depth of distress and humiliation. This is the effect of the connection of the sense of sin and of mercy in the soul. Mere legal distress is more selfish in its terror, though admirable for destroying confidence in self and throwing on mercy; conviction with the sense of mercy is more the sense of wronging the God of goodness. It is a deeper work after all. Here there is forgiveness with Jehovah that He might be feared, and the soul waits on Jehovah, though it has cried out of the depths. There is desire, grace being looked to, as well as waiting for Jehovah, verse 6. The groundwork is stated in verse 7, while verse 8 shews confidence in the full results. Verse 4 is the upright acknowledgment of where the need came from, grace meeting that need; verse 7, that which can be reckoned on in Jehovah; verse 8, the full counting on it for Israel, that is, redemption, not from troubles, but from iniquities. {Ps 131}

Psalm 131 briefly states the humble absence of all self-confidence, that so he has walked. Israel is now to trust in Jehovah and for ever.

Psalm 132 is, in some respects, a very interesting psalm. It is the restoration of the ark of the covenant to its resting-place, and the promises of Jehovah, in answer to the supplication of His servant. It is founded on David’s bringing the ark up to Zion. This, as we have seen in the historical books, has a very important place. It was grace acting by power when Israel had so completely failed that the bond of the people with God, so far as it was founded on the people’s responsibility, was wholly broken, and the ark gone into captivity, and Ichabod written on all.69 But now, in a fuller and more lasting sense, a habitation was found for the mighty God of

Jacob, where the godly would worship low before His footstool. The fruit of David's body, the Messiah of Jehovah, was to sit on His throne, and that for evermore. Jehovah was entering into His rest— He and the ark of His strength. Before (Num. 10:35, 36), if He arose it was to scatter His enemies, and then He returned to the many thousands of Israel. But now, and this is what characterises the psalm, the enemies were scattered, and Jehovah arose to take His rest in Israel. The sovereign election of God is seen, verse 13; and, then, it will be remarked, that the promise, in answer to the supplication, goes each time beyond the request (compare verses 14, 15, 8; 16, 9; 17, 18, 10). This is of the highest interest as shewing the grace of the Lord, and how His love surpasses all the hopes of His people, His interest in them. {Ps 133}

Psalm 133. The people are now dwelling together in unity. It is as the anointing of Aaron, which, poured on the head, gave the odours of divine favour on all, as the abundant dew of the lofty hills, but which brought, however high its source, its refreshing power where God had ordained blessing and life for evermore.70 I see no need to seek for any mountain of a like name near Hermon, but the contrary.

Psalm 134 closes the series by calling on the servants of Jehovah to bless Him. Night and day should furnish praise to Him, and in the holy place holy hands be lifted up to bless. Jehovah was there, His servants there to praise Him. Jehovah, who made heaven and earth, blessed now (not simply from heaven, but) out of Zion. It is the place of blessing Jehovah, and Jehovah blessing. I should be disposed to count the last verse rather the voice of Christ as the Son of David, something in the

character of Melchisedec, who said, Blessed be the most high God, and blessed be Abraham of the most high God, only specially in connection with Jehovah (as Zech. 6:13) blessing the godly remnant out of Zion. The last verse is a kind of answer to the call of the preceding ones; the Spirit of Christ in the remnant calls on Jehovah's servants to bless Him, and they from Him bless the godly one. {Ps 135, 136}

Psalms 135 and 136 celebrate Jehovah, who has delivered Israel and now dwells in Jerusalem, and give thanks to Him whose mercy has endured for ever—the Creator of all things in goodness who first delivered them, and remembered them to redeem them when brought low. {Ps 135}

Psalm 135 is a very characteristic Psalm, giving a remarkable key to the interpretation of the book, and linking it with the early statements of Jehovah as to His relationship to Israel, so as to bind together their history in one whole. The subject is Hallelujah—praise the name of Jehovah. He is good: it is pleasant to do it; for He has chosen Jacob and Israel for His peculiar treasure. He is then (v. 6) celebrated as the Almighty God, doing what He pleased, daily disposing of creation; then as He who executed judgment on the oppressors of Israel, and freed them, and drove out the heathen and gave them their land. Now comes His name in connection with Israel and in contrast with idols; and the two passages, in one of which He first took up Israel for ever under the name of Jehovah, and, in the other, prophetically announced their deliverance when they should have wholly and utterly failed, are cited from Exodus 3:15, Deuteronomy 32:36. The first takes the name of the Lord God of their fathers, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

when He sends Moses to deliver them, and declares this is His name for ever, His memorial to all generations, and then promises deliverance and bringing into the land; then He takes the name of Jehovah. The second is in the prophetic song of Moses, when he has drawn out to them their picture as apostate, their spot not the spot of God's children, when they forsook God who made them, and provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, and Jehovah hid His face from them, and, but for the fear of man's pride, had made the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Then, when they should be helpless and hopeless in themselves, Jehovah would judge His people, and repent Himself concerning His servants, execute judgments on the heathen, and then make them rejoice with His people. So that these two verses give the first deliverance and purpose of God, and the judgment and ways of God in the last days, to which the psalms have brought us. Thus they give a clear key to the application of the psalms themselves. Then we have (v. 15-18) the present judgment of the idols spoken of in Deuteronomy 32, and to which they had fallen away. The psalm closes with the summons to those already generally specified—the divers parts of Israel and all that fear Jehovah—to bless Jehovah; the house of Israel, of Aaron, of Levi, and all that fear Jehovah; and this now out of Zion, even Jehovah, of whom now they could say that He dwelt in Jerusalem. {Ps 136}

Psalm 136 may be considered as the answer to this summons. It is characterised by the formulary, as often noticed, the expression of Jehovah's unchanging goodness to Israel in spite of all: "His mercy endureth for ever." It celebrates Him as Creator, God of gods, the Deliverer of Israel, who had led them through the

wilderness, as Him who by power slaying mighty kings had given them the inheritance of the land; and who, finally, remembering them in their low estate, had redeemed them from it, and now supplied every living thing with food, the God of heaven. This, in a certain sense, closes the historical psalms.

We have then a kind of supplementary series:—first, of their characteristic sorrows and Jehovah's ways in the latter days, and then of millennial praises. These sorrows are from Psalm 137 to Psalm 144—the latter, however, being the expectation of deliverance and blessing. Psalm 139 also has a peculiar character, as will be at once seen. {Ps 137}

Psalm 137 refers, and alone does—to give the full history of Israel's sorrows—to Babylon, which has only a mystic fulfilment in the latter days, but has its importance, because at that time was the closing of the period of the divine presence in Jerusalem, and the setting up of the power of the Gentiles. But faith could not content itself in a strange land nor sing the Lord's songs there; for they were not a heavenly people—hence they turn to Jerusalem, which faith never forgets. Babylon is to be destroyed and her judgment is desired; Edom's enmity not forgotten. The object of the psalm is to bring out their attachment to Zion in their captivity; there was no separation of heart from it in the strange land. {Ps 138}

Psalm 138 gives the ground of faith—God's word; and now the godly turns to own it in worship; and when that word reaches the kings of the earth, they shall turn and praise Jehovah and sing in His ways. Nor is His truth all. Though so high, He has respect to the lowly; He revives,

protects, and perfects all that concerns the believing righteous. “His mercy endureth for ever.” {Ps 139}

Psalm 139 shews the complete exercise of heart that belongs to God’s ways. Though the faithfulness of God perfects all His purposed blessing, not a thought escapes God. There is, morally speaking, no staying in His presence; but there is no getting out of His presence, nor where He sees not, though conscience might be glad to flee. But this brings in another aspect. He knows all, because also He has formed all. This connects us with the taking perfect notice of us in goodness. He cares for us, watches over every member that is formed, as He knows our every thought; if He does, He has His own too, and these are precious to us. This is just the change and working of faith. It begins necessarily by conscience under God’s eye; for it brings us into His presence, and then gets at God’s thoughts, who has formed us for Himself, and then unfolded boundless spheres of His own blessing and ways. God watches over him in the silence of sleep: waking, therefore, he finds himself with God.

But, further, this connection with God is a perfect breaking with the wicked: God will slay them. And he calls on them to depart from him. Therefore he looks at the wicked with horror, because of what they are to God —for himself, that he may be searched throughout, that no wickedness may remain in him. This psalm goes far in the relationship of man’s spirit with God, though it looks to the external judgment of the wicked and uses language which becomes verified in the assembly figuratively, and which is so also in the resurrection. The great direct point in it is the full searching out of man’s heart, as it will be then, as it must be ever. But this

searching, when we are under our own responsibility, is, Whither shall I flee from Him? But when we are God's workmanship (that is, when grace and power have come in), God's thoughts become precious to us, and we can ask to be searched, known, and tried—the more the better, that, emptied of self, we may be able to enjoy God. Then also we look for leading. The will is broken, as the thoughts are judged, and our desire is to be led of God. We see at the same time the character of the psalm connects it with the latter day. "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked." It looks for judgment, and has hatred and horror of the haters of God.

The five following psalms go over ground which we have trodden over in detail: only they apply to a restored Israel, still in conflict, and not fully blessed. {Ps 140}

Psalm 140 looks for deliverance from the evil and violent man. Israel is in connection with Jehovah, but compassed about by the proud. {Ps 141}

Psalm 141. Having learnt the government of Jehovah, the godly looks for his words and thoughts to be kept of Jehovah, that Jehovah may bless him. Smiting he will accept as discipline. He looks for acceptance for his prayers. And even in the judgment coming upon the proud (Israel, I apprehend), he looks to it as breaking them down so as to hear His word. It is such a psalm as David might have penned when pursued by Saul. He looks for judgment on the wicked, but that calamities may arrest some. {Ps 142}

Psalm 142 looks to Jehovah alone as a refuge. {Ps 143}

Psalm 143 specially for mercy and goodness, that in the midst of the persecution of the enemy, and the pressure on the godly, Jehovah would not enter into judgment

with him, but shew His lovingkindness. As the servant of Jehovah, he begs to be taught and guided. Thus these psalms are all of one in deep distress; but they look, in relationship with Jehovah (not cast out, and knowing Him only as God), for the cutting off of the enemies. {Ps 144}

Psalm 144 blesses Jehovah as the source of strength. Its plea for the destruction of the enemies is, What is man? Why should Jehovah make account71 of such a worm, and delay bringing in blessing by thus lingering in judgment? Deliverance is thus looked for, for the full true final blessing of Israel. Happy the people in such a case: happy the people who have Jehovah for their God! Directly, the psalm applies to David himself, who is named in it, and owns God, as subduing his (David's) people under him, as the source of royal power. I do not see that it brings in any personally in the latter day. Did it so, it would be "the prince"; for there will be a human house of David on the earth. But it is the bringing in of the people into that state of subjection under Christ, when they will be willing in the day of His power, when in the day of Jezreel they will appoint themselves one head, when the day will be great, when Jehovah will utterly scatter the power of the enemies of Israel, give them a new song, and bless them. Messiah will surely be their head; but it is prophetically spoken of by David in person. The true Beloved will be their sure head. {Ps 145}

Psalm 145 goes on in thought into the millennium, after the distress is over, and the full deliverance can be celebrated. It is Christ in spirit—perhaps even in person—as in the midst of Israel, leading the praises of Jehovah, and awakening them amongst men. Hence,

though only expressing purpose, it is a dialogue in its character. First, he expresses his own purpose of praising Jehovah, and for ever and ever. One generation should do it to another. “I will speak.” One sees his heart is full of praise, and he speaks of it (v. 5). “And men shall speak of the might of Jehovah’s terrible acts. And I will declare thy greatness. They shall speak of the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.” Then he breaks off most beautifully to speak of the goodness: for still out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. All Jehovah’s works shall praise Him. The saints bless Him. Their subject shall be the glory of Jehovah’s kingdom and His power, to make known to the mass of mankind His acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom, and that an everlasting one. Then in verses 14-20 His character is spoken of. Verse 21 returns to the purpose of heart of the leader of praise. It is as man Christ speaks here—“my God.” Jehovah is looked at as King. In general, the outward acts and greatness are more in the mouth of the rest—what Jehovah is in the leader’s, though he does celebrate His wondrous works. Still the greatness and excellency and majesty of Jehovah are that which we see his heart full of, as verses 3, 5, 8-10; and so, in general, His gracious ways and character (v. 14-19). It is to be remarked that there is the leader who speaks in the psalm, the saints (the Jewish remnant), and the world in general, the sons of Adam. It is of the highest interest in this way; because we have Messiah fulfilling the word, “My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.” And how full in heart He is of His praises! Jehovah’s kingdom is set up; the Messiah in the midst of Israel first, then the preserved saints, and then, through their

leading, all the world join in His praises, for His greatness, goodness, and wonderful works. {Ps 146}

Psalm 146 introduces the full final praises: the first, the outpouring of the heart in praise to Him as the God of Jacob, celebrating what He is, and the comfort of trusting Him, the Creator, the Helper of the oppressed, the Comforter of the lowly, the Lover of the righteous, who turns the way of the wicked upside down. He shall reign for ever, even Zion's God to all generations. The character of this praise, after what we have gone through, is most simple. {Ps 147}

In Psalm 147 the saints take their place now in Jerusalem and Zion to say what He is. He is their God; He builds up Jerusalem and gathers together the outcasts of Israel, healing the broken in heart and binding up their wounds. In verses 4, 5 His greatness is celebrated and His goodness and judgment; in verses 7-9, His goodness in blessing the earth; in verses 10, 11, His pleasure, not in animal strength, but in them that fear Him. In verse 12, the song of praise returns to celebrate His ways towards Jerusalem again; in verses 15-18, His dealings with the seasons in power; in verses 19, 20, His shewing His word and judgments to Jacob as He had not done to any nation. They might have seen the creative and providential power of Jacob's God, but His mind and laws were His people's. {Ps 148}

Psalm 148 calls first on heaven, and all in it, to take their part in the great Hallelujah, and praise Jehovah who had created and sustains them in their place; and then on the earth, with all in it, to join in praising Him whose name alone is excellent, and His glory above the earth and heaven, but who exalts the horn of His people,

the praise of His saints (the godly ones we have seen throughout, but who now are fully Israel), a people near to Him. The great Creator whom heaven and earth must praise is the God of Israel, and Israel His people. {Ps 149}

Psalm 149 calls upon Israel to praise. The creation and Israel we have seen all through to be co-ordinate (the new creation and the assembly), and to form the sphere of the Psalms. Still it is now in the congregation of the saints. Israel's relationship is double: Jehovah has formed him for His praise; He is King in Zion. The reasons of praise are then given. Jehovah takes pleasure in His people; but we learn who have this place. He beautifies the meek with salvation. Then he can say, Let the saints be joyful in glory; but if the high praises of God are in their mouths, the sword of earthly judgment and vengeance is in their hands to execute it on the nations and peoples, to bind the mighty ones who had once oppressed them. It was the judgment written. Such honour have all His saints. The persons here in view are thus evident, as is their position: the meek in Israel now delivered, and the Lord Jesus, King in Zion, execute judgment on those who had oppressed them. Such is indeed, as said, the judgment written, and confirms the view I have taken of the last two books: only now it is complete in its statements. The millennium itself is not described. The Psalms are the introduction to it, and by their connection of Christ, as seen in the Gospels, and the remnant of Israel, with the last days, throw the greatest light on the Gospels themselves. {Ps 150}

Psalm 150 is a general closing summons to praise Jehovah— only, remark, it is now freely in His sanctuary, as well as in the firmament of His power—in His

sanctuary, with all the various instruments of the temple —praise for His mighty acts, praise for His own excellent greatness: everything that has breath is called to praise Him. It is a loud and chorus-like termination, full of power and energy, suited to the Jewish state and temple service.

Here we close this most interesting and instructive study, as to which I could hope only to give the outline of general principles, which might enable the reader to use the book; not its varied and beautiful contents in detail— this would have required volumes, both on the prophetic connection of its contents, and on the exercises and feelings of faith, so far as we can apply them to saints now.

13 This so distinctly characterises the Psalms that there are very few indeed even of those which are prophetic of Christ, where the remnant is not found. In the second book they are not, because that element is distinctly presented as the primary subject in the first: the connection being moral through His entering into their sorrows in grace, this is easily understood. And it is necessary to remember this, to account for various passages in which they come in, though partly applicable to, or used by, Christ. See pp. 46, 47, 48, 50, and 51.

14 It is in the point of death that the sufferings of Christ, whether for righteousness' sake, and that which He underwent to be able to sympathise with them when they suffer under the government of God, on the one hand, or atonement on the other—the latter prefigured in the burnt and sin-offering (compare Heb. 9), the former the expression and testing of perfectness in the

meat-offering—meet. Christ suffered onward up to death. Then He also made atonement for sin. Some of the remnant may suffer unto death, as faithful under the trials of this government; but then, like Christ, they will obtain a better resurrection. Of course, the atoning part is exclusively His.

15 I here use Israel as contrasted with the Assembly and Gentiles. We shall see Judah distinguished from Israel when we enter into details.

16 Compare Isaiah 48:22; 57:21.

17 Hence the intimacy of feeling and peculiar interest of the Psalms. They are the beating of the heart of Him, the history of whose circumstances, the embodying of whose life, in relationship with God and man, whose external presentation, in a word, and all God's ways in respect of it, are found in the rest of scripture.

18 Compare I Peter 1:11

19 The state of the prodigal till he met his Father—the state of every soul, where the God who is light and love has been revealed in Christ; but redemption-work, and acceptance in Him are not known—there is confidence, but not peace.

20 I think it will be found that the first two books are somewhat distinguishable from the last three. The first two are more Christ personally among the Jews; the last three, more national and historical. And so Psalm 72, the last part of the first two books, closes with the Solomon reign.

21 Hence it is too that in the Romans we find experiences, because the soul is brought through the process which brings it into liberty; while in the

Ephesians we find no experiences, because man is seen first dead in sins; and then united to Christ exalted to God's right hand. The Epistle to the Philippians gives us, almost exclusively, proper christian experience.

22 Union belongs to the assembly's position alone, and is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Union in scripture is not attributed simply to life. (Compare John 14:20.)

23 Psalm 8, while it is the great result, is a mighty change in the position of Christ according to the counsels of God, which forms the basis of all that follows. It is referred to in John 1, in contrast with what Nathanael says, which refers to Psalm 2. It is found in Luke 9 and parallel passages, and quoted in Ephesians 1, 1 Corinthians 15, and unfolded in Hebrews 2. In the close also of John's Gospel, we have the three characters noticed on which these psalms are founded. God vindicates in testimony His rejected Son. He raises Lazarus, and the Son of God is glorified thereby. He rides into Jerusalem as king of Israel. Then the Greeks come up, and He says, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified; but thus, to take this place in God's purpose, He must suffer and die. In chapter 13 consequently He begins His heavenly place. Psalms 1, 2 are in fact an introduction to the whole book. For His glory as Son of man, though prophesied of here when entered into, is another sphere of glory. Still He is owned as such, as He ever called Himself such down here.

24 But they are viewed as in the last days with the judgment at hand, 25 1 Peter makes the same distinction, chapter 3:14; 4:14.

26 More specifically in the Jews. The remnant of the Jews are spared and pass through the tribulation when two-thirds are cut off in the land (Zech. 13). The judgment of the ten tribes is outside the land, and the rebels do not enter into it (Ezek. 20). Israel is the general term of promise as applied to the nation.

27 The Lord, but not the word Lord which represents generally Jehovah in the English version; but that which gives the Lord as an official relative title.

28 See Matthew 17:24-27, already when here below. This may seem in a measure anticipation: still, He revealed the Father's name to them.

29 Leviticus 9:22-24 strikingly shews this. The acceptance of the sacrifice by God was not manifested till Moses and Aaron had come out after going in (v. 24) —Christ as priest and king. Then the people worship, but Aaron blessed from the offering before. We know by the Holy Ghost come out that the offering has been accepted, while the priest is yet within the veil. And hence the full value of divine righteousness.

30 I do not mean by this that none of the psalms do. We know this is not so, as Psalm 22 notably shews; nor that no sentence is found in psalms which are not wholly of Him which does express feelings He had. I have referred to several in the course of these notes and stated the principle of their application already; but I here speak of the psalms I am treating of (Psalms 3-7).

31 The littleness of man compared with the creation on high, gives occasion to the revelation of God's counsels in man.

32 Compare John 1:49-51.

33 *Not once did they understand what He said to them.

34 Psalm 3:6.

35 Psalm 3:8 (here "thy people," the same practically).

36 Psalm 2:8.

37 Psalm.7:7.

38 Psalm 7:8.

39 These names are not without importance. One is the abiding name of God in Israel, His memorial for ever; the other, the millennial name of God introduced by the judgments spoken of in the psalm. Compare Psalm 91 and Genesis 14:19, 20.

40 Ammim3 v. 11. Leummim3 v. 8.

41 Here in the plural. The difference is sometimes important, because, as Paul says, there is that wicked one.

42 Had not liked to retain God in their knowledge.

43 In Revelation 4 are found the characters of the seraphim as well as of the cherubim, as prefacing, I believe, the judgments there, as characterised as being according to the holy nature of God as well as governmental. It is true the application of Isaiah 6, where alone the seraphim are found, is to a governmental judgment, because grace preserved a remnant. But the incompatibility of Jehovah and

uncleanness— with man in himself—is what the prophet sees.

44 The quotation in Hebrews 2 is literally from the LXX of Isaiah 8.

45 Compare as to a special aspect of this, John 12:23, 24; and the Lord's consequent place, in chapters 11, 12, 13, as we have seen, had given testimony to His place according to Psalm 2. See note, p. 52.

46 Thus, becoming man, and through glorifying God in His work as man, He has also title under God's gift over all flesh.

47 This is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2—"I will put my trust in him."

48 The more we study the cross, the more we shall see that every question of good and evil was brought to an issue, and the immutable basis laid for perfect blessing according to what God is in righteousness and grace and majesty too, for the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We come by the blessed testimony that it meets all our wants; but in contemplating it at peace, we see man in absolute sin, hating and rejecting God in grace and goodness; Satan's full power—the disciples fled in fear, and all the world else in his power against Christ; man in absolute goodness loving the Father and obedient, glorifying God in the very place of sin where it was needed, and at all cost; we see God in perfect righteousness against sin as nowhere else, and perfect love to the sinner. Innocence was conditional blessing. This is completed in perfectness, and its value can never change. It is everlasting righteousness. Hence the blessing of the new heavens and new earth is immutable. We have had

an innocent Eden; a sinful world; and shall have, besides the reign of righteousness, new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness 49 And this is known by the Holy Ghost sent down when He had ascended on high. The new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will be the full result, while it is the manifestation of the just ground of unbelieving man's final condemnation.

50 Christ in His lifetime uses naturally the term Father; on the cross, at the close of the hours of darkness, "my God, my God "(in dying, 51 The only possible sense it could have as to Him was the deliverance of His soul at that moment as a fact, from the curse He bore for us, in which He had perfectly glorified God as to our sins, and as made sin for us. But the Lord does not use it. But though He had as a fact yet to die, its bitterness and sting were past.

52 What thief would, if hung, revile another thief hunt; by his side? But the condemned thief did so to Christ.

53 Although the dry tree be in the full sense lifeless Israel, yet, as the remnant, so long rejecters of Jesus being the Messiah, are mixed up with the nation, they go through the sorrows in heart and spirit which come upon the nation, though not its final judgment from God. For them Christ had done that; He died for the nation. But all short of that they go through, and feel in bitter sorrow and anguish, in some sort, more than before the judgment comes, because they feel the sin that is bringing it. Hence it was that Christ, who did know the cause and looked forward to the judgment which He did go through (undergoing the oppression without apparent deliverance, for His hour was come to be

reckoned with the transgressors), could enter fully into their case. Though He entered into it in love, yet the righteousness which threatened Israel was before Him.

54 If the title be right, David was not yet king de facto, and the Spirit of Christ in him spoke anticipatively of the title of the anointed one; but evidently in view of another epoch. Note too here all Israel is in view of the desires of faith, though no deliverance even of the Jews be yet accomplished.

55 Compare Daniel 12:3 and Isaiah 53:11; not “justify many," but turn to righteousness, and bear, etc.

56 For Christ and for the new man, the world is a desert, without anything in it to refresh the soul. But divine favour being better than life, we can praise while we live; our soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. The saint is not in the sanctuary, but has seen God in it. His desire is after God Himself. Christ could literally say this. “He hath seen the Father”: we have seen Him in Him.

57 The force of the word is much disputed; its sense, I suppose, is evident. It is used for the stables of sheep or cattle.

58 Further, as already remarked, in no case is the assumption of sins or their confession, on the head of the victim, the act of expiation. It is the assumption of that which had to be expiated.

59 This, if noticed, makes many psalms easy to understand, which would otherwise be difficult; because sorrow and distress follow after the confidence, but it is really what the spirit passed through in reaching it.

60 This supposes, of course, truth in the inward parts, conversion.

61 Some, as Venema, translate, “because of my casting away or down “instead of “from my youth." Rosenmüller gives both. Compare Psalm 129.

62 Compare the connection and remarkable contrast with John 15.

63 Christ, however deeply feeling what was before Him, was just the opposite of this struggling of will, being perfect in subjection (John 12 and Gethsemane). Peter would have resisted, but Christ took the cup as His Father’s will.

64 This in Isaiah 30:32, where the grounded staff, that is the decreed rod, was to pass, it was with tabrets and harps.

65 Note, there is no bringing in of’ me ‘in connection with indignation and wrath, as in Psalm 22, though Christ realises it in spirit. But personally He is lifted up and cast down. It is a key which opens up much in the psalms.

66 The difference of a reference to the promises to Abraham, and those to Moses, the blessings of which depended on the faithfulness of the people, is a marked feature in all the renewals of mercy to the people and the faith that referred to one or the other.

67 I do not refer here to Daniel 9 but to Daniel 8.

68 A hill is used as a symbol of exalted strength, a high hill as the hill of Bashan. This is the Lord’s hill.

69 The three principles of government had been brought out in Israel. First, direct responsibility to God under

priesthood. That had failed under Eli, and that was Ichabod. It was over with Israel on the ground of their own responsibility. Then God intervened by a prophet. That He could still do; it was a sovereign act. But that failed; so did royalty as set up by the people. Then we have royalty as power in grace, as it will be in Christ, and the lost ark brought back. This is what we have in this psalm.

70 This is one of the two places where life for evermore, life eternal, is spoken of in the Old Testament; the other is Daniel 12 s both as accomplished in the time of blessing to come. In the New Testament, I need not say, it is fully revealed in Christ, and he that believes in Him has everlasting life.

71 Compare Psalm 8, grace’s view of it, and Job’s impatience (chap. 7:17, 18) against discipline, God’s taking notice of men’s ways in government.

## Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs gives us the application of that wisdom which created the heavens and the earth to the details of life in this world of confusion and evil. This thought brings out the immensity of grace unfolded here. God deigns to apply His wisdom to the circumstances of our practical life, and to shew us, with His own intelligence, the consequences of all the ways in which man may walk. For it is often in the way of knowledge, not of precept, that the statements made in the Book of Proverbs are presented. It is a great blessing to be provided for in the labyrinth of this world, in which a false step may lead to such bitter consequences, with a book that sets forth the path of prudence and of life; and that in connection with a wisdom which comes from God.

It is well to remember that the Book of Proverbs treats of this world, and of God's government, according to which man reaps that which he has sown. This is always true, whatever may be the sovereign grace that bestows on us things beyond and infinitely above this world.

Solomon was filled with wisdom from above, but which had its exercise in this world, and its application to it; that is to say, which applied to it God's way of viewing all things, discerning the truth of all that, day by day, is developed in it. We have here the ways of God, the divine path of human conduct, the discernment of that which the heart of man produces, and of its consequences; and also—for one who is subject to the word—the means of avoiding the path of his own will and of his own foolish heart (which is unable to

understand the bearing of a multitude of actions that it suggests to him), and this, not by bringing him back to moral perfection— for that is not the object of the Proverbs; but to that wisdom and prudence which enable him to avoid many errors, and to maintain a serious walk before God, and an habitual submission to His mind. The precepts of this book establish practical happiness in this world by maintaining earthly relationships in their integrity according to God. Now it is not human prudence and sagacity that are enjoined. The fear of the Lord,72 which is the beginning of wisdom, is the subject here.

There are two very distinct parts in this book. The first nine chapters, which give the great general principles; and the proverbs, properly so called, or moral aphorisms or sentences, which indicate the path in which the wise man should walk. At the end of the book is a collection of such made by Hezekiah.

Let us examine the first part. The grand principle is laid down at the outset—the fear of the Lord on the one side, and on the other the madness of self-will, which despises the wisdom and instruction that restrain it. For, besides the knowledge of good and evil in respect of which the fear of the Lord will operate, there is that exercise of authority in God’s created order which is a check on will (the origin of all disorder), as that confided to parents and the like. And these are carefully insisted on, in contrast with independence, as the basis of happiness and moral order in the world. It is not simply God’s authority giving precepts, nor even His statements of the consequence of actions, but the order He has set up in the relationships He has established amongst men, especially of parents, subjection to them is really owning

God in His order. It is the first commandment with promise.

There are two forms in which sin, or the activity of man's will, manifests itself—violence and corruption. This was seen at the time of the deluge. The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Satan is a liar and murderer. In man, corrupt lusts are even a more abundant source of evil. {Pr 1}

In chapter 1 violence is pointed out as the infringement of those obligations which the will of God has laid upon us. But wisdom cries aloud that her voice may be heard, proclaiming the judgment of those who despise her ways. {Pr 2}

Chapter 2 gives us the result of subjection of heart to the words of wisdom, and an earnest search after it—the knowledge of the fear of Jehovah, and the knowledge of God Himself. He who applies himself to this shall be kept: he shall not only have no part with the wicked man, but he shall be delivered from the deceitful woman —from corruption. The judgment of the earth and the prosperity of the righteous are declared. {Pr 3}

The latter principle being established, chapter 3 shews that it is not human sagacity or the prudence of man which imparts the wisdom here spoken of. Neither is it the ardent desire after prosperity and happiness, manifesting itself in crooked ways; but the fear of Jehovah and subjection to His word supply the one clue to guide us safely through a world of wickedness which He governs. {Pr 4}

Chapter 4 insists on the necessity of pursuing wisdom at whatever cost; it is a path of sure reward. It warns against all association that would lead the contrary way

and into ruin, adding that the heart, the lips, and the feet are to be watched. {Pr 5}

Chapter 5 returns in detail to the corruption of heart that leads a man to forsake the wife of his youth for another. This path demoralises the whole man. But the eyes of Jehovah are upon the ways of man. {Pr 6}

In chapter 6 wisdom will not be surety for another. It is neither slothful, nor violent, nor deceitful. The strange woman should be avoided as fire: there is no reparation for adultery. {Pr 7}

In chapter 7 the house of the strange woman is the path to the grave. To curb oneself, to be firm in resisting allurements, looking to Jehovah and hearkening to the words of the wise— such are the principles of life given in these chapters. {Pr 8}

Chapter 8. The wisdom of God is active. It cries aloud; it invites men. Three principles distinguish it—discretion, or the right consideration of circumstances, instead of following self-will; hatred of evil, which evidences the fear of Jehovah; and detestation of arrogance and hypocrisy in man. It is by wisdom that kings and princes rule; strength, counsel, and sound wisdom, and durable riches, are found in it. Moreover Jehovah Himself has acted according to His own perfect discernment of the right relations of all things to each other; that is to say, He created them according to the perfection of His own thoughts. But this leads us farther; for Christ is the wisdom of God. He is the centre of all relations, according to the perfections of God; and is in Himself the object of God’s eternal delight. The everlasting wisdom of God is revealed and unfolded in Him. But this is not the only link. If Christ was the object of God the

Father's delight, as the centre and fulness of all wisdom, men have been the delight of Christ, and the habitable parts of Jehovah's earth. It is in connection with men that Christ is seen, when considered as uniting and developing in Himself every feature of the wisdom and the counsels of God. The life that was in Him was the light of men. Christ is then the object of God the Father's delight. Christ ever found His joy in God the Father, and His delight with the sons of men,73 and in the earth inhabited by men. Here then must this wisdom be displayed. Here must the perfection of God's ways be manifested. Here must divine wisdom be a guide to the conduct of a being subject to its direction. Now it is in Christ, the wisdom of God, that this is found. Whoso hearkens to Him finds life. Observe here that, all-important as this revelation is of the display of God's wisdom in connection with men, we do not find man's new place in Christ, nor the assembly here. She is called away from this present evil age to belong to Jesus in heaven. Christ cannot actually yet rejoice in the sons of men, if we take their state into account. When He takes possession of the earth, this will be fully accomplished—this will be the millennium. Meantime He calls on men to hear His voice. The principle of a path to be followed by hearkening to the words of wisdom is one of the greatest importance for this world, and of the most extensive bearing. There is the path of God, in which He is known. There is but one. If we do not walk in it, we shall suffer the consequences, even if really loving the Lord. {Pr 9}

But in fact (chap. 9) wisdom has done more than this; it has formed a system, established a house of its own, upheld by the perfection of well-regulated and co-

ordinate solidity. It is furnished with meat and wine; the table is spread; and, in the most public manner, wisdom invites the simple to come and partake, while pointing out to them the right way in which life is found. There is another woman; but before speaking of her, the Spirit teaches that instruction is wasted on the scorner; he will but hate his reprover. Wisdom is wise even in relation to its enemies. There is progress for the wise and the upright, but the beginning of it is the fear of Jehovah. This is its fundamental principle.

But scoffing is not the only character of evil. There is the foolish woman. This is not the activity of love which seeks the good of those who are ignorant of good. She is clamorous, sitting in the high places, at the door of her house, seeking to turn aside those who go right on their ways, and alluring those that have no understanding into the paths of deceit and sin; and they know not that her guests are the victims of death. Such are the general instructions which God’s warning wisdom gives us. {Pr 10}

In chapter 10 begin the details which teach those who give ear how to avoid the snares into which the simple might fall, the path to be followed in many cases, and the consequences of men’s actions: in short, that which characterises wisdom in detail, what may be prudence for man, divine discretion for the children of God; and also, the result of God’s government, whatever appearances may be for awhile. It is well to observe, that there is no question of redemption or propitiation in this book; it proposes a walk according to the wisdom of God’s government.

In the final chapter we have the character of a king according to wisdom, and that of the woman in her own house—the king who does not allow himself that which, by darkening his moral discernment through the indulgence of his lusts, would make him unfit to govern. In the woman we see the persevering and devoted industry which fills the house with riches, brings honour to its inhabitants, and removes all the cares and anxieties produced by sloth. The typical application of these two specific characters is too evident to need explanation. The example of the woman is very useful, as to the spirit of the thing, to one who labours in the assembly.

Although in this book the wisdom produced by the fear of Jehovah is only applied to this world, it is on that very account of great use to the Christian, who, in view of his heavenly privileges, might, more or less, forget the continual government of God. It is very important for the Christian to remember the fear of the Lord, and the effect of God's presence on the details of his conduct; and I repeat that which I said at the beginning, that it is great grace which deigns to apply divine wisdom to all the details of the life of man in the midst of the confusion brought in by sin. Occupied with heavenly things, the Christian is less in the way of discovering, by his own experience, the clue to the labyrinth of evil through which he is passing. God has considered this, and He has laid down this first principle, "wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Thus the Christian may be ignorant of evil (if a worldling were so, he would fall into it), and yet avoid it through his knowledge of good. The wisdom of God gives him the latter; the government of God provides for all the rest.

Now, in the Proverbs, we have these things in principle and in detail. I have not dwelt on the figurative character of the forms of evil. They are rather principles than figures. But the violent man of the last days is continually found in the Psalms; and Babylon is the full accomplishment of the woman who takes the simple in her snares and leads them down to death; just as Christ is the perfect wisdom of God which leads to life. But these two things which manifest evil proceed from the heart of man at all times since the fall: only we have seen that there is an active development of the wiles of the evil woman, who has her own house and her own arrangements. It is not simply the principle of corruption, but an organised system, as is that of sovereign wisdom.

72 I have left “Lord “here as an expression of general application, but Jehovah is always His name in Israel, and that of government, save in a few cases where Adonai (Lord, in the proper appellative use of it) is employed. But it is to be noted that Jehovah is used in Proverbs, because it is authoritatively instructive in known relationship; never in Ecclesiastes, where it is God in contrast with man, having his own experience as such on earth. “God “abstractedly is only once used in Proverbs (25:2). We have “her God “in chapter 2:17.

73 So He became a man, and the unjealous testimony of the angels on His birth is, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men. Man would not have Him, and the special relationship of His risen place as man with God, “my Father and your Father, my God and your God,” and that of the assembly was formed, but His delight was in that race; for the time it was not peace on earth but division, but even after the millennium the

tabernacle of God will be with men, where we have both the special relationship and the general blessing.

## Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes is, up to a certain point, the converse of the Book of Proverbs.74 It is the experience of a man who— retaining wisdom, that he may judge of all—makes trial of everything under the sun that could be supposed capable of rendering men happy, through the enjoyment of everything that human capacity can entertain as a means of joy. The effect of this trial was the discovery that all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that every effort to be happy in possessing the earth, in whatever way it may be, ends in nothing. There is a canker-worm at the root. The greater the capacity of enjoyment, the deeper and wider is the experience of disappointment and vexation of spirit. Pleasure does not satisfy, and even the idea of securing happiness in this world by an unusual degree of righteousness, cannot be realised. Evil is there, and the government of God in such a world as this, is not in exercise to secure happiness to man here below—a happiness drawn from the things below and resting on their stability; though as a general rule it protects those who walk with God: "Who is he that shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? "75There is no allusion to the truth that we are dead in sins and offences. It is the result in the mind of the writer of the experience which he has gone through, and which he sets before us. As to the things around us, there is nothing better than to enjoy the things which God has given us; and finally, the fear of Jehovah is the whole of man, as the rule of his walk on earth. His own capacities do not make him happy nor the gratifying of his own will, even when he has everything at command. "For what can the man do that

cometh after the king? “Man fails to secure joy; and permanent joy is not to be found for man. Consequently, if there be any joy, it is with the sense that it cannot be retained.

The moral of this book goes even farther than that of the Proverbs—on one side at least; for we must remember that it is this world that is in question (under the sun). Wisdom avails no more than folly. The difference between them is as great as that between light and darkness. But one event happens to all men, and much reflection only makes us hate life. The heart becomes weary of research, and after all one dies like another. The world is ruined as a system, and death cuts the thread of thoughts and projects, and annihilates all connection between the most skilful workman and the fruit of his labours. What profit has been to him? There is a time for all things, and man must do each in its season, and enjoy that which God gives on his way. But God is the same in all His works, that men should fear before Him. He knows that God will judge the righteous and the wicked; but, as far as man’s knowledge extends, he dies as the beast dies, and who can tell what becomes of him afterwards? There is no question here of the revelation of the world to come, but only of the conclusions drawn from experience of what takes place in this world. The knowledge of God teaches that there is a judgment; to man all is darkness beyond the present life. {Ec 4}

Chapter 4 expresses the deep sorrow caused by the crying injustice of a sinful world, the unredressed wrongs which compose the history of our race, and which, in fact, make the history of man insupportable to one who has a sense of natural justice, and creates the

desire to put an end to it. Labour and sloth alike bring their quota of distress. Nevertheless, in the midst of this quicksand in which there is no standing, we see the thought of God arise, giving a firm foundation to heart and mind. {Ec 5}

This is in the beginning of chapter 5. He demands respect from man. The folly of the heart is indeed folly in His presence. From thence onward we find that that which takes away the vain hope of earthly happiness gives a more true joy to the heart that becomes wise, and therefore joyful, in separating itself from the world. There is therefore the grace also of patience. The self-sufficient effort to be righteous only ends in shame; to be active in evil ends in death. Finally, to strive after wisdom by the knowledge of things below is labour in vain. He has found two things: first, with respect to woman, judged by the experience of the world, he has found none good; amongst men, one in a thousand; and, in a word, that God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions apart from God.

God must be honoured, and the king also, to whom God has given authority. We see too in chapters 9 and 10, how little everything here meets the apparent capacity of man; and, even when this capacity is real, how little it is esteemed. Nevertheless the wisdom of the upright, and the folly of the fool, have each its own consequences, and, after all, God judges. To sum up the whole, God must be remembered, and that before weakness and old age overtake us. For the manifest conclusion of all that has been said is “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man.”

The chief subject, then, of this Book is the folly of all man's efforts in seeking happiness here below, and that the wisdom which judges all this only renders man still more unhappy. And then all this experience, on the part of one who possessed the highest capacity, is put in contrast with the simple principle of all true wisdom—submission and obedience to God, who knows all things, and who governs all things, because "God shall bring every work into judgment."

If we remember that this Book gives us the experience of man, and the reasonings of man, on all that happens under the sun, there is no difficulty in those passages that have the semblance of infidelity. The experience of man is necessarily infidel. He confesses his ignorance; for beyond that which is seen, experience can know nothing. But the solution of all moral problems is above and beyond that which is seen. The Book of Ecclesiastes makes this manifest. The only rule of life then is to fear the God who disposes of our life, who judges every action all the days of the life of our vanity. There is no question, in this book, of grace or of redemption, but only of the experience of this present life, and of that which God has said with respect to it—namely, His law, His commandments, and the consequent judgment—that which is decreed to man.

A Jew under the law might say these things, after having had the experience of all that God could give man to favour him in this position, and in view of the judgment of God that is connected with it.

In Proverbs we have practical moral guidance through the world; in Ecclesiastes the result of all efforts of man's will to find happiness, with all means at his

disposal. But in the whole inquiry in Ecclesiastes there is no covenant relationship, no revelation. It is man with his natural faculties, and such as he is, conscious indeed he has to say to God, but seeking by his own thoughts where happiness is to be found. Only that conscience has its part in the matter, and the fear of God is owned at the end. It is God owned indeed, but man in the world with full experience of all in it.

74 See the note to Proverbs, page 187.

75 Peter’s epistles, after laying the foundation of redemption and being born again, are occupied with the degree in which what was immediate (in promise) among the Jews is applicable now. The first epistle, its application to saints; the second, to the world and the wicked here below: hence he goes on to the new heavens and the new earth.

## The Song Of Songs

This Book takes up the Jew, or at least the remnant, in quite another aspect. It tells of the affections that the King can create in their heart, and by which He draws them to Himself. However strong these affections may be, they are not developed according to the position in which christian affections, properly so called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose and sweetness of an affection that flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated, the bonds of which are formed and recognised, that counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship, and that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves, and is seeking the affections of the beloved object, is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former the relationship is only in desire, the consequence of the state of heart; to the latter the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship. Now, although the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, nevertheless, on account of the revelation which has been made to us, and of the accomplishment of our salvation, this latter character of affection is that which is proper to the assembly. Praise and glory be to God for it! We know whom we have believed. The strength and energy of desire is, however, still maintained, because glory and the marriage of the Lamb are yet future. What a position is that of the assembly! The entire confidence of the relationship on the one hand, the ardent expectation of the betrothed of the Lord on the other, whose love,

however, is well known; an expectation that is linked with the glory in which He will come to receive her to Himself, to be for ever with Him.

This is not the position of the Jew. The point for him is to know that his Beloved is his. That is the question. That there is a principle in common is true. Christ loves His assembly, He loves His earthly people, He loves the soul that He draws to Himself. So that there is a moral application to ourselves which is very precious. Nevertheless it is important that we distinguish and do not apply to the assembly that which relates to Israel. Otherwise we shall not have the right character of affection, and shall fail in that which is due to Christ.

The Song of Songs gives then the re-establishment of the relations between Christ and the remnant, in order that by exercise of heart—necessary on account of their position— they may be confirmed in the assurance of His love, and in the knowledge that all is of grace, and a grace that can never fail. Then is He fully known as Solomon. His heart becomes like the chariot of His willing people (Ammi-nadib), which carries Him away. {So 8:1}

Chapter 8:1 affords us a passage which may serve to express the state of mind treated in the book. “Oh that thou wert as my brother! when I should find thee without I would kiss thee! “Nevertheless, the Spirit of God desiring to assure the heart of the remnant of the Saviour’s love, we see that the expression of the heart’s desire to possess its Beloved does not cease until it has gained its object. The heart assures itself according to the operation of the Spirit of prophecy; for in fact Christ is for the remnant, and the remnant is for Him. The

whole is based on this. But the heart needs to be reassured, as in a similar case we observe in other passages.

Having thus given the general idea, we shall point out some features that are developed in the course of this book, and that possess a moral import of great interest to ourselves. {So 1}

Chapter 1 presents in the most clear and simple manner the assurance of the full enjoyment of blessing; but still, though affection be there, all is more characterised by desire than by peace. And after this we find exercises of heart, that lead to a full understanding of the Beloved One's affection. There is progress in this intelligence, and that in spite of the faults and slothfulness of heart, which gives a fresh value to the affection that is in exercise. This mode of instruction is found in the Psalms, in which the first verses frequently give the thesis and the result, which is reached through circumstances that are afterwards detailed. Besides the peacefulness of the affection which subsists in a known relation, there is another sign of an affection in exercise when the relation is not formally established. The heart is occupied with the qualities, with the features, of the Beloved One. When, on the contrary, the object is possessed, it is with that object itself the heart is occupied. No doubt the qualities are a source of happiness; but while the position gives the enjoyment of these, it is the person who manifests them that is thought of. The grace, the kindness, or similar qualities, may attract the heart, and it is occupied with them. But, the relationship once formed, it is the person we think of, whose qualities are now, so to say, our own.

The loved one speaks much here of the qualities of her Beloved; she loves to speak of them, and to others. It may be said that the Beloved does so yet more, although He knows the relation in which He stands to her. This is true; but, as she is not yet in it, He is fain to reassure her with respect to her value in His eyes. He therefore speaks constantly of it to herself. Moreover, this is suitable to the position of man and of woman, and so much the more as it is really Christ Himself in question. Christ, in a certain sense, suffices to Himself. He needs not to go and talk to others of that which is in His heart. His love is a love of grace. But it is infinitely precious to us—when, in our utter unworthiness, we might doubt the possibility of His affection, even because it is so inestimable—and very affecting, as well as precious, to see Him manifesting His sense of her value, that her beauty is perfect in His eyes, that He has observed all her features, that one look has ravished His heart, that His dove, His undefiled, is the only one, that there is no spot in her. There is perfect grace in this reassuring testimony of the Bridegroom's part. It is the chief subject of His discourse. It is that which her heart needed.

There is much more variety in the exercises of her heart; there are even failures and sorrows arising from her faults. There is also an evident progress in her assurance. The song commences with the bride's declaration that her heart needs this testimony. She acknowledges that she is black, because of the scorching rays of the sun of affliction. She seeks shelter in the presence of her Beloved, who makes His flock to rest at noon. She would belong to Him only. She fears now to wander among the shepherds of Israel. But if the

Spirit of the Lord reminds her of those former testimonies of the law and the prophets, her heart is not silent, and the heart of the Beloved overflows in the testimony of her value in His eyes. The suitability of all this to the remnant in the last days is evident. The rest of the chapter contains testimonies of affection, which present the idea that is the thesis of the book.

The first six verses (omitting the second) of chapter 2 appear to me to be the voice of the bride. They have been differently understood, but (I think) wrongly. Observe here that Christ is the apple-tree. This will help us afterwards. Moreover the bride speaks of herself. In theory she apprehends her relationship, and speaks chiefly of herself; but there is real affection. The Bridegroom will not allow her to be disturbed76 when she rests with full confidence in His love. His own voice, the only one to which she now hearkens, shall waken her. He Himself tells her to arise, that the winter is past —the time, of mourning and sorrow. He desires also to hear her voice. Thus her heart is re-assured: her Beloved is hers. How truly all this gives the awakening of divine affections and confidence in the remnant which had so long learned what it was to have Jehovah's face hidden, and how fully the inextinguishable love of Him who wept over Jerusalem is in the blessedest way in exercise to awaken this confidence and assure the heart of the afflicted people! It is to me singularly beautiful, not instruction as to circumstances nor in connection with responsibility, but grace—Christ's (Jehovah's) own relationship with Israel. {So 3}

In chapter 3 we have another attitude, another state of heart. She is alone and in darkness. She seeks her Beloved, but finds Him not. There is affection, but no joy.

She questions the watchmen in Jerusalem who go about the city. As soon as she passes from them, she finds Him. Again He will have her rest in His love. But all this is only prophetically and in testimony, for the comfort of those who have not yet found Him, by shewing them what He is for them. The Spirit of prophecy then exhibits the Bridegroom coming up out of the wilderness with His bride, where (like Moses) He had been with her in spirit. The chapter confirms the application to Israel. In her solitary state she seeks the Messiah, and, after inquiring of those who watched, soon found Him her soul loved, and brought Him into the place of Israel, for to Israel the Son was born,77 though in a new relationship. There He maintains her rest, and there, the other side of the picture, the true Solomon comes up out of the wilderness, crowned now in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart, by the Israel that had rejected Him. {So 4}

And now, chapter 4, He declares all that she is in His sight, although she has been in the lion's den. From thence He calls her, all fair and without spot in His eyes; His heart expressing His delight in her. It is, I judge, a fine moral perfectness of thought that the bride never speaks of the Bridegroom's perfections to Himself as if she was to approve Him; she speaks of Him fully as expressive of her own feelings and to others, but not to Him. He speaks freely and fully of her to herself as assuring her of His delight in her. When we think of Christ and our relation with Him, this is beautifully appropriate. {So 5}

Chapter 5 gives us another experience. Intimacy was formed through the testimony of the Bridegroom's affection. The reassured heart, certain of His love,

exhibits its slothfulness. Alas, what hearts are ours! We turn again to ourselves as soon as we are comforted by the testimony of the Lord's love. The Bridegroom's sensitive and righteous heart acts upon her word, and He retires from one who does not listen to His voice. She arises to learn her own folly, and the just delicacy, with respect to herself, of His ways whom she had slighted. How often, alas! do we act in the same manner with regard to the voice of His Spirit and the manifestations of His love! What a dreadful loss, but, through grace, what a lesson! She is chastised by those who watch for the peace of Jerusalem. What had she to do in the streets at night, she whom the Bridegroom had sought at home? And now her very affection exposes her to reproof, the expression of its energy placing her in a position that proved she had slighted her Beloved. If we are not in the peaceful enjoyment of the love of Christ, where He meets with us in grace, the very strength of our affection and our self-condemnation causes us to exhibit this affection out of its place, in a certain sense, and bring us into connection with those who judge our position. It was right discipline for a watchman to use towards a woman who was wandering without, whatever might be the cause. Testimonies of her affection to her Beloved at home, the love of her own heart, do not concern the watchman. Affection may exist; but he has to do with order and a becoming walk. Nevertheless her affection was real and led to an ardent expression of all that her Beloved was to her—an expression addressed to others, who ought to understand her; not to the watchman, but to her own companions. But if sloth had prevented her receiving Him in the visitations of His love, her heart, now disciplined by the watchman and

turned again to her Beloved, overflowing with His praises, being taught of God, knows where to find Him.

And this experience makes her understand through grace another aspect of her relationship, proving a real progress in the intelligence of grace and condition of heart. It is no longer the desire that seeks possession of the object for herself, it is the consciousness that she belongs to Him. “I am my Beloved’s.” This is a very important progress. The soul that seeks salvation, that seeks to satisfy newly-awakened affections, exclaims, as soon as it is assured of it, “My Beloved is mine.” When there has been a deeper experience of self, it recognises itself as being His. Thus, with respect to ourselves, it is not “We have found him of whom the prophets did write “; but “We are not our own, for we are bought with a price.” To belong in this manner to Christ, no longer thinking of self, is the happiness of the soul. It is not that we lose the sense of the blessedness of possessing the Saviour, but the other thought, the thought of being His, occupies the first place.

Again the Beloved testifies to the preciousness of the bride in His eyes. But here also there is a difference. Before, when speaking of her, He added to the gentleness and beauty of her aspect all the graces which were seen in her, the honey that flowed from her lips, the pleasant fruits that were found in her, the sweet odours which He called on the breath of the Spirit to bring forth. He does not now repeat these things. He speaks of that which she is for Him. Having described her personal beauty, His heart dwells on what she is for Himself. “My dove, my undefiled, is but one.” His affection can see no other: none can be compared with her. There are many others, but they are not the one

whom He loves. The person of the Lord fills the heart that has been brought back to Him. The look and the graces of the bride are the subject of the Bridegroom's testimony. Moreover for Him there is no one but her, the only one of her mother. Thus will it be with the remnant of Israel in the last days, even as in spirit it is now with us.

The reception of Christ and His union with this remnant at Jerusalem are represented in a very striking manner in that which follows. It is no longer the Beloved coming up out of the wilderness—where He had associated His people with Himself—in glory and in love. It is the bride, fair as the moon and radiant with glory, who appears on the scene, like an army with banners displayed. The Beloved had come down to look upon the ripening fruits of the valley, and to see if His vine flourished. Before He is aware, His love makes Him like the chariots of His willing people (compare Psalm no: 3). He leads them in glory and triumph. He had sought the fruits of grace among them; but, having come down for this, He exalts them in glory. It is only when His people are fully established in grace that everything in them will be beauty and perfection, and that they will recognise that they belong entirely to Christ, and at the same time that they will entirely possess His affection.

This last thought is the rest of their heart. This is thus expressed in the third formulary of the experience of this divine song, if I may coldly so speak, and which gives the full happiness of the bride, "I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me "—the consciousness of belonging to Christ and that His affections rest on us—the consciousness that we are the objects of His own affections and delight. This is most deep and perfect joy.

The reader will do well to weigh these three expressions of satisfaction of heart: the possessing Christ; our belonging to Him; and this last, with the unspeakable knowledge that His heart's delight is in us, however much—and it is surely then it will be felt—all is grace.

But (to return to the text) they can now go forth with Him to enjoy all the blessings of the earth in the certainty and the communion of His love. What fruits of gratitude, what peculiar feelings, will be those which the people of Israel have kept for the Lord alone, which they could never have for any other, and which, after all, none but themselves could have towards the Lord, viewed as come on earth. {So 8}

Chapter 8 stands by itself, and appears to me to recapitulate the principles of the whole book. It returns to the foundation of that which gave rise to all these exercises. The full satisfaction of all the desires of the remnant is prophetically announced, and the path of their affections is marked out. But this picture is drawn for the encouragement of those who are not yet enjoying it, and expresses the desire for its accomplishment (giving thus the sanction of God to the ardent desire of the remnant to possess Christ, and to have full liberty of communion with Him). The reply teaches, with a clearness that is very precious, the manner of its accomplishment. The ardent affection of the loved one is manifested, and the Beloved desires that she may rest in His love, and enjoy it as long as she will without being disturbed. Afterwards she comes up out of the wilderness, leaning upon Him. And where did the Lord awaken her from her sleep? Under an apple-tree (see chap. 2:3). From Christ alone she derives her life. Thus only can Israel give birth to this living remnant, which,

at Jerusalem, shall become the earthly bride of the great King, which desires to be, and shall be, as a seal upon His heart, according to the power of a love that is strong as death—that spares nothing, and yields nothing.

The “little sister “appears to me to be Ephraim, which has never had the same development that Judah received through the manifestation of Christ, and through all that took place after the captivity of the ten tribes. For all the moral affections of Judah were formed on their relationship to Christ, on His rejection, and on the sentiments which this produced when the Spirit caused it to be felt (Isaiah 50-53). Ephraim has gone through none of this, but will enter into the enjoyment of its results. Judah, when perfected, will enjoy the full favour of the Messiah; their affections having been formed for Him by all the exercises of heart which they have had with respect to Him.

Christ, in His Solomon character, the glorious King, the Son of David, and after the order of Melchisedec, has a vineyard as Lord of the nations or multitudes. He has intrusted it to others, who are to make Him a suitable return. The vineyard of the bride was at her own disposal, but all its proceeds shall be for Solomon; and there shall be a portion for those that kept its fruits—a touching expression of her relationship to the King. She will have all to be His; and then there are others who shall profit by it also.

The last two verses express the bride’s desire that the Bridegroom may come without delay.

It is to be observed, that there is no question in this book of the purification of the conscience. That question is not touched upon. But it speaks of those affections of

the heart which cannot be too ardent when the Lord is their object. Consequently the faults, that manifest forgetfulness of Him and of His grace, serve only to produce such exercises of heart with respect to Him as recall all the attractions of His Person, and the consciousness of belonging entirely to Him—exercises that form the heart to a much deeper appreciation of Himself, because guilt before a judge is not the question, but a fault of the heart towards a friend—a fault which, meeting with a love too strong to be turned away from its object, only deepens her own affection, and infinitely exalts in her eyes the affection of her Beloved (thus forming her heart, by inward exercise, to the appreciation of His love, and to the capability of loving and estimating all that He is). It is all-important to form our heart in this portion of the christian life. It is thus that Christ is truly known; for, with respect to divine persons, he who loves not knows not. The heart indeed is imperfect; it cannot love as it ought; and therefore all these exercises are necessary. I do not say that faults are necessary. But, as has been said, it is love that causes the fault to be felt when it exists, and the strength of the love that exposes to the watchman's blows, whose business it is, not to measure love, but to maintain moral order. He takes away the veil—sad and painful discipline, which proves that, even while loving much, there was not love enough; or, at least, that this love was deposited in a weak vessel which, if listened to, is a traitor to itself.

I have said that in its interpretation this book does not apply to the assembly. Nevertheless I have spoken of ourselves and of our hearts, and with reason; because, although the interpretation of the book presents Israel

as its object, it is the heart and the feelings that are in question; so that morally it can be applied to us. But, then, the modification already noticed must be introduced. We have the full knowledge of accomplished redemption, we know that we are sitting in the heavenly places in Christ. Our conscience is for ever purged. God will remember our sins and our iniquities no more. But the effect of this work is, that we are entirely His, according to the love that is shewn in the sacrifice that accomplished it. Morally therefore Christ is the all of our souls. It is evident that, if He loved us, if He gave Himself for us, when in us there was no good thing, it is in having absolutely done with ourselves that we have life, happiness, and the knowledge of God. It is in Him alone that we find the source, the strength, and the perfection of this. Now, as to justification, this truth makes our position perfect. In us there is no good thing. We are accepted in the Beloved—perfectly accepted in His acceptance, our sins being entirely put away by His death. But, then, as to life, Jesus becomes the one object, the all of our souls. In Him alone the heart finds that which can be its object—in Him who has so loved us and given Himself for us—in Him who is entire perfection for the heart. As to conscience, the question is settled in peace through His blood: we are righteous in Him before God, while exercised daily on that ground. But the heart needs to love such an object, and in principle will have none but Him, in whom all grace, devotedness to us, and every grace, according to God's own heart, is found. It is here that the Christian is in unison with the Song of Songs.

The assembly—loved, redeemed, and belonging to Him—having by the Spirit understood His perfections, having

known Him in the work of His love, does not yet possess Him as she knows Him. She sighs for the day when she will see Him as He is. Meanwhile He manifests Himself to her, awakens her affections, and seeks to possess her love, by testifying all His delight in her. She learns also that which is in herself—that slothfulness of heart which loses opportunities of communion with Him. But this teaches her to judge all that in herself which weakens the effect on her heart of the perfections of her Beloved. Thus she is morally prepared, and has capacity for the full enjoyment of communion with Him; when she shall see Him as He is, she will be like Him. It is not the effort to obtain Him; but we seek to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended by Christ. We have an object that we do not yet fully possess, which alone can satisfy all our desires—an object whose affection we need to realise in our hearts—an end which He in grace pursues, by the testimony of His perfect love towards us, thereby cultivating our love to Him, comforting us even by the sense of our weakness, and by the revelation of His own perfection, and thus shewing us all that in our own hearts prevents our enjoying it. He delivers us from it, in that we discover it in the presence of His love.

It is not my object to trace here in detail the working of these affections in the heart, because I am interpreting and not exhorting. But it was necessary to speak a little on the subject, that the Book may be understood. Moreover, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of cultivating these holy affections which attach us to Christ, and cause us to know His love, and to know Himself. For, I repeat, when God is in question, and His dealings with respect to us, he who loves not knows not.

Only remark with what earnestness, with what tenderness, He tells His loved one of all her preciousness in His sight, and of the perfection which He beholds in her. If Jesus sees perfection in us, we need nothing more. He reassures her heart by speaking to her of this, when she had been justly rebuked and disciplined by the watchmen, and her heart compelled to seek relief by declaring to others, to her friends, all that He was to her. He reproaches her with nothing, but makes her feel that she is perfect in His eyes.

Practically, what deep perfection of love was in that look which the Lord gave Peter when he had denied Him! What a moment was that when, without reproach, although instructing him, He testified His confidence in Peter by committing to him, who had thus denied Him, the sheep and the lambs so dear to His heart, for whom He had just given His life!

Now this love of Christ's, in its superiority to evil—a superiority that proves it divine—reproduces itself as a new creation in the heart of every one who receives its testimony, uniting him to the Lord who has so loved him.

Is the Lord anything else than this for us? No, my brethren, we learn His love; we learn in these exercises of heart to know Him Himself.

76 Lit. "nor awaken love till it please," see New Translation.

77 So Naomi, and Revelation 12.

## Introduction To The Prophets

We enter, now, dear reader, on the field of prophecy; a vast and important one, whether in view of the moral instruction that it contains, or on account of the great events that are announced in it, or through its development of God's government, and, by this means, its revelation of that which He Himself is in His ways with men. Jehovah and His dealings, and the Messiah, shine through the whole. Israel always forms the inner circle, or chief platform, on which these dealings are developed, and with which the Messiah is immediately in relation. Outside of, and behind this, the nations are gathered, instruments and objects of the judgments of God, and finally, the subjects of His universal government made subject to the Messiah, who however will assert His especial claim to Israel as His own people.

It is evident that the assembly and the Christian's individual place is outside this whole scene. In it there is neither Jew nor Gentile; in it the Father knows the objects of His eternal election, as His beloved children; and Christ, glorified on high, knows it as His body and His bride. Prophecy treats of the earth, and of the government of God. For after personal salvation is settled, there are two great subjects in scripture, the government of this world, and the sovereign grace which has taken poor sinners and put them into the same place as God's own Son as the exalted man, and as adopted into sonship— the divine glory, and that in Christ, being of course the centre of all. If we measure things not by our importance, but by the importance of

the manifestation of God, whatever develops His ways as unfolded in His government will have much importance in our eyes. There can be no doubt that the assembly, and the individual Christian, are a still more elevated subject, because God has there displayed the whole secret of His eternal love, and deepest present divine affections. But if we remember that it is not only the sphere of action that is in question, but He who acts therein, the dealings of God with Israel and the earth will then assume their true importance in our eyes. And these are the subjects of prophecy. For the others we must specially look to Paul and John.

This portion of the word is divided into two parts. The prophecies that refer to Israel during the time that Israel is owned of God, and consequently that concern the future glory also, form one part. The other consists of those prophecies which make known that which happens during God's rejection of His people, but which make it known in view of the final blessing of this very people. This distinction flows from the fact that the throne of God, sitting between the cherubim, has been taken away from Jerusalem, and the dominion of the earth committed to the Gentiles. The period of this dominion is called "the times of the Gentiles." The former class of prophecies applies to that which precedes and that which is subsequent to this period. The latter refers to this period itself. There is a moment of transition, during which the restoration of the people is in question, when the end of the times of the Gentiles draws near—a moment especially in view in those prophecies which relate to this period, and to which the psalms, as we have seen, largely apply, connecting it with the first coming of the Lord and His rejection by

the Jews. As He says, “Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But the general history of the period itself is given in diverse forms. The interval between the return from the Babylonish captivity and the coming of Jesus has a special character. For the Gentiles had the dominion; and nevertheless Judah was at Jerusalem expecting the Messiah. God favoured His people with the testimony of prophets, who addressed themselves especially to this state of things, namely, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Their prophecies have consequently an especial character, suited to the position in which the people are then found and to God’s ways towards them.

There is another prophet who holds a peculiar place, that is, Jonah. His was the last testimony addressed immediately to the Gentiles, to shew that God still bore them in mind, and governed all things supremely, although He had already called Israel to be a separate people unto Himself.78 Christ is the centre of all these prophecies, whatever their character may be. It is the Spirit of Christ that speaks in them. One of the two divisions I have mentioned is of much greater extent than the other. Daniel alone in the Old Testament gives us the detail of “the times of the Gentiles,” with the exception of some particular revelations in Zechariah. There is a very striking difference between the two classes of prophecies. That which belongs to the time when Israel is acknowledged is addressed to the people, to their conscience and to their heart. That which gives the history of “the times of the Gentiles,” while it is a revelation for the people, is not addressed to them. In the books of the three prophets who prophesied after

the captivity, neither Israel nor Judah is ever called the people of God, except in promises for the future, when the Messiah will re-establish blessing.

There is yet another principle, simple but important to our understanding of the prophets. Whatever figures the Spirit of God may use in depicting the ways of God or those of the enemy, the subject of the prophecy is never a figure. I am not speaking of those prophecies in which all is symbol; this remark could not be applied to them. Moreover a symbol is not the same thing as a figure. It is a collection of the moral or historical qualities, or of both, which belong to the prophetic object, in order to present God's idea of that object. Certain elements which compose this symbol may be figures; but the symbol itself, correctly speaking, is not a figure, but a striking whole, made up of the qualities that morally compose the thing described. Accordingly nothing is more instructive than a well-understood symbol. It is the perfect idea which God gives us of the way in which He looks upon the object represented by the symbol—His view of its moral character.

Let us now consider the writings of the prophets.

78 The character of this prophet in other respects will be considered hereafter.

## Isaiah

Isaiah takes the first place; and in fact he is the most complete of all the prophets, and perhaps the most rich. The whole circle of God's thoughts with respect to Israel is more given here. Other prophets are occupied with certain portions only of the history of this people.

We will give here the division of this book into subjects. There is in the beginning an appearance of confusion; nevertheless it helps to explain the moral bearing of the book.

And here what a scene presents itself to our view!—sorrowful in one aspect, yet at the same time lovely and glorious, like the first glimmerings of dawn after a long and cold night of darkness, telling of the bright day which soon will rise over a scene, the beauties of which are faintly perceived, mingled with the darkness that still obscures them—a scene that shall be vivified by the sun that will soon enlighten it. One rejoices in this partial light: it tells of the goodness, the energy, and the intentions of that God who has created all things for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace and glory. But one longs for the manifestation of the fulness of this accomplishment, when all will repose in the effects of this goodness.

Such is prophecy. It is sorrowful, because it unveils the sin, the ungrateful folly, of God's people. But it reveals the heart of One who is unwearied in love, who loves this people, who seeks their good, although He feels their sin according to His love. It is the heart of God that speaks. These two characters of prophecy throw light upon the two-fold end it has in view, and help us to

understand its bearing. First of all, it addresses itself to the actual state of the people, and shews them their sin; it always therefore supposes the people to be in a fallen condition. When they peacefully enjoy the blessings of God, there is no need of displaying their condition to them. But, in the second place, during the period in which the people are still acknowledged, it speaks of present restoration on their repentance, to encourage them to return to Jehovah; and it proclaims deliverance. And in this, the law and so the blessings connected with it, have their place as that to which they should return. Of this the last prophetic word from God (Mal. 4) is an expressive instance. But God well knew the hearts of His people, and that they would not yield to His call. To sustain the faith of the remnant, faithful amidst this unbelief, and for the instruction of His people at all times, He adds promises which will assuredly be fulfilled by the coming of Messiah. These promises are sometimes connected with the circumstances of a near and partial deliverance, sometimes with the consummation of the people's iniquity in the rejection of Christ come in humiliation. It is important to be able to distinguish between that part of a passage which refers to those circumstances which were near at hand, and that which speaks of full deliverance shewn in perspective through those circumstances. This is the difficult part of the interpretation of prophecy.

I would add that, although the subject of prophecy is not a figure, yet figures are not only largely used, but they are often intermingled with literal expressions; so that in explaining the prophetic books one cannot make an exact rule to distinguish between figure and letter. The aid of the Holy Ghost is necessary, as is always the case

in the study of the sacred word, to find the true sense of the passage. What I have said is equally applicable to other parts of scripture, and in the most solemn circumstances. Psalm 22, for instance, is a continual mixture of figures, which represent the moral character of certain facts, with other facts recited in the simplicity of the letter. There is no difficulty in understanding it. “Dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet.” The word dogs gives the character of those present. This way of speaking is found in all languages. For instance, it would be said, “He drew a fine picture of virtue.” Drew a picture is a figure. I say this in order that a difficulty may not be made of that which belongs to the nature of human language.

I come now to the contents of this important book of prophecy. It is thus divided: —The first four chapters are apart, forming a kind of introduction. The fifth also in itself stands alone. It judges the people in view of the care that God has bestowed upon them. But we shall find this judgment resumed in detail in verse 8 of chapter 9. In chapter 6 we have the judgment of the people in view of the Messiah’s coming glory; consequently there is a remnant acknowledged.79 Chapter 7 formally introduces the Messiah, Immanuel, the Son of David, and the judgment upon the house of David after the flesh; so that there is an assured hope in sovereign grace, but at the same time judgment upon the last human support of the people. In chapter 8 we have the desolating Assyrian who overruns the land, but also Immanuel (previously announced in chap. 7) who finally brings his schemes to nought. Meantime there is a remnant, separate from the people, and attached to

this Immanuel;80 and the circumstances of anguish through which the apostate people must pass are alluded to, which terminate in the full blessing flowing from Immanuel's presence. This closes with verse 7 of chapter 9; so that we have here in fact the whole history of the Jews in relationship with Christ. In verse 8 of chapter 9 the Spirit resumes the general national history from chapter 5, interrupted by this essential episode of the introduction of Immanuel. He resumes it from the time then present, pointing out the different judgments of Jehovah, until He introduces the last instrument of these judgments—the Assyrian, the rod of Jehovah. And here the immediate deliverance is presented as an encouragement to faith, and as prefiguring the final destruction of the power that will be the rod of Jehovah in the last days. Jehovah, having smitten the desolator, presents (chap. 11) the Offspring of David, at first in His intrinsic moral character, and then in the results of His reign as to full blessing, and the presence of Jehovah established again in Zion in the midst of Israel. Thus the whole history of the people is given us in its grand features, until their establishment in blessing as the people of God, having Jehovah in their midst. Only that it is to be remarked that nothing is given of Antichrist, nor of the power of the beast, nor of the time of tribulation as such, because that is the period during which the Jews are not owned, though they be dealt with, while our prophecy speaks of the time when they are owned. It is stated in general terms that God would hide His face from the house of Jacob, and the righteous in spirit wait for Him. {Is 13-27}

From chapter 13 to the end of chapter 27 we find the judgment of the Gentiles; whether Babylon or the other

nations, especially of those which were at all times in relationship with Israel; the position of Israel, not only in the midst of them, but of all the nations in the last days (this is chap. 18); and, finally, the judgment of the whole world (chap. 24), and the full millennial blessing of Israel (chaps. 25-27). From chapters 28 to 35 we have the detail of all that happens to the Jews in the last days. Each revelation closes with a testimony to the glory of God in Israel. {Is 36-39}

In chapters 36 to 39 the Spirit relates the history of a part of Hezekiah's reign. It contains three principal subjects: — the resurrection of the Son of David as from death; the destruction of the Assyrian, without his having been able to attack Jerusalem; and the captivity in Babylon. These are the three grand foundations of the whole history and state of the Jews in the last days. {Is 40}

From chapter 40 to the end is a very distinct part of the prophecy, in which God reveals the consolation of His people and their moral relations with Himself, and the double ground of His controversy with them, whether in view of the position in which He has placed the nation as His elect servant—the witness of Jehovah the one true God, in the presence of the Gentiles, and their idolatrous failure—or in respect to their rejection of Christ the only true elect Servant81 who has fulfilled His will. This gives occasion to the revelation of a remnant who hearken to this true Servant, as well as to the history of the circumstances that this remnant pass through, and therefore at the same time to that of the people's condition in the last days, ending with the manifestation of Jehovah in judgment. The position of Israel with respect to the idolatrous nations gives occasion also to

the introduction of Babylon, of its destruction, and the deliverance of captive Judah by Cyrus. This idolatry is one of the subjects on which Jehovah pleads with His people. The other and yet graver subject is that of the rejection of Christ. For more detail we must wait till these chapters come under examination.

Prophecy supposes that the people of God are in a bad condition, even when they are still acknowledged, and prophecy addressed to them. There is no need of addressing powerful testimony to a people who are walking happily in the ways of the Lord, nor of sustaining the faith of a tried remnant by hopes founded on the unchangeable faithfulness and the purposes of God, when all are enjoying in perfect peace the fruits of His present goodness—attached, as a consequence, to the faithfulness of the people. The proof of this simple and easily understood principle is found in each of the prophets. It does not appear that the prophets, whose prophecies we possess in the inspired volume, wrought any miracles.82 For the law was then in force, its authority outwardly acknowledged; there was nothing to establish; and Jehovah's authority was the basis of the public system of religion in the land according to the institutions appointed by Himself in connection with the temple. It was on practical duty that the prophets insisted. In the midst of the ten apostate tribes Elijah and Elisha wrought miracles to re-establish the authority of Jehovah. Such is the faithfulness of Jehovah, and His patience towards His people. A new object of faith requires miracles. That which is founded on the already acknowledged word, and which does not demand the reception of it as a new object, requires none, whatever the increase of light or claim on

conscience may be. The word commends itself to the conscience in those who are taught of God; and if there are new revelations, they are to the comfort of those who have received the practical testimony, and have thus recognised the authority of one who speaks on the part of God.

We will now examine the contents of the prophecy itself in a more detailed way.

Isaiah I begins with a testimony to the sad condition of the people. They were all wounds and corruption. It was useless to chastise them any more. Their ceremonies were an abomination to Jehovah. He desired righteousness. Nevertheless the people are called to repentance, and are assured that blessing should follow repentance. Such is the position which prophecy gives them. But God knew the people who, with their princes, were wicked and corrupt; and God declares what will take place. He will execute judgment and thus cleanse the people and re-establish blessing. The two great principles are thus laid down: blessing proposed consequent upon repentance; but in fact it will be blessing brought in by judgment.

Thus re-established, Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, will be the centre of blessing and peace to all the nations (chap. 2:1-4). This puts the invitation to the people into the prophet’s mouth to come and walk in the light of Jehovah. Why has He forsaken His people? Because they have learnt the ways of the heathen. Well, the day of Jehovah shall be upon all the glory of man, and upon all his idols. They may cease from man, for God’s own people on the earth, the place of His rest, shall be judged and smitten by their God (chaps. 3, 4). But in

that day shall the Branch of Jehovah be glorious, and the earth shall be blessed. He who smites binds up the wounds by introducing the Messiah, and by Him blessing the earth. The remnant will be holy when the cleansing of Jerusalem shall have been accomplished by the judgment and the fire of Jehovah. Jerusalem shall be protected and glorified by the manifestation of Jehovah's presence, like the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the form in which the introduction to this prophecy is presented with much force and clearness.

After this the Spirit of God begins to plead with the people, taking two distinct grounds—namely, that which God had done for His people, and the coming of Jehovah in the Person of Christ in glory. Had the people made a suitable return to the care which Jehovah had lavished upon them? Were they in a condition to receive Jehovah in their midst? Chapter 5 takes up the first question, which addresses itself to the responsibility of the people, in view of the care and the government of God. What could He have done for His vine that He had not done? It has produced Him but wild grapes. He makes known the consequences of this according to His righteous government. His hedge, the protection with which He had surrounded it, shall be taken away, and it shall be left a prey to the ravages of the heathen. God, in pleading with Israel, shews them their sins in detail. Then His hand is stretched forth against His people, and terrible judgments fall upon them. Nevertheless, "His anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." He will bring mighty strangers against them, whose progress nothing can arrest, who will carry the people into captivity. There shall be sorrow and mourning in the land, and the light of their heavens shall

be darkened. In the first instance this will be Nebuchadnezzar, and even Sennacherib; but still more fully will it be the nations that come against Jerusalem in the last days, and capture it, after having overrun and invaded all the land. We shall have the details of this farther on.

But it was in the counsels of God that His presence should be established in glory in the midst of His people, and this will be accomplished in Christ at the end of the age. Hence the testimony of the progress of the judgments is interrupted after the first general statement, and in chapter 6 the prophet sees this glory. Yet its first effect is judicial, and operates to blind and condemn them. The previous judgment (chap. 5) had been in respect of the breaking of the law and the despising of the word of the Holy One of Israel. But with enmity against Christ and His rejection comes judicial blindness and the separation of a remnant. That it is the glory of Christ is taught us in chapter 12 of John's Gospel. The prophet feels at once the incompatibility of the people's condition with the manifestation of this glory. Unclean lips cannot celebrate it. But a live coal from the altar cleanses his own lips, and he consecrates himself to Jehovah's message; and to that which concerns the glory of Christ. The heart of the people is made fat until there is entire desolation. Nevertheless there shall be a remnant, a holy seed, which shall be like the sap of a tree that has lost its leaves.83 We have then in these last chapters the judgment of the people under two aspects: first, that of God's government (in this point of view the people, being altogether guilty, are given up to the Gentiles); secondly, in view of the glory of Jehovah's presence at His coming according to His

purposes of grace (for this the people were unfit). But here, as the purposes of God were in question, there is a remnant according to election in whom the glory shall be re-established. This distinction must be made when the government of God and His outward dealings are in question. {Is 5}

In chapter 5, which speaks of the former character of judgment, there is no remnant. It is simply the public and complete judgment of the nation; for as to this all rested on their responsibility. In the Gospels this is looking for fruit; Christ might dig about it and dung it, but this was looking for fruit. Hence it is cursed and never to bear fruit. That is Israel (man) under the first covenant. In chapter 6 God acts within, in His own relationship with the people. Hence we find a remnant and the assured re-establishment of the people; for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Here also we find Christ. God could not cast off His people for ever, and the prophetic faith is found which says, How long? as elsewhere it is said, There is none to say, How long? For when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?

But this requires further development; and it is given in a remarkable manner in the next prophecy, comprised in chapters 7, 8, 9 to the end of verse 7. Certain promises were attached to the family of David, in which—as we saw when examining the Books of Samuel—God had renewed the hopes of Israel, when the links between Himself and the people were broken by the taking of the ark, and He had forsaken His place at Shiloh. Now the house of David, the last sustainment of the people in responsibility, has also failed in faithfulness. Ahaz has forsaken Jehovah, and set up the altar of a strange god

in the temple of Jehovah. In chapter 7 the Spirit of God directs the prophet to the king, and addresses him. Isaiah was to go and meet him, with Shear-jashub his son—a symbolical child whose name signifies “The remnant shall return” But the Lord seeks first, as He did with respect to the people in chapter 1, to encourage this branch of David to act in faith, and thus to glorify God. He announces to the king that the designs of Rezin and Pekah shall come to nought, and even proposes to him to ask a sign. But Ahaz is too far from the Lord to avail himself of this, though he replies with forms of piety. And again, as He had done with respect to the people, Jehovah declares that which shall happen to the family of David, and to the people under their rule. The two points of this prophetic announcement are—the gift of Immanuel, the virgin’s son; and the complete desolation of the land by the Assyrian. These indeed are the keys to the whole prophecy of Isaiah. Nevertheless there shall be a remnant. Verse 16 refers to Shear-jashub; but this prophecy goes farther. In chapter 8 the second prophetic child announces by his name the approaching appearance of this enemy and his ravages; and then, since the people despised the promises made to the family of David and rejoiced in the flesh, Jehovah would take the thing in hand. Consequently we have the whole sequel of the people’s history, of the directions given to the remnant, and of God’s intervention in power for the establishment of full blessing in the Person of the Messiah. {Is 7}

In chapter 7, where the responsibility of the family of David is the subject, Immanuel is promised as a sign; but the success of the Assyrian is complete without any reverse. Immanuel once brought in, all is changed; the

land is His. The Assyrian reaches even to the neck, because the waters of Shiloah had been despised. But Immanuel secured all. Thus the prophetic Spirit passes on to the events of the last days, of which Sennacherib was but a type. He exhibits all the designs and confederacies of the nations brought to nought because of Immanuel—God (is) with us. It is the complete deliverance of Israel in the last days (chap. 8:5-10). And as to the remnant, what course are they to follow? (chap. 8:11, and following.) They are not to be troubled by the fear of the people, nor to join them in their confederacies, but to sanctify Jehovah of hosts Himself, and give Him all His true importance in their hearts. He will be their sanctuary in the day of their trouble.

But who then is this Immanuel, this Jehovah of hosts? We well know. This brings in then the whole history of the rejection of Christ, and the position of the remnant and of the nation in consequence, and of the final intervention of the power of God. The passage is too clear to need much explanation. I will point out its principal subjects. Christ becomes personally a stumbling-stone.84 In consequence of this the testimony of God is deposited exclusively in the hands and the hearts of His disciples, God's elect remnant. He hides His face from Jacob; but, according to the Spirit of prophecy, this remnant waits for Him and seeks Him. Meanwhile Christ and the children whom Jehovah has given Him are for signs to the two houses of Israel (compare Rom. 11:1-8). Those (the nation) who reject the stone are in rebellion and anguish in Immanuel's land; they are given up to desolation. Nevertheless this distress is not like the former ravages of the Assyrian, because the Messiah, having appeared, has taken in

hand the cause of His people, according to the counsels of God. The Spirit of prophecy passes at once, as is constantly the case, from His appearance as light, to the results of the deliverance which He will accomplish in the last days (from v. 2 to 3, chap. 9). For the church was a mystery hid in God, and not the subject of prophecy or promise. The yoke of the Assyrian being broken, all the brightness of the glory of the divine Person of the Messiah shines out in the blessing of His people.

These two subjects, the Messiah and the Assyrian, form the basis of all the prophecy that speaks of Israel, when this people are the recognised object of God's dealings. It may be noticed that the Assyrian appears here twice—the second time in connection with a gathering together of the nations. The first time, chapter 7, he is Jehovah's instrument for the chastisement of Israel, and he does his own will without any question of his being broken. The second time, chapter 8, he fills the land; but the assembly of the nations gathered together against Israel is broken and brought to nothing. This expectation of Jehovah's intervention (without sharing the fears of the world in the last days, or seeking that strength which the world think to find in confederation, but, on the contrary, resting absolutely on Jehovah alone) contains in principle a valuable instruction for the present day. {Is 9:8}

In chapter 9:8 the Spirit, having given the great leading facts as to Messiah, Immanuel, resumes the general history of Israel without any special introduction of the Messiah till towards the end. This prophecy closes with chapter 12. Although the pride of Ephraim is mentioned, yet Jacob or Israel is looked at as a whole. The different phases of chastisement or of distress are in verses 8-12,

13-17, 18-21, and chapter 10:1-4. The Assyrian then re-appears, as being properly the rod of Jehovah; and it is announced, that when God shall have accomplished all that He had determined with respect to Zion (an accomplishment not here revealed), He will break the rod that He has used, and then the remnant shall seek Jehovah, and shall “stay upon “Him. This is the final act of the great drama of God’s dealings with respect to Israel. There is a consumption decreed of God for the land. But when at length the Assyrian lifts up his hand, Jehovah comes in and smites him. And the indignation of Jehovah, and His anger against Israel, which till now had never been turned away, will come to an end in the destruction of this rod that magnified itself against the Lord who used it. Verse 25 is in contrast with chapter 9:12, 17, 21, and chapter 10:4. Sennacherib was a type of this. But it is a prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian in the last days, when the indignation against Israel shall cease. {Is 11, 12}

Consequently we have, in chapters 11, 12, the Messiah and His reign, the source of the millennial blessing of the people of God. The first verses of chapter 11 give His character; afterwards it is the effect of His reign. {Is 12}

With chapter 12 one division of the whole book closes. That which commences with chapter 13 continues to the end of chapter 27, which describes the same millennial condition, but in a more extended sphere, because the world—of which these latter chapters speak—is brought in; while chapters 5-12 were in especial connection with Israel.

The chapters we are now considering connect events that were then at hand with the end of the age. It is only by thoroughly apprehending this that we can understand them. The reason of this is simple: the nations are looked at in reference to Israel. But time is not reckoned, with respect to Israel, from the Babylonish captivity until the last days. The introduction of the Messiah as a stone of stumbling, with which the special epoch of seventy weeks is noticed in Daniel, has been already considered. But this passage in the prophet of the times of the Gentiles shews only more distinctly that time is not reckoned afterwards to the close. Seventy weeks go to the full restoration of Israel. The immense gap, which has now lasted more than 1800 years, is in no way taken into account.85 In the eyes of the prophet, Babylon, or more correctly its head, besides the idolatrous corruption, represents the imperial throne of the world in contrast with the throne of God at Jerusalem.86 Babylon will be overthrown, and God will again bless Israel. This will be the judgment of this present age—of the world. It is represented here in that destruction of Babylon which was at hand. But this judgment will not be completed until, the times of the Gentiles being ended, Israel shall be delivered. The character of the king of Babylon is described here in very remarkable language (chap. 14:12, 13). It is the spirit of Babylon, and still more especially in its last representative at the close, to which this prophecy in its full accomplishment refers. It was so even in Nebuchadnezzar himself—nay, even when they built the tower of Babel. The destruction of the Assyrian then takes place in the earth;87 and, although the house of David had had its sceptre broken, Philistia shall be judged and subdued, and Jehovah will found Zion, and

the poor of His people will trust in Him. This destruction of Babylon, and of the Assyrian after Babylon, necessary to the understanding of the whole scene, is a kind of scene apart, complete in chapters 13, 14.

But in Israel's territory, or in connection with this people, some nations still remain; and God must dispose of these in order that Israel may enjoy the full blessing and the result of the promises. Babylon, being an immense system, which takes the place of the throne of David, is seen as a whole. The nations, whose judgments are here related (although there is allusion to events nearer the time of the prophecy), are looked at as in the last days, when God resumes His throne of judgment in order to re-establish His people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar had taken Tyre and subdued Egypt. The Assyrian had overthrown Damascus and led Ephraim captive. And these were events comparatively near at hand. But, as a whole, the events spoken of here are owned in the last days. Even in the preceding chapter the destruction of the Assyrian is placed after the fall of the king of Babylon. Yet historically the Assyrian had been subdued by Babylon; and the overthrow of Sennacherib had taken place many years before that epoch. But prophecy always looks to the accomplishment of God's purposes. Here there are generally no details with respect to the instruments employed by God. They are found elsewhere. {Is 15, 16}

In chapters 15 and 16 Moab is judged. They are warned that the throne of David shall be established, and the oppressor consumed out of the land. In chapter 17 we have the invasion of armies from the north, the assembled nations. Damascus is overthrown. Israel shall be but as a few berries on the outmost branches.

Nevertheless they shall look to their Maker, and the gathered nations shall perish before the manifested power of God. The outline of this last invasion of Israel gives rise to a brief but very clear prophecy of their condition in the last days, and which is contained in chapter 18. They shall be restored by means of some powerful nation, outside the limits88 of their then national relationships; but Jehovah stands apart from His own relationship with them, though ordering all things. Then, when Israel shall begin to bud as a vine in the land, they shall be given up as a prey to the nations. Nevertheless in that time they shall be brought as an offering to Jehovah, and shall themselves bring an offering too.

In chapters 19 and 20 Egypt shall be smitten in that day; but Jehovah will heal it. Egypt, Assyria, and Israel shall together be blessed of Jehovah. Chapter 20 teaches us that it will be Assyria that leads Egypt captive (compare Daniel 11 at the end). It will be observed here, that, in general, from chapter 13 to 17 there is deliverance. The sceptre of the wicked is broken (chap. 14:5). The throne of David will be established in mercy (chap. 16:5). The Assyrian is destroyed —the Philistines subdued—Zion founded by Jehovah— Damascus reduced. The latter event introduces the evils of the last days. Only, as we have remarked, the gathering of the nations is for their destruction (Micah 4:11-13). Chapter 18, resuming the subject of chapter 17, shews us Israel as they are to be in their land in the last days—oppressed by the Gentiles, but in result brought back to God.

The chapters following 18 do not, like the previous ones, tell of Israel’s deliverance, but of the invasion and overrunning of the nations before mentioned—the

overflowing scourge. Egypt is overrun as well as Ethiopia, in which Israel had trusted. Babylon is overcome—Dumah and Kedar destroyed— Jerusalem is ravaged—Tyre falls. In short it is a universal overthrow, the central scene of which is the land of Canaan, but in which the whole world is included (chap. 24:4). Even the powers of heaven are overturned, as well as the kings of the earth upon the earth, giving place to the establishment of Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, as the centre of power and blessing, the power of the serpent, the dragon that is in the sea, being annihilated.

After this outline attention must be given to some details. It will be observed that Babylon and Jerusalem fall (chaps. 21, 22), one after the other, Jerusalem the last. Now it is quite evident that this connection of events is yet future. That which is said of Babylon and Jerusalem may have found its occasion in the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, and partly in the condition of Jerusalem when threatened by Sennacherib. But there was neither the connection nor the order of events noted in this prophecy. But Babylon is named in a manner that gives no clue whatever to its condition. The “desert of the sea “is a singular term to describe a city. But a dreadful invasion is before the prophet’s eyes, and Babylon falls. It comes like a whirlwind of the south, and the power of Babylon is at an end—we are not told in what manner.

Jerusalem, the valley of vision, is ravaged. The Persians and the Medes, who were the invaders of the preceding chapter, re-appear here as attacking Jerusalem. There is no fighting outside; but, the city being taken, its inhabitants are bound or slain within it. Besides the prophetic revelations, this chapter contains also moral

instruction of the deepest importance. In the first place all the wisdom of man is insufficient to ward off evil, if not accompanied by the power of God. When the city of God is in question, this wisdom, exercised in forgetfulness of the God who built and founded the city of His holiness, is an unpardonable sin (chap. 22:11). Again, that which is related here was, historically speaking, done by Hezekiah, of whom it is said he prospered in all his works. Outward blessing attended his labours; but, at the same time, the condition of the people, even with respect to these labours, was such that God could not pardon it. This is often the case: outward faith in doing the work of God, blessed by Him; corruption as to state of heart in the thing, which God will assuredly judge, and forgetfulness of God Himself and of their belonging to Him. This is when the people of God lean upon human means. We see also here one who held a settled office, according to man, in the government of the house of David, set aside with shame, and one chosen of God taking his place, all glory being given to him (a remarkable prefiguration of the setting aside of the false Christ, and the establishment of the true, in the last days). This prophecy gives room to suppose that the nations will attack Jerusalem when the Babylon of history is a desert. That which is Babylon in those days shall fall. Nevertheless Jerusalem, the object of the prophecies, shall be taken, its government changed; the usurper must yield his place to the chosen One of God.

The burden of Tyre shews us all the pride of human glory stained, and all the honourable of the earth brought into contempt. The occasion is the capture of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, but the prophecy goes farther

—even to the days when her merchandise shall be holiness to Jehovah (chap. 23). {Is 24}

Chapter 24 sets before us the overturning of everything in the earth. The land of Israel is first in view. But there all the elements of all the systems of this world will be gathered together and judged. We have already remarked that this extends to the judicial overthrow of the power of wickedness in the heavenlies, as well as of the kings of the earth upon the earth: the succeeding chapters shew us with what intent. Without it the evil would not be set aside and put a stop to. Hence when Christ rides into Jerusalem in Luke it is said, “peace in heaven.” For till the power of evil is set aside thus, any blessing established on the earth is soon corrupted and fades.

Before examining them, let us retrace the objects of the judgments we have spoken of; let us retrace them in their moral order. We have Babylon, the power of organised corruption, where the people of God are captive; the public open enemy of God and His people—the Assyrian; the inward enemy—the Philistine; then Moab, the pride of man. Damascus is that which has been the enemy of God’s people, but allied with the apostate part of that people against the faithful part. From all these the people are delivered. Afterwards we find, under judgment, Egypt, or the world in its state of nature, the wisdom of which is lost in confusion; Babylon, now desert in the midst of the nations; Dumah, the liberty, the independence, of man; Jerusalem, the professing people; Tyre, the glory of the world; and, finally, all that is on the earth, and, to sum up all power, spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. {Is 25, 26}

Chapters 25 and 26 take the form of a song, in which the effect of God's intervention is celebrated. Let us observe its principal subjects. God is faithful. He accomplishes His purposes. He has brought the city of human pride to nought through His power. All the strong organisation of man's pride is destroyed. God has been the strength of the poor among His people in the day of their distress, and the power of the enemy has been brought low. He will execute justice in Zion for all people. He will take away the veil that is upon their heart. The resurrection of the faithful will have taken place. I say "the faithful," for it is death swallowed up in victory. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 15 applies it thus. The rebuke of His people (Israel) shall be entirely taken away. The remnant (v. 9-12) celebrate their deliverance; they had waited for God, and the power of Jehovah shall be displayed on their behalf. Moab, their haughty neighbour, shall be subdued.89 In chapter 26 the remnant sing in praise of the character of this deliverance. They have a strong city, but its bulwarks are the salvation of God. The strength of man has no place here; it is the foot of the poor that treads down the lofty city. It is the judgment that the righteous God executes Himself. The remnant had waited for Him in the way of His judgments. The long-suffering of grace was in vain; it is only when the judgments of God are in the earth90 that the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Even when the hand of Jehovah was lifted up to strike, they did not see. But they shall see, in spite of themselves, and they shall be ashamed. The fire of Jehovah's jealousy shall devour them; they shall not rise. But Israel shall be raised, as from the dead, by the power of Jehovah.

Finally, Jehovah invites His people to hide themselves a little moment, while He comes out of His place to execute vengeance (chap. 27). The power of Satan in this world and among men shall be destroyed, Israel preserved and watered as the vine of Jehovah. He had smitten Israel, but only in measure. Nevertheless the people shall be fully judged; and then Jehovah will gather His dispersed, one by one.

In the succeeding chapters we have the details of that which will happen to Israel in their own land, when invaded by the Gentiles in the last days, of which we have had but the general picture and results. We shall find a complete and glorious deliverance of the remnant amidst the most terrible judgments. {Is 28}

Chapter 28 sets before us the first elements of these final scenes in the history of this wonderful people. The scourge comes from the north. Ephraim is invaded as by an overflowing torrent, by a tempest of hail that smites and destroys; he is trodden under foot. But in that day Jehovah shall be for a crown of glory to the residue of His people. The people, morally besotted, do not hear. And this is the judicial sentence of Jehovah who turns to Jerusalem in pronouncing it. There they had made a covenant with death and the powers of darkness,91 that they might escape the overflowing torrent. But the covenant shall be disannulled, the scourge shall overtake them; they shall be trodden down, and smitten by this terrible rod. We have then this revelation, that when Ephraim shall be invaded by this terrible scourge, the princes of Jerusalem will seek to preserve themselves from it by making a covenant with the power of evil. But it shall come to nought. The waters shall overflow and sweep away the refuge of lies. Jerusalem,

as well as Ephraim, undergoes the consequences of the assault of the enemy. But the Messiah is the elect corner-stone, the sure foundation for the remnant; he that believes in Him shall not be confounded. Thus Ephraim is invaded and Jerusalem taken. There is a consumption determined92 by Jehovah upon the whole earth. {Is 29}

Chapter 29 Jerusalem is reduced to the last extremity. But this time Jehovah appears for her deliverance, and the multitude of her enemies disappear as a dream of the night. Everything is dark and gloomy as to the people; all is morally overturned, and soon God will overturn everything by His power, and change the forest into Carmel (that is, a fruitful field). Henceforth Jacob shall no more be weak and feeble. The meek shall be blessed, the deaf shall hear the word. The terrible one and the blasphemer shall be consumed before Jehovah. There are two parts then in this history, two attacks. The first succeeds against Ephraim and against Jerusalem. The second does not succeed. Jerusalem is brought very low, but Jehovah appears and she is delivered. The spirit of scorn and unbelief was marked in chapter 28; the spirit of blindness in chapter 29.

The effect of this unbelief is manifested in chapter 30. The people put their trust in man, according to the wisdom of man. They look to Egypt for help, but in vain. This contempt of Jehovah, accompanied by an absolute refusal to hearken to His word, which called on the people to trust quietly in Him, added yet more to their iniquity. God allows the evil, therefore, to go on to the full; but it is in order to give then free course to His grace. Verse 18 is a marvellous testimony to the ways of Jehovah. He allowed the chastisement to be fully

accomplished, that nothing might be left for Him but perfect grace. Grace and glory will abound, when Jehovah shall bind up the breach of His people and heal their wound. At the end of the chapter we have the intervention of Jehovah against this last instrument of His chastisements— the rod of chapter 10. The Assyrian is destroyed, and in the place where the rod should fall on him, there shall be only songs of triumph. But Tophet, the fire of Jehovah, was prepared for another also—"for the king" He who shall have assumed that title in Israel shall be consumed also by the indignation of Jehovah.

Chapter 31. The folly of trusting in an arm of flesh is again pointed out, but only while dwelling on the true means of deliverance. Jehovah at Jerusalem would be in the midst of the nations as a lion among the shepherds, and would defend Jerusalem as birds hovering over it. His presence should overthrow the Assyrian, and cause him to flee; for the fire of Jehovah shall be in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem. {Is 32}

Then, in chapter 32, the Messiah should reign in righteousness and set everything morally in order. Zion would in fact be a wilderness until the Spirit was poured out from on high, and then it should become a Carmel; and that which before had passed for a Carmel should be counted comparatively but a wilderness. Righteousness should be established everywhere, and peace, the fruit of righteousness, when the hail should come down upon the lofty ones who bear no fruit; and the city, the organisation of human pride, should be utterly abased. The last verse appears to me to speak of the blessedness of full earthly peace. {Is 33, 34}

Chapters 33, 34 announce the last two great acts of judgment. At the moment when God establishes Himself in Zion, and fills it with righteousness, a final and powerful enemy (whom I believe to be the same as the Gog of Ezekiel), who had come up to spoil the land, appears on the scene. But there are those who wait upon Jehovah, and He arises, and the enemy is put to flight. They gather the spoil of those who thought to despoil Israel. In verses 14,15, the faithful remnant are distinguished. The Messiah appears in His beauty; and, all being at peace after the destruction of this enemy, the most distant parts of the land are open to the inhabitants of Zion, which is established in safety for ever. {Is 34}

Chapter 34 reveals the terrible judgments which will fall upon the other nations in Edom (compare chap. 63).93 Here it is those who have oppressed Zion, and the vengeance that God takes on oppressors. Idumea is itself the particular object of this; but all the enemies of Israel, who were associated with Edom, the armies of the nations assembled against Jerusalem, will perish by the judgment of Jehovah in the land of Edom. {Is 35}

Chapter 35 gives a picture of the blessing that succeeds the judgment, the blessing even of the wilderness, which depends on that of Israel. The redeemed of Jehovah shall go up with joy in full security to Zion, and all mourning shall pass away for ever. {Is 36-39}

Chapters 36-39 relate the history of the invasion of Sennacherib, its result, and the sickness unto death of Hezekiah, which preceded it: an instruction for the remnant as to the manner in which the Lord should be waited on (this deliverance being, as to the substance of

it, a figure of that which will take place with respect to the Assyrian in the last days). The sickness of Hezekiah furnishes us with a type of the Son of David as raised from the dead—the power of Christ, which shall be perfected in a nation raised also—morally—from the dead, all their sins being pardoned. It is the outward and inward deliverance of Israel: resurrection (as to its practical power); and deliverance from the Assyrian. Meanwhile, as a present thing, the captivity in Babylon is announced.

Previously to this, we have rather had the outward history of Israel; but now we have their moral or inward history, in their place of testimony against idolatry, and in their relationship with Christ, and the separation of a remnant.94 {Is 40}

Chapter 40. The first part of that which might be called the second book of Isaiah extends from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48. The Messiah is, comparatively speaking, but little introduced here. It is rather the great question between Jehovah and idols, answered first by the success of Cyrus and the capture of Babylon. For, though their glory cannot be separated, there is Jehovah and His anointed. This is evidently connected in grace with the deliverance of Israel, God’s witness on the earth, unworthy, as the nation was, to be so. At the same time these ways of God shewed that there was no peace at all for the wicked in Israel. This great truth is repeated twice over, being applied to the two great controversies which God had with Israel. We will point out some details to make all this evident. The first eight verses of chapter 40 express in a very remarkable manner the principles on which God acts: the grace flowing from His own heart, when His chastisements

had been fully inflicted. God would comfort His people; and He speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, by telling her that her warfare is accomplished. The herald proclaims the coming of Jehovah. And here it is the fact, as deliverance: His rejection is not mentioned. It is spoken of later in chapters 51, 53. But with respect to the people, what must the prophet say? “All flesh is grass.” If all flesh is to see the glory of Jehovah, if He pleads in vengeance with all flesh, this is where the testimony must begin. All flesh is grass: Jehovah bloweth upon it. Is it thus with the Gentiles only? No; “the people is grass.” Comfort must begin with this. The grass withereth; who, then, can be trusted in? God has spoken. “The word of our God” (says the faith of the remnant—says the Spirit of prophecy) “shall stand for ever.” Then comes the prophetic testimony to the blessedness of ransomed Zion, who proclaims to the cities of Judah the presence of Jehovah— the Saviour, whose tender care is then described in a touching manner. The glory of His divine Majesty is contrasted with idols to verse 26. He then challenges Israel for their unbelief. He who is Jehovah fainteth not, neither is weary. The depths of His wisdom are unsearchable; but they that wait on Him renew their strength, and shall not grow weary. {Is 41}

Chapter 41 begins the historical details which prove this. Who raised up Cyrus to overthrow idolatry? But in the midst of the havoc he made of it, Israel is the elect servant of God, the seed of Abraham95 (this title of “servant” is a key to the rest of the book). He is not to fear: God will uphold him; and they that strive with him shall perish. God will hearken to His poor, and minister to their need. The besotted idolaters of the nations know

nothing of what God is about to do in judgment and for the deliverance of His people.

But although Cyrus is Jehovah's instrument for inflicting judgment and for delivering His people, this is but a passing and partial thing. Above all this there is a servant of God, His elect, who will appear in humility and without pretension, but who shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles of the Gentiles shall receive His law (chap. 42). This testimony was needful, and secures the blessing of Israel by the unfailing purpose and grace of God; but nothing more is said of the Messiah in this part of the prophecy. The result of bringing in the work of the Messiah is the glory of Jehovah, who alone in fact shall be glorified, and that unto the ends of the earth. In the manifestation of this glory He who had for a long time held His peace, will deliver His blind and deaf people Israel, who had not understood His ways. He will magnify His law. But why then are the people robbed and spoiled? Jehovah had given them up because of their disobedience.

But now He delivers and saves them (chap. 43). He created them for His glory. The blind have eyes; the deaf, ears; they are witnesses that Jehovah alone is God. The judgments on Babylon—the commencement and the figure of the final judgments96—prove this. Jehovah had formed this people for Himself, and the people had grown weary of their God; and, as it were, had made Him to serve with their sins. But now He pardons it all for His own glory. Glorious and striking testimony of Him who, in grace to the sinner when the sin becomes unbearable, puts away the sin instead of the sinner! This is what God has done through Christ. {Is 44}

Chapter 44. Jehovah now reasons with His people whom He had formed from the womb, encourages them, promises them His Spirit. Their children shall spring up as willows by the water-courses. They shall be witnesses for Him, Jehovah, the King of Israel, and their Redeemer. He shews Israel the folly of idolatry, reminds him that he is Jehovah's servant, and that He will not forget them, and assures them of the entire pardon of all their sins: even Jehovah, who is the disposer of all things, and who calls Cyrus by name to rebuild Jerusalem. {Is 45}

Chapter 45 enlarges upon the same subjects, dwelling on the deliverance of Israel as an everlasting deliverance, the result of which shall never be overthrown. {Is 46, 47}

In chapters 46, 47, the application is made to Babylon and to her idols, but still as pleading for Israel as beloved of God; for governmental judgment is always the deliverance of the beloved righteous. Babylon with all her pride and all her idols must come down and sit in the dust. In chapter 48 Jehovah at length pleads with Israel. He specifies Israel, the name of relationship with Himself, Jehovah, which those He is pleading with bear and claim, while noting that they were descended from Judah—in a word, the Jews, who had the place of Israel and called upon the name of the God of Israel; but He declares their wickedness and obstinacy. He had told them many things long before, and had made new revelations to them, that they might know that Jehovah is God. But they hearkened not; they did not understand. Nevertheless for the glory of His name Jehovah would not cut them off; but would refine them as silver. He reminds them in an affecting manner of the blessing they would have enjoyed had they kept His

commandments. Nevertheless it is even now declared unto them that Jehovah has redeemed His people. But as for the wicked, there is no peace unto them. This continual pleading against idolatry, whilst giving instruction for that day, seems to prove that, up to the end, the question of Israel's either testifying against idolatry or being defiled with it themselves will have a principal place. For the government of the world it is a primary question. The god of this world governs by means of idols; Jehovah, by His own name. Israel ought to have been the witness of this. They will be unfaithful to it in the last days. This is the reason why there is so much testimony here on the subject.

The Messiah is brought in, for it is He who delivers. But it is a question apart, so to say. The subject of Christ, and of the people's guilt with respect to Him, begins with chapter 49, which, with the following to the end of chapter 57, forms a whole; and, if one may venture to say so, Christ takes the place of Israel as the true servant of God. As He declared, "I am the true vine."97 This makes an apparent difficulty, but gives the true sense of chapter 49. Israel is the vessel of the glory of God on the earth, and the Spirit of prophecy in Israel calls on the isles of the Gentiles to hearken, as being thus chosen of Jehovah. "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (v. 3). Then Christ, by this same prophetic Spirit, says, "then have I laboured in vain." For we know that Israel rejected Him. Verse 5 is the answer. He shall be glorious. It would be a light thing to restore the remnant of Israel. He shall be the salvation of Jehovah unto the ends of the earth. Here we find a principle that is applicable to the work of Christ, even in the days of the gospel. But for the fulfilment of

the counsels of God the succeeding verses carry us on to the millennium. Verse 7, Christ is exalted. Verse 8, He is given for a covenant of the people (Israel) to secure the blessing of the land of Canaan, and the long desolate inheritance, and then the deliverance of the captives. At length God has comforted His people. Zion, apparently forsaken, must confess that Jehovah's faithfulness is greater than of a mother to her sucking child. Her destroyers are gone, her children flock in crowds to her and replenish her waste places, which regorge with an unlooked-for multitude before the eyes of the astonished mother, long time desolate. Kings shall be her nursing fathers, and shall bow down to her. And although she has been the captive of the mighty, she shall be delivered, and her oppressors trodden under foot. And all flesh shall know that Jehovah is her Saviour. This is the result in grace of the introduction of the true Servant. {Is 50}

Chapter 50 enters into the detail of the judgment which God brings upon Israel, and the true cause of their rejection.98 Nothing can be more touching, more wonderful, than the manner in which the Person and the first coming of the Lord are presented in this remarkable chapter, which requires not interpretation but devout study. Jehovah, who disposes of the heavens and the earth at His pleasure, has learnt how to speak a word in season to the weary and heavy-laden, taking the place Himself of lowliness and humiliation. Men—sad and dreadful truth!—seized the opportunity to insult and put Him to shame. They would none of Him. The heart pauses before such a truth, and judges itself. But soon also, thank God, it melts before that love which took occasion to introduce man into God's own perfection

(and that of man in the divine counsels) and to adapt itself, at the same time, to all his need— to make him feel that it had experienced all his misery. But, whatever the sorrows and trials attendant on such a service, the Man, Christ, trusted in God throughout, and turned not away back.

Here then is prophetically the cause of Israel's, or more specifically Judah's rejection;—when Jehovah came, there was no man. But, at the same time, with the help of the New Testament, we find the Christian's place in the most clear and striking manner. It is the place of Christ Himself. That which Christ says here the apostle adopts, and puts it into the mouth of the believer99 (Rom. 8:33, 34). He is identified with Jesus in His position before God. God (thus judges faith) acknowledges Him whom the people have rejected and by so doing have, as it were, forced God to give them a bill of divorcement. Next, this is what distinguishes the remnant—a new and important principle—they hearken to the voice of the servant, the Messiah, to the prophetic word. We have seen the church hidden in the Person of Christ Himself; here it is the faithful remnant of Israel in the latter day that are specified (y. 10). The rest who seek resources in themselves, in man and in flesh, shall lie down in sorrow.

The application is found in chapters 51 and 52 to the end of verse 12, and that to the remnant of Israel. In verse 13 a fresh division of the prophecy begins. The remnant in the last days are exhorted to have confidence. Those who follow after righteousness are a little flock; but God had called Abraham alone, and had blessed and increased him; He can do the same for the remnant. Compare Ezekiel 33:24, where we see in what

manner carnal confidence, walking in unrighteousness, can imitate, to its own ruin, divine faith. Jehovah will comfort Zion. Verse 4 is the second exhortation. The remnant are acknowledged as Jehovah's nation. His righteousness was near; salvation and deliverance were already gone forth from Him, and should be for ever. In verse 7 there is a further step. They are a people who know righteousness, who have the law in their heart; they are not to fear men who should be devoured by the judgments of God. But His righteousness and His salvation should be everlasting. The remnant, thus set in their place, are revealed by the Spirit of prophecy as owned of Jehovah. The same Spirit speaks by the mouth of the remnant (v. 9), to implore His intervention in power, and to claim the perfect lovingkindness of Jehovah, and the assured salvation of His redeemed ones, as well as the re-establishment of Zion in everlasting joy. The remnant thus encouraged, the Spirit turns to Zion, and even as "Awake! awake!" had been addressed to the arm of Jehovah, so is it now to Zion herself, oppressed and trodden under foot of strangers. As if to say it was Zion that had need to awake, not the Lord, for the salvation was there. The cup shall now be given to those that afflicted her again. "Awake! awake!" is once more addressed to her, that she may stand up and clothe herself in strength and glory. For Jehovah has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of Israel's God. This threefold repetition of "hearken "(v. 1, 4 and 7), followed by the threefold repetition, "Awake! awake! "is extremely beautiful. The verses 11, 12 of chapter 52 shew that in those days Israel will be captive among apostate Gentiles, as in the days of Babylon. Verse 13 is closely connected with that which precedes.

It is Christ's position in those times of glory and of deliverance wrought by Jehovah. Nevertheless it may be considered separately, and as beginning a new subject, because it forms a whole with respect to the Lord Jesus Himself. Christ shall be very highly exalted in those days. But what had His position been? On this subject the Spirit of prophecy enlarges. The kings shall be astonished at His glory—His whose visage had been so marred, more than any man. {Is 53}

Chapter 53. Israel's unbelief is declared. The structure of this most interesting chapter is as follows. As we have seen, in the Psalms and elsewhere, the full repentance of Israel comes after their deliverance. That is, when (as judged of Jehovah) their chastening is over, the glorious manifestation of Christ as their deliverer produces the deep sense of their sin in having rejected Him. This is Psalm 130. It is the affliction of the day of atonement. This chapter (53) expresses it. After verse 1 the Spirit speaks by the mouth of the escaped remnant of Israel. They confess their sin in having despised Him. Nevertheless there is faith now in the efficacy of His work (v. 5). Verse 1 shews that the testimony of Christ, addressed to faith, had been rejected. They believe when they see Him. I need not comment on this chapter, which is engraved on every true Christian's heart. We, by the work of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, have anticipated, and more than anticipated, their faith in the value of that work which is here spoken of; and their sin, which, as far as the nation was concerned in it, they here acknowledge. They had esteemed Him smitten, rejected of God, but the meaning of this is now seen. In verse 11, it is my belief that the two parts of Christ's work are distinguished. By His knowledge He

shall bring many to righteousness, or instruct many in righteousness, and He shall bear their iniquities. {Is 54}

Chapter 54 gives the result of these events to Jerusalem in those days. Jerusalem is looked at as barren and desolate, after having rejected Him who came to be her husband; but now, through that grace which has made Jehovah to be her righteousness, she is called to enlarge the place of her tent, and spread forth the curtains of her habitation. That grace indeed reckons all gathered during her desolation as her children. Christ being owned as the son born to her, all came in under Him (see Psalm 87:5, 6). For a little while God has treated her as a rejected wife, but has now comforted her with everlasting mercies. {Is 55, 56, 57}

Chapters 55, 56, 57 are exhortations given in view of these things. Chapter 55 is full free grace, which consequently embraces the Gentiles. For this reason it can be applied as a principle to the gospel. Its accomplishment will be in the time of blessings to the earth through the Lord’s presence. Chapter 56 gives the moral character that is necessary to enjoy the blessing, which is no longer according to the narrow legal principles of former days. His house shall in fact be a house of prayer for all those whose hearts are truly turned unto the God of Israel; and they shall be joyful in it. Chapter 57 denounces (we may say, on the same principle) those even in Israel who morally walk contrary to the will of God. The righteous might perish. But it would only be taking them from the evil to come. But whether it were Israel or not, there would be no peace for the wicked. These three chapters then give the moral instruction that belongs to those days. The faithful shall be blessed, and the meek, be they who they may;

the wicked shall be judged, whether of Israel or not. This closes, as I have said, with chapter 57 the second subdivision of this part of the prophecy.

But these moral considerations rouse the indignation of the Spirit at the condition of Israel in the days of the prophecy— their sin and their hypocrisy in pretending to serve Jehovah; and in chapters 58, 59 He denounces their trust in outward forms, and places blessing on condition of obedience. It was not that the arm of Jehovah was shortened, or His ear grown heavy; but the iniquity of the people hindered blessing and would bring judgment upon them. Yet, when all had failed and there was no one to maintain righteousness, Jehovah Himself would intervene in His sovereignty and might. He would crush His enemies and judge the isles; so that His name should be feared throughout the whole earth. The Redeemer should come to Zion and to those that turn from transgression in Jacob. Blessing should then be permanent, and the presence of the Holy Spirit abide with the seed of Jacob for ever. {Is 60}

Chapter 60 gives us the condition and the glory of Jerusalem in that time of blessing: all of the people thus spared would be righteous. {Is 61}

Chapter 61. As chapters 50-53 presented Christ in His sufferings, chapter 61 exhibits Him in the full grace of His Person concerned in the blessing of Israel. The three preceding chapters had revealed the judgment and the intervention of Jehovah, at the same time pointing out the Redeemer. We have seen the same principle in the structure of the prophecy from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48, as in the last series. Then in chapter 49 the Messiah is specially introduced. So He is here from the

beginning of chapter 61 to verse 6 of chapter 63. But there is a progress necessarily accompanying the introduction, in the last series of chapters, of the Person of Christ as the principal subject of Jehovah's pleadings. We see that it is Jehovah Himself who is Christ, and Christ who is Jehovah. "Wherefore, when I came," is the inquiry, "was there no man?" Hence also there is the difference between the moral sins of Israel against Jehovah, and the rejection of Himself in the Person of the Messiah, which we have seen so clearly pointed out in chapter 50. So also with respect to the repentance of the Jews. In the former chapters the law is written in their hearts; they turn away from iniquity; they trust in Jehovah; they hearken to the Spirit of prophecy, to the servant of Jehovah; they are delivered. But when they shall see their Redeemer in glory, then it is that the true repentance, the deep affliction, shall take place at the sight of Him whom they have despised and rejected, and who in His grace has borne their iniquities. {Is 61, 62}

Chapters 61, 62 appear to me too plain to need much remark. The manner in which the Lord stopped in the middle of verse 2 (chap. 61) will be observed, the time for the fulfilment of the last part of the verse not being yet come. But He could set before them that which applied to His own Person in grace. {Is 63:1-6}

Chapter 63:1-6. We find again here the terrible judgment of chapter 34 executed by Jehovah (or rather having been already executed, for He returns from it). The result is the peace and blessing which we have just seen described in chapter 62.

From verse 7 of chapter 63 we have the reasoning of the Spirit of prophecy in the mouth of the remnant, or

perhaps that of the prophet, putting himself in that position. And in chapters 65, 66 we find Jehovah's answer. Nothing can be more affecting than the way in which the Spirit lends Himself to the expression of all the feelings of a faithful Israelite's heart; or rather in which He gives a form to the sentiments of an afflicted but trusting heart, recalling past kindnesses, overwhelmed by the present distress, acknowledging the hard-heartedness and rebellion of which they had been guilty, but appealing to the unchangeable faithfulness of God's love against the judicial blinding and hardening which the people are under. If Abraham acknowledged them not, God was their Father. Where was His strength, His tenderness, His mercies? Were they restrained? Faith recognises through all things the link between the people and God; it acknowledges that God prepares for those that wait on Him things beyond man's conception100—that He meets those who walk uprightly; and it confesses that the state of Israel is quite different—that they are sinners, not even seeking His face. But the affliction of His people, the disastrous condition into which sin had brought them, is to faith a plea with God. Whatever had happened, the people were to faith as the clay, and Jehovah the potter. They were His people; their cities, the cities of Jehovah. The house in which their fathers had worshipped was burnt up, and all was laid waste.

The next two chapters give us a full revelation of the dealings of God in answer to this appeal. First of all, God, through His grace, had been sought after by others. He had made Himself known to those who were not called by His name. The infinite and sovereign grace of God had sought out the poor Gentiles. At the same

time, with infinite patience, He had stretched forth His hands to a people who would not have Him —to a people who provoked Him continually in the grossest manner. And now He declares His mind. The people that forsook Him shall be judged; He will number them with the sword; they shall bow down to the slaughter. But there shall be an elect remnant in grace—the servants of Jehovah, who shall be spared and blessed (v. 11, 12, 8, 9, 13, 15). Jehovah would then introduce an entirely new order of things, in which the truth of His promises should be acknowledged, and the former things should be quite forgotten—new heavens and a new earth, not as yet with respect, to the physical change, but the moral order of which should be entirely new. It should not be only a new order of things on the earth, which the power of evil in the heavens might spoil, as in former days; the state of the heavens themselves should be new. We learn elsewhere that Satan will have been cast out, and his power there gone for ever.101 Indeed, this would have been the occasion of the last terrible trials in Jerusalem. But now Jerusalem should be blessed in the earth, and her people should enjoy the gifts of Jehovah in as long a life as that of men before the flood. A man of a hundred years old should be a child; and if any one should die at that age, he must be looked upon as cut off by the curse of God. God would always grant the prayers of His people. Peace should be established, and there should be no evil in all His holy mountain. This is the millennial state of the Jews. {Is 66}

Chapter 66 speaks of the judgment that introduces it, and consequently gives us more historical details. The temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem (v. 6), but Jehovah does not own it, man alone being concerned in its building;

neither does He acknowledge the sacrifices offered in it. He looks to the meek and contrite spirit. There were some who mocked at the hopes of these, and said mockingly, “Let Jehovah display his glory”; but He will appear to their confusion, and for the blessing of those who waited for Him. Zion shall suddenly be as the mother of a people, blessed in Jehovah and comforted. The remnant is thus distinguished in these two chapters in the most explicit manner.

Let us retrace here the use of the word servant. First of all it was Israel; then Christ Himself, the only true Servant amidst this people; afterwards the remnant who hearkened to His words as the Servant, or Spirit of prophecy. For the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. The latter are called servants here: they shall be comforted in Jerusalem, as one whom his mother comforteth; and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation toward His enemies. For He shall come and execute judgment against all flesh. Salvation has been made known to all flesh. And now Jehovah shall plead in judgment with all flesh. The unbelieving and idolatrous Israelites shall be there, confounded with the nations, all of whom God will assemble, who shall come and see His glory. He will execute judgment on the multitude by fire and by His sword. But there shall be some who through grace will escape. God will send these to the distant nations who have never seen His glory nor heard His fame. There is no question here of the election by grace for heaven. They will declare (not that grace, but) the glory which they have seen; and the nations will bring back the dispersed of Israel, as an offering to Jehovah in His holy mountain. And the seed of Jacob, and the priests whom

Jehovah shall choose, shall be as the new heavens and the new earth before Jehovah, and all flesh shall come to worship before Him. Those who have been the objects of Jehovah's judgments, who have transgressed against Him, especially it seems to me the apostate Jews, shall be an abiding testimony of Jehovah's terrible judgment. For if the full blessing of His presence shall shine upon His people, it is the principle of judgment that brought it in and that maintains it.

There remains a general remark to be made here. The sinful condition thus judged existed in the days of the prophet. The patience of God bore with it, but the principle that brought in judgment was there (witness chap. 6). Until the rejection of Christ, and in a certain sense until the reception of Antichrist coming in his own name, the evil is not fully consummated, nor the final judgment executed. But already in Ahaz the occasion had been given for pronouncing it. Thus, the occasion being in this manner given, the whole condition of Israel, the grace that received the Gentiles, the nothingness of forms and ceremonies—in a word, all the great moral principles of truth are laid down in this part of the prophecy; and we see Stephen, Paul, the Lord Himself, making use of passages that speak of these principles, applying them to the times in which they lived: the Lord, to the hardened state of the people; Stephen, to the unprofitableness of an already judged system; Paul, to the Jews' state of condemnation, and to the manifestation of grace to the Gentiles. What remains is the accomplishment of the great result, in which these things shall be demonstrated to the world by the judgment and the sovereign blessing of God.

As to the coming of Jesus in humiliation, we have seen it as clearly revealed as His coming in glory. In short, all the ways of God in the government of His people, with respect to their conduct under the law, to the promises made to the house of David, and at last to their treatment of Christ—Jehovah in humiliation amongst His people—the government, I repeat, and the ways of God towards Israel in all these respects, are developed in the clearest and most wonderful manner in the course of this prophecy.

But the judgment pronounced now by the prophet the patience of God suspended nearly 800 years. It was only accomplished when they rejected Christ.

79 Note here, the two great dealings of God with the conscience to convict it of sin exemplified in these two chapters. First, the state of blessing in which God had first set the person judged, and his departure from it (so man in his innocence); and second, the meeting of the Lord in glory. Are we in a state to do so?

80 This is largely brought out in the Gospel of Matthew. The passage itself is quoted in Hebrews 2. What is spoken of in Isaiah 8:13-18 is in fact the gospel history breaking in upon the scene. Peter quotes verse 14; Paul (Rom. 9) the stumbling stone; Matthew quotes chap. 9:1,2 for Christ’s apparition in Galilee.

81 This term “servant “is a kind of key to this whole prophecy: first Israel, then in chapter 49 the Lord takes Israel’s place, and at the end the remnant. But of this more hereafter.

82 The dial of Ahaz in this prophet may be thought an exception, but Ahaz was really departed from God. It is also noteworthy that the apostles never wrought

miracles for their own comfort. Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick. Epaphroditus “was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but on me also.”

83 A more exact translation throws much light on this prophecy. “Nevertheless there shall still be in it a tenth, and it shall return and shall be to be consumed, as the oak and the teil tree, which being cut down have still the trunk [or the rooted stump]; thus the holy seed shall be their stock “(chap. 1.: 9). That is, the remnant itself will undergo judgment and consumption at the time of their return; but there shall be a holy seed, from which life will spring as from a tree cut down.

84 The beginning of verse 17 is the passage quoted in Hebrews 2, along with verse 18, to prove the humanity of the Lord and His connection with the remnant.

85 The seventy weeks, or 490 years, include the great gap which has already lasted more than 1800 years—these coming in between the end of the 483rd and the end of the 490th—only that Christians know that half the 70th week was really fulfilled in Christ’s ministry; therefore we get a half week in Daniel 7 and in the Revelation.

86 Besides the fact of the captivity of God’s people, Babylon has a very important position with respect to God’s dealings. Until Nebuchadnezzar received power, the government of God, while centred in Israel (with respect to whom He had set the bounds of the peoples), took cognizance of the nations as dispersed at Babel. He allowed them indeed to follow their own ways j but before Him every nation had an individual existence. The throne once taken from Jerusalem, from whence

God governed the world with a view to His chosen people, the world is given up to the dominion of a single throne, which stands therefore before God as holding the sceptre of it. Three other powers followed in succession, the last of which was in existence when Christ came, but the time of its judgment was not yet come. These four empires form the times of the Gentiles. God will resume His government, and again judge the nations in view of Israel; and Babylon, or the one universal empire, will be set aside in its rebel and apostate condition. But, while it lasts, the empire has its own peculiar and absolute position before God. Jerusalem, punished for its idolatry by the Babylonish captivity (subjection to idols) and the transfer of the throne from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, is so far owned in the remnant under the Gentiles that God in the prophetic books takes account of it, though not as then His people, till the second grand sin was perpetrated, the rejection of Christ. But this even was in the prophet when they were in captivity. Still they were partially preserved to present Christ the Lord to them, after that set aside till sovereign grace comes on them in the last week, for faith the latter half. Time begins to count again when that is come.

87 A proof that the prophecy relates to the last days, for of old the Assyrian fell before Babylon, being conquered by it. It is to be remarked that the Assyrian, not the beast nor Antichrist, is the subject of this prophecy. Under the Assyrian Judah was not “Lo-ammi,” nor is he in this prophecy. In Babylon Judah was captive, and “Lo-ammi “written on the people. Hence we must not look for the beast. The Assyrian is the main enemy here.

88 The rivers of Cush, Nile and Euphrates.

89 Note, you have here all the results then of this judgment of God and what is connected with it. The saints are raised, the power of evil cast down from the heavens, the rebuke of Israel taken away, and the veil of the covering taken off the face of all peoples.

90 I apprehend “the earth “is a more contracted sphere than “the world,” the distinction especially lying in this, that it is the sphere in which the revealed ways and government of God have been brought before men. When this has been the case with the whole world, it becomes the earth. The word “earth “is used for the land of Israel and for the earth in the sense explained, and for the whole earth as a scene ordered of God. Hence, when the scene with which God has already dealt is judged, then it is that the wide world at large will learn righteousness; not, though it ought to have been carried there, while the present system of grace prevails.

91 They insolently say they have made a covenant with the power of evil, so that, when the scourge came, it would not come nigh them. Impossible to conceive a more open defiance of God and His judgments. Historically they will have done it in uniting with the man of sin, the Antichrist, whose coming is after the power of Satan j but here it is said in defiance of God.

92 This expression is used elsewhere also, as in Daniel, as a kind of technical formula for the Lord’s dealings in the last day—the finishing of the work and cutting it short in righteousness. He judges completely, fills it up, but cuts it short for the sparing of the remnant, the elect.

93 Compare also Psalm 83 and Obadiah.

94 See the note further on in p. 230.

95 It will be remarked that, though there is the fullest discovery of Israel's sin, yet these chapters are the expression of grace and sovereign goodness, and a remnant preserved; not the responsibility of the nation and judgment.

96 That is, earthly judgments.

97 So, I doubt not, in Matthew, "I have called my Son out of Egypt." Christ replaces the first Adam before God, though blessing in that new position many of his children. He takes the place of Israel also, though blessing the remnant and making it the nation.

98 It is affecting to remark how in both pleadings, as to idolatry, and as to the rejection of Christ, the love and faithfulness of Jehovah and its consequences are introduced before the pleadings of the Spirit of God with the people for their failure in these very points; the resulting blessing before the human evil, God before man. It was so in the counsels of God before the world: the full declaration of the blessing comes afterwards.

99 These verses in Romans 8 should be divided thus: "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, etc.; who shall separate us from the love of Christ? "In His love He has gone through everything that could make us imagine it possible. They have become the proofs of His love. Moreover it is the love of God: creation cannot separate us from His.

I add a brief synoptical view of all these chapters, to aid in seizing them as a whole. Chapters 40-48 treat the question of idolatry between God and Israel; 49-57 that of Christ. Chapter 49 gives an orderly view of the purposes and ways of God as to Israel and the Messiah.

God will be glorified in Israel (v. 1-3). Then Christ has laboured in vain; yet His work is with God. Ist, He will be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah. 2ndly, It is a light thing, the restoration of the preserved of Israel. He is salvation to the ends of the earth. 3rdly, Heard in an acceptable time, He is set as a covenant of the people. Zion is restored. In chapter 50 Israel is divorced, because when Jehovah came, there was no man. He had come as man in humiliation in order to perfect sympathy with man in sorrow. Given up to shame, God justifies Him (v. 5-9). This, that is, Christ's justification, is the church's, as we have seen; in verses 10, 11 we have the Jewish remnant of the church. Chapter 50 gives us Christ's sufferings from man; in 53 it is atonement. Chapter 49 gives the glory resulting from Christ's taking the place of Israel, the fruit of His labour; chapter 50 the consequence of His rejection by Israel, yet in grace as to the yet unrevealed church and the remnant which is positively spoken of; chapter 49 has more to do with the government of God.

100 * The difference between this and gospel knowledge as made by Paul (1 Cor. 2) is striking, often quoted for just the contrary. These things, he says, have not entered into man's heart, but God has revealed them unto us (Christians) by His Spirit; so at the end of the chapter, "but we have the mind of Christ."

101 Hence, when the Lord enters into Jerusalem as Jehovah Messiah, it is said (Luke 19:38) "peace in heaven."

## Jeremiah

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah has a different character from that of Isaiah. It does not contain the same development of the counsels of God respecting this earth that Isaiah does. It is true, that we are told many things in it concerning the nations; but it is principally composed of testimony addressed immediately to the conscience of the people, on the subject of their moral condition at the time the prophet speaks, and with an eye to the judgment with which they were threatened. Judah had forsaken Jehovah; for their repentance under Josiah was but a fair appearance, and under the kings that succeeded him their degradation was complete. The prophet's heart was overwhelmed with grief, because of his love for the people; at the same time that he was filled with a deep sense of their relationship with the Lord. The sense of this produced a continual conflict in his soul between the thought of the value of the people as the people of God, and a holy jealousy for the glory of God and His rights over His people—rights which they were trampling under foot. This was an incurable wound to his heart. He had pleaded for the people, he had stood in the breach for them before Jehovah; but he saw that it was all in vain: the people rejected God and the testimony that He sent them. God Himself would no longer hearken to prayer made for Israel. Jeremiah prophesies under this impression: a sorrowful task, indeed, and one which made the prophet truly a man of sorrow. And although he could always say that, if the people repented, they would be received in grace, he well knew that the people had even no thought of repenting. Two things sustained him in this painful

service: (for what could be more painful than to announce judgment for their iniquities, to a people beloved of God?) first of all, the energy of the Spirit of God, which filled his heart and compelled him to announce the judgment of God, in spite of contradiction and persecution; and then the revelation of the people's final blessing according to the unchangeable counsels of God. After this brief notice of the spirit of the Book of Jeremiah, the proofs and details of which we shall find in going through his prophecies, let us now examine these in succession.

It is well known that the order of the prophecies in the Septuagint is different from that in the Hebrew Bible. But I see no reason for not receiving the latter. There is no doubt that it does not preserve the chronological order. The names of the kings102 in the successive chapters clearly prove this. But it appears to me that, where there is chronological confusion, the subjects are classed, and that according to the mind of the Spirit.

The first twenty-four chapters have rather a different character from those that follow. To the end of chapter 24 it is a reasoning, a moral pleading with the people. In chapter 25 there is a formal prophecy of judgment on divers nations by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. And afterwards we find prophecies much more distinct from each other, and connected with historical details. {Je 30-33}

Chapters 30-33 contain promises of assured blessing for the last days. From chapter 39 it is the history of that which followed the taking of Jerusalem, and the judgment of Egypt and Babylon.

We will now state the different distinct prophecies; chapter 1, chapters 2-6, chapters 7-10, chapters 11-13, chapters 14, 15, chapters 16, 17, chapters 18-20, chapters 21-24, chapter 25, chapter 26, chapter 27 (v. 1, read Zedekiah instead of “Jehoiakim”), chapter 28, chapter 29, chapters 30, 31, chapter 32, chapter 33 (this last, however, is connected with the preceding one), chapter 34, chapter 35, chapter 36, chapters 37, 38, chapter 39, chapters 40-44, chapter 45, chapter 46, chapter 47, chapter 48, chapter 49, verses 1-6, 7-22, 23-27, 28, 29, 30-33, 34-39; chapters 50,51. Chapter 52 was not written by Jeremiah.

There can be nothing more striking in the way of deep affliction than that of the prophet. He is distressed; his heart is broken. One sees too that God has made choice of a naturally feeble heart, easily cast down and discouraged (even while filling it with His own strength), in order that the anguish, the complaints, the distress of soul, the indignation of a weak heart that resents oppression while unable to throw it off or overcome it, being all poured out before Him, should bear testimony against the people whose inveterate wickedness called for His vengeance. The affliction of Christ, whose Spirit wrought that of Jeremiah, was infinitely deeper; but His perfect communion with His Father caused all the anguish, that in Jeremiah’s case broke out into complaints, to be in secret between Jesus and His Father. It is very rarely expressed in the Gospels. He is entirely for others in grace.103 In the Psalms we see more of His feelings. In Jeremiah’s case, it was proper that the anguish of the faithful remnant should be expressed before God. The absolute perfection of the Lord Jesus, and the calmness which, through the

presence of God, accompanies His perfection in all His ways, allowed of no complaint, whatever might be the inward anguish of His heart. He thanks in the same hour that He can justly upbraid. Sympathy for others became the position of Jesus. We see that our precious Lord never failed in this.

But it was equally becoming that the outpouring of heart of the faithful, who needed this sympathy, should be expressed by the Holy Ghost. It is not that there was no weakness in the heart that poured itself out; but if the Spirit lays it open, it is evident that He must express it as it is; otherwise it were useless and false. Consequently Jeremiah enters much more personally into his prophecies than any other prophet.104 He represents the people in their true position before God— such as God could recognise, as being before Him in this character— in order to see whether, receiving from God that which applied to this position, and expressing the sentiments inspired by such a position, it was possible to reach the conscience and win the heart of the people; always remembering that these sentiments were expressed according to the Spirit, and accompanied by the most direct and positive prophecies of that which God would bring upon the people. It is to be observed also, that a great part of that which was written was not addressed in the first instance to the people, but to God. This position of Jeremiah's, as the representative before God of the true interests of the people, or of the remnant, causes him to be looked at sometimes as though he were Jerusalem itself, and, at other times, as a remnant separated from it and set apart for God.

But these points will be better understood by examining the passages which bring them into notice. The period

during which Jeremiah prophesied was of considerable length, and embraced the whole time of Israel's decline, from the year after that in which Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and all the land, until the final destruction of Jerusalem by the army of the Chaldeans; and even a little while after in Egypt, a period of more than forty years—a period throughout of distress and anguish. For although Josiah was a godly king, the reformation of the people was only an outward one, as we shall see. So that the anguish of one who saw with God was so much the greater on account of this appearance of piety. "And Jehovah was not turned away from his fierce anger, because of the sins of Manasseh." Nevertheless the prophet distinguishes between the two periods, that is, the reign of Josiah, and that of his successors.

Excepting in chapters 21-24 there are no dates for the first twenty-four chapters. It is probable that they were mostly given under Josiah's reign. They contain moral arguments, the expression of the prophet's sorrow of heart, and solemn warnings of the coming invasion from the north. The four chapters I have specified have no chronological order, and are probably composed of prophecies given at different periods. They contain the judgment of the different branches of the house of David successively, as well as that of the false prophets who deceived the people. They end by declaring the fate of the captives in Babylon, and of those that remained with Zedekiah in Jerusalem—the two very different from each other. {Je 1}

In chapter 1 the prophet is established in his office, to which he had been appointed by Jehovah, even before his birth, that he should carry His word unto the nations. But Jeremiah's fears are immediately manifested. The

Lord encourages him by the assurance of His presence. He puts His words into his mouth, and appoints him as prophet over the nations to root out and to plant. Two visions are shewn him, which contain the summary of the prophetic charge communicated to him, and announce that Jerusalem shall soon be stricken by the kingdoms of the north. Under these circumstances Jeremiah is set before a rebellious people, who will strive against him. Nevertheless he must declare everything; and as the Lord had before encouraged the prophet, He now adds to the encouragement, in order to enforce it, a threat in case of disobedience; namely, that, if through fear he drew back from his commission, the Lord would become a greater cause of fear, and would break him to pieces before those of whom he was afraid. But if he fulfilled his appointed task, Jehovah would be with him. Verses 6-8, 17, 18, shew the great fearfulness of the prophet's spirit, which needed to be thus strengthened by Jehovah. {Je 2}

Chapter 2 contains a most touching appeal to the people at Jerusalem. It requires no explanation, but deserves the heart's serious attention. It testifies in the most striking manner to the kindness and tender love of the Lord. Only that we have here only the comparison of what they had originally been as planted by the Lord, and His ways of love, not any reference to the coming of the Lord. Christ is not in view nor the counsels of God as in Isaiah, though we shall find it further on; but their responsibility under God's touching ways of grace with them is much more fully brought out, and final blessing is spoken of in the following chapter. {Je 3}

Chapter 3 has the same character; indeed it is the continuation of the same address; but it contains details

of Israel's and Judah's behaviour, and proclaims the restoration of Israel by sovereign goodness, and the blessing of the last days on their return to God. Remark only that, before the pleading with Israel for their folly, what the Lord first notices is that there was no seeking Himself, no longing after Him: no people nor priests said, "Where is Jehovah?" For judgment being executed on Israel, God can allow His heart to flow out in the testimony of grace. This necessarily gives a place also to Judah, as the two are to be united. The end of the chapter enlarges, in a very affecting manner, on the spirit that grace will produce in Israel when they are brought back, and on the manner in which the Lord will receive them. In verses 23-25 the prophet confesses the people's condition at the time in which he spoke. It is in this chapter that we have the solemn revelation, that as far as the people were concerned, the reformation under Josiah was but hypocrisy. These two chapters form a kind of general introduction, shewing the ways and judgment of Israel and Judah, and their restoration by grace. The first chapter had been the appointment of Jeremiah to the prophet's office. {Je 4}

Chapter 4 resumes the subject of chapters 2, 3, and, applying it at that time to the people, tells them that, if they return, it must be unto the Lord Himself—that neither forms nor half-measures would be of any use. After verse 4 the prophet announces the certain judgment of God, which should come from the north, and fall upon Jerusalem in destruction. {Je 5}

In chapter 5 the sin and iniquity are shewn to be universal: rich and poor, all are alike. And "Shall not I visit for these things? saith Jehovah." Nevertheless He will not destroy entirely. The source of evil, or, at least,

that which maintains it, is pointed out. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means. Chapter 6 continues the testimony, but gives also the position of Jeremiah in the midst of all this evil. In verses 11-26 the judgment is plainly announced. The conduct of the false prophets is again marked. In both these chapters the coming of Nebuchadnezzar in judgment is evidently declared. {Je 7}

Chapter 7 begins a new prophecy, contemplating especially the temple, which, instead of being a protection (as the people, without conscience, would have it), was become a further demonstration of their iniquity. They were to remember Shiloh; for the house of God should likewise be overthrown. Judah should be cast off, as Ephraim had been, and God would hear no intercession for His people. He required obedience and not sacrifice, and if the people came into His house while they were practising idolatry, they did but defile it. But Israel had less understanding than the birds of the heaven, which at least knew their appointed times, while Israel knew not the judgment of Jehovah (chap. 8).

From verse 18 to verse 2 of chapter 9 the prophet lays open the depth of his grief. From verse 3 of chapter 9 he proclaims judgment—a judgment which shall also visit the nations around. And in view of these judgments he exhorts every man not to glory in man, but in the knowledge of Jehovah (v. 23, 24). {Je 10}

In chapter 10 the idols and the vanities of the nations are put in contrast with Jehovah. In verses 19-25 we have the affliction of the prophet, speaking of the desolation of Jerusalem as though he were himself the desolate city, and praying to God that His dealings might

be only chastisement, and not excision. The reader will do well to observe that the repetition of God's pleadings with Israel (although these pleadings, while varied in their character, need little remark to make them understood) is the most touching proof of the kindness of God, who multiplies His appeals to a rebellious and perverse people, "rising up early," as He expresses it, to protest unto them. {Je 11}

Chapter 11 suggests some observations. God addresses Himself again to Israel on the ground of their responsibility, reminding them of the call to obedience, which had been addressed to them ever since their coming out of Egypt. God was about to bring on the people the evil with which He had threatened them. Jeremiah is not to intercede for them. Nevertheless He still calls Israel His "beloved "; but, being corrupted, what had she to do in His house? Whatever she might have been to Him, judgment was coming. At the end of the chapter Jeremiah takes the place of the faithful remnant who have the testimony of God. His position continually reminds us of the Psalms. We see the working of the Spirit of Christ often clearly expressed, but sometimes, it appears to me, in expressions more mingled with Jeremiah's personal position, and thereby less deep and less akin to the sentiments of Christ, although the same in principle with the Psalms. Jeremiah, on account of his faithfulness and his testimony, was exposed to the machinations of the wicked. Jehovah reveals these things to him; and, according to the righteousness which characterises the condition of the remnant, he calls for the vengeance of God.105 This will be the means of deliverance for the remnant. He announces the judgment of these wicked

men by the word of Jehovah. In Psalm 83 the same principles will be found, and the same wickedness in God's enemies; only there, these enemies are Gentiles, and the range of thought is wider. Israel and the knowledge of Jehovah are the object of the prayer in that Psalm. Compare also chapter 9 and Psalm 64. Here there is more intercession on Jeremiah's part; the psalm speaks of judgment. Compare also Psalm 69:6, 7, and Jeremiah 15:15. The words of the psalm being from the mouth of Christ Himself, the request is for others and infinitely more touching. This comparison of passages will help in understanding the relationship between the position of Jeremiah and that of the remnant described in the Psalms. We may also compare Psalm 73 with the beginning of chapter 12. This last chapter forms a part of the same prophecy as the preceding one. Jeremiah pleads with God on the subject of these judgments, but in a humble and submissive manner, which God accepts by making him feel (a painful necessity) the evil of the people more deeply. At the same time He sustains the prophet's faith by the personal interest He manifests in him. God makes him understand that He has forsaken His inheritance: the state of things was therefore no longer to be wondered at. At the same time He reveals His purposes of blessing to His people, and even to the nations among whom they will be dispersed, if these nations would learn the ways of Jehovah. {Je 13}

Chapter 13, bringing to mind how God had bound Israel to His heart, announces the terrible judgment with which the people shall, as it were, be drunken; and, on the ground of this judgment, calls them to repentance. He relates their hopeless evil, and the unfeigned grief of the prophet at their obstinacy. Compare Luke 19:41.

This zeal for Jehovah's glory against the evil and the people who dishonoured Him, and touching affection to them as Jehovah's people, is everywhere a striking mark of the working of the Spirit of Christ. Compare Moses (Exodus 32:27, 28, 31, and sequel); so Paul (Rom. 9; 1 Thess. 2:15, 16): only here, under grace, there is no call for judgment; so even Christ Himself (compare Matt. 23:31-37). {Je 14}

Chapter 14 refers to a famine which took place in the land. The desolation of Jerusalem by the sword and by famine is again declared. But observe here the touching intercession of verses 7-9; and again in verses 17-22, the deep affliction of the Spirit of Christ which expresses itself in the prophet's mouth. "For in all their affliction he was afflicted." Observe also another element of their condition, pointed out by the Apostle Peter, and by the Lord Himself, with reference to the last days—namely, false prophets.

The beginning of chapter 15 is an answer to the close of chapter 14; but the instruction and the principles it contains are very remarkable. Jehovah declares that if Moses and Samuel (whose love for Israel, and faith in intercession for them, were unequalled among all the servants of God who had stood before Him on their behalf)—if these two beloved leaders of the people were there, yet God would not accept Israel. Who should have pity on them? Jehovah Himself forsakes them. From verse 20 we find the true position of the remnant in such a case: a most touching instruction for ourselves!

Poor Jeremiah complains of his lot, among a people whose sorrows he bore on his heart, while at the same time enduring their causeless hatred. We see in verses

11-13, that he represents the people before God, but yet that the faithful remnant are separated from the mass of the wicked. From verse 15 they present themselves in this separated position to God, bearing at the same time all the pain of the nation's wound, even while asking vengeance on the wicked, the adversaries of the truth. In reply, precise directions are given for the walk of one who is faithful in such a position. The word of God, eaten and digested in the heart, is the source of this position (v. 16).

Instead of sharing the spirit of the enemies and the mockers, who rejoiced in the abominable and hypocritical state of those who bore the name of God's people, the effect of the word in the heart was no doubt to separate from this condition of the people, but to isolate the godly one, as though he were himself the object of God's indignation, as being himself the people. The word, which revealed the relationship between God and the people, and shewed them their privileges and their duties, caused the faithful to judge the state of the people, and to feel all the consequences of this state as the judgment of Jehovah— a judgment so much the more terrible to his heart from his feeling how close a band of affection and blessing from God was the normal condition of the people. "Thou hast filled me with indignation" (v. 17, 18) is the prophet's language.

In verses 19-21 the precise instructions of God with respect to this condition are given. God also addresses Jeremiah as though he were the people whom he thus represented in spirit before Him, and, at the same time, according to his individual faith. He says, first of all, "If thou return, then I will bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me." This open door— open till man shuts it

—is always in the ways of God, although He well knows that man will not profit by it.

Is this all that is to be done while it is called to-day and the door is open, to call on the rebellious people to return? No: there is something else for the faithful to do: and this is the second leading principle: “If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.” In the midst of the ruin caused by the rebellion of God’s people, this is the especial work of one who is faithful, who is imbued with the word. The desire of his soul being the reproduction of this word, and of the affections of God revealed in it, can he reject the people in a mass as wicked? That cannot be. Can he accept them in a condition of rebellion, which is so much the worse because they belong to God? This he cannot do either. He must learn to do that which God does—take account of all that is good, and, if it is too late to preserve everything, never condemn that which is of God. The penetrating eye of God never loses sight of this. The affections of the prophet are fixed upon it also.

But God has His own thoughts, and He acts according to His own will; He lays hold of that which is precious, owns it, and separates it from that which is vile. This is not precisely the judgment of God respecting evil; but when the judgment is imminent on account of the evil, the energy of the Spirit and the power of the word lead us to attach ourselves to the good, to discern it, to separate it from the evil, before the judgment comes. If Satan can, he will mingle them together. Those who know how to separate them shall be as the mouth of God. God will do it in judgment by smiting the evil: in the faithful the Spirit of God does it by separating the precious from the vile.

The third principle is, that, when once separated from the path of the rebellious by this spiritual intelligence, there must not be a moment's thought of returning to them. "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Finally, in this position, Jehovah will make the faithful like a wall of brass. The rebels, who boast of being called the people of God, fight against His faithful servant, but shall not prevail, because Jehovah is with him. Deliverance is promised to Jeremiah.

All this, while having its immediate application to the prophet, is most valuable instruction for us in the principle which it contains, to direct us in similar times. Patience is required, but the path is clearly marked out. There is always an open door on God's part; the separation of the precious from the vile makes us like the mouth of God; a positive refusal, when thus placed, to return to the unfaithful: such are the principles that God has here established. The word received in the heart is their source. At the same time the effect is very far from contempt of the fallen people; on the contrary, the heart of the faithful takes upon itself all the grief of the position in which the people of God, or those who publicly stand as such, are found. {Je 16}

In chapter 16 Jehovah teaches Jeremiah to avoid all family relationships with this people, and to cease from all testimonies of interest in what was going on among them. For He Himself had entirely broken off with them, and would cause all His testimonies to cease among them, and would drive them out of the land. But, after all, through the greatness of the evil which He would bring upon them, He would cause their deliverance out of Egypt to be forgotten in their yet greater deliverance from this evil. For at length God will pardon and comfort

His people. But before this He will recompense their iniquity. Afterwards the Gentiles themselves shall come and acknowledge the true God, the God of Israel. {Je 17}

Chapter 17. The great thing, amidst all that was going on, was to trust in Jehovah. He who, failing in this, made flesh his arm, should not see when good came. Meantime the fire of God's anger was kindled and should not be quenched. How could a wicked and deceitful heart be trusted? The Lord searches it, to give every one according to his ways. The prophet, in the name of the people, casts himself upon Jehovah; and, on account of the wickedness of the adversaries who mocked at God's testimonies, he appeals to God. He had not desired the woeful day which He announced; neither was it by his own choice that he forsook the peaceful duties he owed the people to follow God in this testimony. He entreats God, whose terrible judgments were to scatter the people, not to be a terror unto him. God was all his hope in the day of evil. What a picture of the condition of the remnant in the last days; and, at all times, of the portion of one who is faithful, when the people of God will not hearken to his testimony! Nevertheless, it being still called To-day, God in His long-suffering opens the door of repentance to the people and to their king, if they have ears to hear. {Je 18}

In chapter 18 this principle is fully demonstrated before the people (v. 1-10). But the people in despair as to God, in the midst of their boldness in evil and in contempt of His marvellous patience, give themselves up to the iniquity by which Satan deprives them of their hope in God. God announces His judgment by the prophet,

whose testimony provokes the expression of the confidence felt by a hardened conscience in the certainty and immutability of its privileges, and of the blessings attached to the ordinances with which God had endowed His people, and to which He had outwardly attached these blessings, which maintained their relationship with Him. What a dreadful picture of blindness! Ecclesiastical influence is always greatest at the moment when the conscience is hardened against the testimony of God; because unbelief, which trembles after all, shelters itself behind the presumed stability of that which God had set up, and makes a wall of its apostate forms against the God whom they hide, attributing to these ordinances the stability of God Himself. Conscience says too much to allow the unbeliever any hope of standing well with God, even when God opens His heart to him. “There is no hope,” he says; “I will continue to do evil; moreover, the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise; nor,” he adds (the false prophets having the ear of the people), “the word from the prophet.” The warning which this chapter contains appears to me very solemn. I can scarcely imagine a more terrible picture of the professing people’s condition. The prophet asks for judgment upon them. This is in the spirit of the remnant trodden down by the wickedness of the Lord’s enemies. {Je 19-20}

Chapters 19 and 20 shew us the judgment of Jerusalem announced in terms that require little explanation; and we have in chapter 20 a sample of the opposition of the priests, and of Jeremiah’s sufferings. But this does not prevent Jeremiah’s denouncing the priest himself, and repeating that which he had said of Jerusalem.

Nevertheless we see the effect of these sufferings on his heart. He was compelled, as it were, by the Lord to bear this testimony. He has not (and it is the same with the remnant) the willing spirit that rejoices in tribulation by the power of the Holy Ghost. He was the subject of constant mockery. They watched for his halting, so that he would gladly have been silent; but the word of Jehovah was like fire in his bones. Alas! we understand all this—the deep iniquity of the men who are called the people of God; the way in which the feeble heart recoils before this iniquity, that has neither heart nor conscience; and how on these occasions the word is too strong in us to be shut up in our heart. Nevertheless with all this fear he had also the consciousness that Jehovah was with him, and he again asks for vengeance (which, in fact, is deliverance, and the only deliverance of those who have the testimony of Christ in such a position). This deliverance is celebrated in verse 13; but in verses 14-18, we see to what a point personal grief may drive those who are subjected to such a trial as this.

See the same thing in Job—a picture of the same condition, that is to say, of a soul tried by all the malice of Satan, without the full knowledge of grace, in the sense of its own nothingness, and in the forgetfulness of self. This will be precisely the state of the remnant in the last days. Christ is the model of perfection in what answered to these circumstances of trial, the reality of which He thoroughly experienced and felt, when He had yet to undergo for others what laid the foundation of grace for them. {Je 21-23}

Chapters 21-23. On the occasion of Zedekiah’s request to Jeremiah to know if the Lord would interfere in favour of the people against Nebuchadnezzar, the Spirit of God

has brought the testimonies together that were given with respect to all the members of David's family who presided, so to say, at the ruin of Jerusalem—Jehoahaz (chap. 22:10), Jehoiakim (v. 13-19), Jeconiah (v. 20-30). The judgment of Zedekiah had been pronounced (chap. 21); and after having declared, as we have seen, that the door was always open to repentance, and that blessing always attended a godly walk (chap. 21:12; 22:1-5), judgment is again pronounced, and a sentence from God upon the different kings. Finally (chap. 23) the expression of Jehovah's indignation against these evil pastors gives rise to the declaration that He will raise up a Shepherd after His own heart, namely, the true Son of David, the Messiah. The just indignation and the judgment of God are expressed in the strongest terms. {Je 24 }

Two things attract our attention in chapter 24. First, submission to the judgment of God when He executes it is the proof of intelligence in His word—of real spirituality. Want of faith leans, not on the stability of the promises, but, under pretext of the promises, on that of the ordinances and of the men who enjoy them. Those who submit to this judgment of God upon the unfaithfulness of man (a judgment which leads to the enjoyment of these promises, and operates to the setting aside of ordinances, the stability of which God had not guaranteed; but in connection with which man would, if faithful, have enjoyed the promises)—those, I repeat, who submit to this judgment, shall enjoy the full and entire effect of these promises, to which it is impossible that God should be unfaithful. The second thing to be remarked is that, when God would encourage the faith of those who submit to His judgment (being led by this

submission to a holy conviction that man has deserved it), God stops at nothing short of the full and entire accomplishment of the promises, which depend on His faithfulness, whatever may have been the unfaithfulness of man—an accomplishment which can and shall be enjoyed solely by means of a work of God in man, that will bring him into a condition suitable to this accomplishment (see v. 6, 7). The position of the people at the time of Jeremiah's prophecies furnished an evident opportunity for the development of these two principles; for the people and the house of David had entirely failed in their faithfulness to God. It is very afflicting, and very humbling, when we are obliged to confess that God's enemies are in the right. The only comfort is that God is in the right (Ezek. 14:22, 23), and that in the end He cannot fail to accomplish His gracious promises. {Je 25}

Chapter 25 closes, so to say, this part of the prophecy with a general summary of God's judgments on the earth, giving it into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. The immediate application to events already accomplished does not offer much difficulty; but we shall find a good deal, if we would bring in also an allusion to the last days. Israel, to whom the door had always been held open, is first judged. The chapter begins by announcing the judgment of God upon Jerusalem, because she had refused to hear the call to repentance which had been addressed to her during twenty-three years. And here let us notice the hardness of the people's heart, stubborn in evil, and refusing to bow the neck to God's testimony, in spite of all the pains God took, if we may so speak, to warn them. And indeed it is His own language: "Jehovah hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising

early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened" (2 Chron. 36:15). Jehovah had always set before the people a full and abiding blessing, if they repented; but they would not. The prophet announces that Jehovah will bring all the families of the north under Nebuchadnezzar, against Jerusalem, and against the adjoining nations, all of whom should assuredly drink the cup of judgment that the Lord had mingled for them. Jerusalem shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years; and after that the king of Babylon himself should be judged and punished, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah against all the nations. For, having begun with Jerusalem, it should be a universal judgment. That which should immediately happen was the judgment of the nations around Palestine, and afterwards that of Babylon, which was the instrument of their judgment. But the fact that the city called by the name of Jehovah was to be laid waste implied the judgment of all the nations. Consequently, in the symbolical action of the prophecy, all the nations connected with Israel, all those of the world as then known, are forced to drink the cup. But this is expressed in terms that include the nations of the whole earth. The historical application of verse 26 does not go farther than that which happened by means of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Sheshach, who should drink subsequently to the others. But a principle of universal judgment is comprised in this. The universal evil is developed (v. 29-38). The only question that can be raised is whether, in this ulterior destruction of all the kingdoms of the earth, the expression "King of Sheshach" has any application to one who shall possess the same territory, or if it is merely Nebuchadnezzar. I doubt its going farther.106 The picture of universal judgment ends the first division of the prophecy. That

which follows gives details and particular cases.107 {Je 26}

Chapter 26 begins this series of details with a prophecy of the commencement of Jehoiakim's reign. The people are warned, as being already in sin, that if they repent, they shall escape. We have constantly seen this character attached to the prophecies of Jeremiah, as though God said, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice." Circumstances rendered this appeal urgent, for in fact, if Israel did not repent, the house of Jehovah was to be like Shiloh. We find that of which God had warned the prophet. They strive against him; but, as Jehovah had promised, they gain no advantage over him. We see that it is the ecclesiastical party that excite the people against the testimony which God bears to them by the mouth of the prophet. But God turns the heart of the princes and of the people towards him. There were some also who regarded the ways of Jehovah. Their intelligence did not go far, but sufficiently so for deliverance; they feared God. We may remark here, that conscience laid hold of the word of God in its immediate application. No doubt the evil would go on increasing, and, when ripe, the judgment would be accomplished (for God does not strike before iniquity has come to its height), and then the prophecy would be fulfilled. But conscience, under the influence of the word, takes knowledge of principles which are judged by it, even when all is not yet ripe for judgment; and as yet consequently the judgment is not executed (v. 18, 19). {Je 27-28}

Chapters 27 and 28 go together. Their chief subject is the submission to the head of the Gentiles, which God requires of the Jews. But before dwelling on this, I would

call attention to the care which God bestows on His people, warning them again at each new phase of their career towards judgment. We remember that Zedekiah brought down this judgment by rebelling against the king of Babylon. At the beginning of his reign the Lord sent His word by Jeremiah to warn all the kings around, as well as Zedekiah, that they must submit. If they submitted, they should dwell in their land in peace; if not, they should be driven out and perish.

Let us now observe the place which, as Creator of the earth, of man and beast, God gives to the king of Babylon. God has given the nations, and even the beasts of the field, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar for a certain time. God establishes the central and universal power, and the nation that refuses to submit to it would be in rebellion against Himself, and should be consumed. Compare Daniel 2:38, which adds the fowls of the heaven to his dominion. All on earth was subjected to this king of the earth—the imperial head taken from among the Gentiles. It was a government appointed of God, who had forsaken Jerusalem, and would no longer protect her unless she submitted to this government. It appears that the kings of the surrounding countries were plotting with Zedekiah to throw off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and that the mission of their ambassadors was the occasion on which this prophecy was given, God declaring that He would have all submit to this yoke, for it was He Himself that imposed it.

This fact—that God has committed power in this world to a man—is very remarkable. In the case of Israel man had been tried on the ground of obedience to God, and had not been able to possess the blessing that should

have resulted from it. Now God abandons this direct government of the world (while still the sovereign Lord above); and, casting off Israel whom He had chosen out from the nations, grouping the latter around the elect people and His own throne in Israel, He subjects the world to one head, and committing power unto man, He places him under a new trial, to prove whether he will own the God who gave him power, and make those happy who are subjected to him, when he can do whatever he will in this world.

I do not enter here into the details of the history of this trial: they belong to the Book of Daniel. We know that man failed in it. Senseless and presumptuous, he ravaged the world and oppressed the people of God, trod down His sanctuary, and prepared for himself a judgment so much the more terrible that Satan will induce him to resist it, and will aid him in his rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar alone answers in all points to that which we have just said. He is the head of gold. God had committed immediately to him the government of the world. Cyrus had personally a more peculiar place, and one more honourable in some respects. But as an empire, the Persians only took the place of one that already existed; and the sources and character of power continually deteriorated, in proportion as their distance from God and His gift increased.

False prophets as well as false teachers oppose the truth in this very point on which God tries His people. They can use all other parts of truth in order to deceive, and appear to have increased faith in them. It is manifest that the secret of the Lord is never with them. But whatever appearances may be, they neither stop nor turn away God from the path He takes. Yet the true

prophet's position is a painful one. He may seem for the time to be reduced to silence; for the popular falsehood possesses the hearts of the people. Jeremiah had to go away. Nevertheless in the combat between truth and error God often intervenes by a striking testimony, and so it was here. The function of the prophet, with respect to the government of the world and of the people's walk, is always a testimony to the judgment which hangs over unfaithfulness. {Je 29}

Chapter 29. On the other hand the prophet comforts those who, by the judgment of God, were subjected to the yoke which He had imposed upon them. The Jews in Babylon should dwell in peace, quietly seeking the welfare of the city in which they were captives. The time of deliverance should come. The spirit of rebellion should be punished. Finally, having insisted on the people's submission to the judgment, God reveals His own thoughts of grace. This submission was necessary, because of Israel's sin; for God must maintain His own character, and not identify Himself with the ways of a rebellious people. But He must needs manifest Himself as He is in His grace. The execution of the judgment, and Israel's ruined condition, brought the truth and beauty of the grace of God into yet greater prominence.

Some details of the circumstances that accompany its exercise deserve our attention, as well as the character which God displays in it, and the extent of its effects. In chapter 30 God commands Jeremiah to write in a book all the words of the judgment which he had heard, for God would restore the people. Now this deliverance found Israel at the height of the distress. This is the first thing presented to the prophet. No day could be compared to this day of Jacob's trouble. It is the day

spoken of in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. But in this extremity God comes to the help of His people, who shall be delivered. And now, God having executed His judgment and acted according to His own counsels in grace, this deliverance shall in consequence be full and complete. Israel shall serve Jehovah their God and David their king. The ruin (v. 12) was complete, incurable: no remedy could heal it. It is God who had smitten His people for the multitude of their sins. Nevertheless He was with them to save them; and consequently all the nations who had availed themselves of God's anger to devour Israel should be themselves devoured.' Zion should be rebuilt on her own foundation, joy and peace should be in her dwellings, the governors of the people should be of her children. Israel should be the people of Jehovah, and Jehovah should be their God. Finally a principle which we have seen clearly explained is here announced, namely, that judgment should fall upon the wicked; that this judgment went forth to smite the people of God first, because they were wicked and must bear the consequence. But wherever the wicked might be, this judgment should reach them. Wheresoever the carcase might be, there should the eagles be gathered together. {Je 31}

Chapter 31. But it would not be Judah only, to whom the prophecies of Jeremiah were addressed, that should be restored —all the families of Israel should enjoy this blessing. Jehovah should be their God, they should be His people. A few words will suffice to fix the reader's attention on this beautiful prophecy. All the tribes are there, but all in renewed relationship with Zion. It is a deliverance wrought by the Lord, and it is therefore complete. Its enjoyment is not hindered by weakness. It

is a deliverance that melts the heart and produces tears and supplications, but which removes all cause for tears, excepting grace. They shall sorrow no more; their soul shall be as a watered garden; they shall be satisfied with goodness from Jehovah. Ephraim has repented, and God will cause him to feel that He has never forgotten him. The Lord has always remembered His erring child; Judah shall be the habitation of justice and the mountain of holiness. This shall be through a new covenant—not that which was made when they came out of Egypt. The law shall be written in their heart; they shall all know Jehovah; and none of their sins shall be remembered any more. If God should overthrow the ordinances of creation, then, saith He, shall Israel be cast off for all that they have done. Finally the Lord declares in detail the restoration of Jerusalem.

I would add that in verse 22 I see only weakness. Israel, feeble as a woman, shall possess and overcome all strength— seeing that strength manifests itself in that which is very weakness.

These two chapters give in general the prophetic testimony to Israel's restoration. Chapter 32 applies it to the circumstances of the Jews besieged in Jerusalem; taking occasion, from the ruin that evidently threatened them by the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, to announce the infallible counsels of God in grace towards them. Jeremiah had declared that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah led captive. But Jehovah had caused him to buy a field, in proof that the people should assuredly return. He points out the iniquity of the people and of the city from the beginning; but now that, in despair through sin, their ruin appeared to them inevitable, Jehovah declares not only a return from captivity, but

the full efficacy of His grace. He would give oneness of heart to the people, that they may serve Him for ever. Their relationship to God as His people should be fully established according to the power of an everlasting covenant. Jehovah will rejoice in doing them good. He would plant them in the land with His whole heart, and His whole soul. It was He who had brought all this evil in judgment, and it was He who would bring all the good which He had promised. {Je 33}

Chapter 33 repeats with ample and rich abundance the testimony to these blessings, and dwells particularly on the presence of the Messiah; it announces that the branch of righteousness shall grow up unto David, executing judgment and righteousness in the land. Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. Her name shall be “Jehovah our Righteousness.” David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel (not merely Judah), nor the tribe of Levi a priest. The Lord’s covenant with the heavens and the earth shall fail, before this covenant with David shall be broken. However deeply sunk in despair the people might be, the Lord would never cast off Jacob, or His servant David, but would cause their captivity to return and would have mercy on them. The reader will remark how complete this revelation of deliverance is in its objects: first Judah, who was then particularly in question, then all Israel, then the land, then Messiah and the priesthood. Although, as a comfort to those in Babylon, the captive Jews are encouraged with a sure hope on their repentance (chap. 29); yet in general Judah is joined with Israel in the same deliverance. It is looked at as a whole. Indeed, after chapter 29, save chapter 31:23, 24, where Ephraim had been already

distinguished, and chapter 33:7, 10, 16, in present grace because of the siege, Israel is always put before Judah when both are named, and God glories in the name of the God of Israel.

We do not get in Jeremiah the rejection of Messiah. His subject is present sins, and future purposes in which Messiah comes in. With this chapter the second part of the book closes, that is, the revelation of the full effect of God's grace towards ruined Israel, a result which should be according to His purposes of love, and perfect according to His counsels. {Je 34}

Chapter 34. On the occasion of renewed iniquity the prophet announces the certain ruin of the people. Nevertheless Zedekiah, though carried captive to Babylon, should die there in peace.108 In the succeeding chapters we have some details of the obstinate rebellion which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and of all Judah. {Je 35}

Chapter 35. The obedience of the Rechabites is set forth in order to shew out more clearly the sin of Judah—disobedient in spite of the remonstrances and the patience of God. God does not forget the obedience that glorifies His name. The family of the Rechabites shall never fail. {Je 36}

Chapter 36 furnishes us with another example of the obstinacy with which the kings of Judah despised the call and the testimony of God. Jeremiah was shut up; but God can never fail in means to address His testimony to man, whatever efforts they may make to escape it. Baruch is employed to write the prophecies of Jeremiah, and to read them, first to the people, then to the princes, and at last to the king himself. But the latter, hardened

in his evil ways, destroys the roll. Jeremiah, by God's direction, causes the same words to be written again; and others also, for he neglects no means to reach and lay hold afresh of the people's conscience. But all was useless.

Chapter 37 gives us Zedekiah in the same state of disobedience. A show of religion is kept up, and, having a moment of respite which excites some hope, the king seeks an answer from the Lord by His prophet. But the favourable circumstances, through which it might appear that the wicked may escape from judgment, do not alter the certainty of the word. Jeremiah sought to avail himself of the opportunity to avoid the judgment which was coming upon the rebellious city; but this only serves to manifest the hatred of the heart to God's testimony; and the princes of the people—accusing Jeremiah of favouring the enemy, because he proclaimed the judgment that should fall on the people by their means—put him in prison. Zedekiah manifests some conscience by releasing him.109 In general there is more conscience in Zedekiah personally than in some others of the last kings of Judah (see v. 21, and chaps. 21; 38:10, 14, 16). On this account, perhaps, were those few words of favour and mercy addressed to him in chapter 34:5. But he was too weak to allow his conscience to lead him in the path of obedience (compare chap. 38:2-12). This last chapter gives us the history of his weakness. Nevertheless in the midst of all this scene of misery and iniquity we find some rare examples of righteous men; and, however terrible His judgment may be, God remembers them; for His judgment is terrible because He is righteous. Ebed-melech, who delivered Jeremiah, is spared. Baruch also

preserves his life; and even Zedekiah, as we have seen, is comforted by some words of encouragement, although he must undergo the consequences of his faults. The ways of God are always perfect, and if His judgments are like an overwhelming torrent as to man, still everything, even to the smallest detail, is directed by His hand; and the righteous are spared. The prison even becomes a place of safety for Jeremiah, and Jehovah deigns not only to spare Ebed-melech, but to send him a direct testimony of His favour by the mouth of Jeremiah, that he may understand the goodness of God in whom he had trusted.

After this, chapter 39 and the following chapters give us the history of the confusion and iniquity that reigned among the remnant who were not carried captive to Babylon, in order that they should be scattered, and that all should fully bear the judgment which God had pronounced. Nevertheless, if at this last hour this remnant had submitted to the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, peace should have reigned in the land, and these few that remained should have possessed it. But some revolt, and the others fear the consequences of their folly. There is no idea of trusting in Jehovah. They consult Jeremiah, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord from his mouth. They take refuge in Egypt to escape Nebuchadnezzar, but only to fall under the sword which would have spared them in Judea, had they remained there in subjection to the king. In Egypt they give themselves up to idolatry, that the wrath of God might come upon them to the end. Nevertheless God would spare even a little remnant of these, but Pharaoh-hophra, in whom they trusted, should be given up into

the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as Zedekiah had been. {Je 45}

Chapter 45 gives us the prophecy with respect to Baruch, already mentioned. Chapter 46 and following chapters contain the prophecies against the Gentiles around Judea, and against Babylon herself. We shall find these special elements in the prophecies that refer to the nations—the judgments are not those of the last days, as in Isaiah, but (according to the general character of the book) refer to the destruction of the different nations, in order to make way for the dominion of one sole empire. It is thus that, in the case of Judea, the judgment is even now executed.

But there is a difference with respect to the restoration of those nations in the last days. Egypt, Elam, Moab, Ammon, are restored in the last days; Edom, Damascus, Philistia, Hazor, are not. The reason of this is easily seen. Egypt and Elam form no part of the land of Israel. God in His goodness will have compassion on those countries; they shall be inhabited and blessed under His government. When the people of Israel entered Canaan, Ammon and Moab were to be spared. They were not Canaanites under the curse; and however deplorable their origin might be yet, being related to the family of Israel, their land was preserved to them, although to the tenth generation they could not be admitted into the congregation of Israel (Deut. 23:3). And when God shall put an end to the? dominion given to Nebuchadnezzar, and to the empire of the Gentiles, these nations shall again enter into the countries that were allotted them. But, although Edom had been spared, and were even to be received amongst Israel in their third generation, yet as their hatred to Israel had been unbounded, they

should be totally destroyed in the judgment of that day. Compare Obadiah throughout, especially in verse 18. Their land should form a part of Israel's territory, and was, in fact, a part of it, although they themselves were spared at the beginning as the brethren of Israel, but only, alas! to abuse this favour; so that the judgment would be more terrible upon them than upon the rest. Damascus, Hazor, and Philistia were a part of the land of Israel, properly so called. These nations disappear as distinct nations, as to their territory. At the close of the judgment on Egypt, God sends words of encouragement to Israel. Israel had leant on Pharaoh when Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Jerusalem. The Egyptian power appeared to be the only one capable of balancing that of Babylon. But God had ordained the fall of Egypt, who would willingly have taken the chief place. This was, however, appointed for Babylon. The country from which they were brought out (the world, considered as man in his natural independent character, organising in his own strength) would like to prevail over idolatrous corruption and Babylonish principles; but these were to be in force until the time appointed by God, when God will judge them. Now Israel having leant upon Egypt, would apparently fall with Egypt; but God watched over them, and they were to return from their captivity and dwell in peace. The ways of God in government are well worthy of attention here. God would judge the nations; He would chastise Israel in measure. His people should not be condemned with the world. Grace abused brings down the most terrible judgments; thus it was with Edom.

Babylon yet remains. But, in Jeremiah, all the judgments are contemplated in connection with the setting aside of

the independent nations, and the establishment of the one empire of the Gentiles—the chief subject of this prophecy; consequently the prophet is specially occupied with the historical fate of the empire, as established by God in the prophet's own days. It is Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans which are the subject of his prophecy. It is the judgment of this empire, to avenge the oppression of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar, who had broken his bones (chap. 50:17). Nevertheless, the deliverance of Israel, at the time of the destruction of Babylon, is given as a pledge and foretaste of their complete and final deliverance (chap. 50:4-19, 20, 34; see also 51:19-21). For the destruction of Babylon was the judgment of that which God had Himself established as the Gentile empire. This is the reason why, even historically, her judgment was accompanied by the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of idolatry, by a man raised up to execute the righteousness of God. It has not been at all the same thing with the other empires, although, no doubt, they were also set up by the providence of God. But in their case it was not the immediate establishment of the empire on God's part, placing man in it under responsibility. Man, thus placed, had completely failed. He has tyrannised over God's people, established a compulsory idolatry, and corrupted the world by its means. Looked at as having the dominion of the world, which had been committed to him, he has been judged, and Babylon is fallen. It is important thoroughly to apprehend this truth with respect to this first empire. In principle the deliverance of Israel results from it, whatever the subsequent dealings of God may have been. See also the character of this judgment, chapter 50:28, 33, 34. The next

chapter furnishes us also with important principles in connection with this destruction of Babylon. {Je 51:6}

Chapter 51:6 reveals the unchangeable faithfulness of God to Israel, in spite of the people's sins. It was the time of the Lord's vengeance. When the time that God indicated should have arrived—a time to be known only by those whose spiritual discernment would enable them to apply the prophecy, the elements of which were given clearly enough in these two chapters (especially in the assaults of the nations), then those who had ears to hear were to leave the city. Moreover the fall of Babylon was a judgment pronounced upon idolatry. The portion of Jacob—Jehovah—might chastise His people, but He was not like the vanities of the Gentiles. After having chastised them, He would bring forth His righteousness in contrast with the Gentiles, who oppressed them, and would, finally, use them as His weapons of war. From verse 25 we see that it is the Babylon of those days which is in question. From verse 29 the historical circumstances that are related give us a very especial proof of this.

The last chapter forms no part of the book of Jeremiah, properly so called. We find in it events relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple. After the remarks we have made, that which is said in it of Babylon will be easily understood.

I recapitulate here the principles of this book on account of their importance. The empire of Babylon, in consequence of the unfaithfulness of the house of David, was established by God Himself, and entrusted with the government of the world. But Babylon not only oppressed Israel, but set up idolatry, and corrupted the

world. He who should have been a worshipper of the true God, and an instrument of His power, established, as far as he could, the influence of the enemy. God has judged him. The empire which God Himself established has been entirely overthrown. This judgment was executed against the pride of man, and against idolatry. At the same time it was the deliverance of Israel. This last consideration gave rise to a declaration on God's part of what Israel was to Him, and what it shall be in the last days. But the subject treated of is the Babylon of that day. Since then God has permitted other powers to exist, governing the world with universal dominion, until the final accomplishment of all His purposes. These empires have subsisted according to His will, have been raised up or cast down as He saw good. But neither of them has held precisely the same place as Babylon. None of them have been formally established in the place of Israel, nor has the destruction of any of them been the occasion of Israel's restoration. The word of prophecy assures us that at the end of the days, the judgment of the last empire will have this effect. The judgment of Babylon has, in a manner, foreshadowed it; as its moral character commenced the sad history of these monarchies, and served as a model to them in many respects as to the evil that should be developed until the end. But to understand the fundamental principles of this history, and the dealings of God, the place which this first empire held in these dealings must be clearly and distinctly kept in mind. Besides the immense fact of the substitution of empire in man's hand, for the immediate exercise of God's government on the earth, the diligent testimony which God sent, and the warnings to king after king, to people and to priests,

is very striking in this book, the patience of God’s love and interest.

102 In chapter 27 “Jehoiakim “should be “Zedekiah “(see verse 12 and chapter 28:1).

103 Compare Matthew 26 where this is brought out in the most striking way. It is very precious to see both this perfect result in Christ and at the same time all that He felt in His heart as man, both as sensible to circumstances without and so deeply exercised within. Perfect exercises within produce perfect quietness in walk without, for in both God is fully brought in. If we avoid the full dealing with the matter with God, the heart cannot act for Him as if all were disposed of: and that is peace in action. Yet how precious to see the reality of Christ’s human nature in all the intimate exercises of His spirit.

104 There is something analogous in Jonah. But there the circumstances of the prophet are an episode, and are not connected with the testimony he bore, unless by the single principle of grace.

105 Righteousness characterises the saint as well as love, and has its place where there are adversaries to that love and to the blessing of the loved people. It is the Spirit of prophecy, not the gospel, no doubt because prophecy is connected with the government of God, not with His present dealings in sovereign grace. Hence in the Revelation vengeance is called for by the saints.

106 In either case the judgment does not appear to me to go farther than the oppression of the nations by the king of the Gentiles, who is raised up in place of the throne of God in Jerusalem, and his own destruction at fiie end of his wicked career.

107 The destruction of Babylon had a peculiar importance; first, because it was substituted by God Himself in place of His throne at Jerusalem; secondly, because it was the only Gentile power directly set up by Him, though all power be from Him. The others replaced Babylon providentially. Hence, at the destruction of Babylon, Jerusalem is restored (however partially it shews the principle), and the power which judges Babylon is the setter up of God's people again in the holy city. Babylon—its setting up, its rule, and its destruction—involved the whole of the direct dealings of God with the Gentiles, and with His people in power. All the rest came in merely as a prolonging by the bye.

108 God's ways in this are remarkable. He had broken the oath of Jehovah, and he is judged as profane. It was mainly through the influence of others (for he was disposed to listen to Jeremiah), and therefore mercy is extended to him.

109 See preceding note.

## The Lamentations Of Jeremiah

The Lamentations of Jeremiah—a touching expression of the interest which God feels in the afflictions which His people undergo on account of their sins—will not require much explanation as to the general meaning of the book. A few remarks may be useful, to shew the true character of this book, and its connection with the dealings of God, as revealed to us elsewhere. The first interesting point—to which I have already alluded—is that the affliction of His people does not escape the eye of God. He is afflicted in their affliction: His Spirit takes knowledge of it; and, acting in the heart of those whose mouth He uses, gives expression to the feelings He has produced there. Thus Christ wept over the hard-heartedness of Jerusalem, and invited its inhabitants to do so likewise. And here also His Spirit not only reproves and reveals things to come; He gives a form to the grief of those who love what God loves, and furnishes the expression of it Himself. There is nothing more affecting than the sentiments produced in the heart by the conviction that the subject of affliction is beloved of God, that He loves that which He is obliged to smite, and is obliged to smite that which He loves. The prophet, while laying open the affliction of Jerusalem, acknowledges that the sin of the people had caused it. Could that diminish the sorrow of his heart? If on the one hand it was a consolation, on the other it humbled and made him hide his face. The pride of the enemy, and their joy in seeing the affliction of the beloved of God, give occasion to sue for compassion on behalf of the afflicted, and judgment on the malice of the enemy. At the end of chapter I, after full confession that it was Judah’s sin that had brought the evil upon them,

and that Jehovah was righteous, the people call on the eye of Jehovah to look on their sorrow, and judge those by whose wickedness they were punished.

The second chapter is a very deep and touching appeal. The desolation of Jerusalem is looked at as Jehovah's own work, on what was His own, and not as that of the enemy. Never had there been such sorrow. Not only had He polluted the kingdom and its princes, and had been as an enemy against Jerusalem, and all that was goodly in it, but He had cast down His altar, abhorred His sanctuary. He no longer respected what He had Himself set up. Only we must remember that it was when the relationships of Jehovah with His people depended, however long God's patience, on the faithfulness of the people's obedience to Jehovah, on the old covenant. But this consideration gives room for appealing to Himself. Still it is a solemn thing when Jehovah is forced to reject that which He acknowledges to be His own. But it must be so if the association of His name is only a means of falsifying the testimony of what He is (v. 6, 7). And this brings before us the amazingly important principle contained in the ministry of Jeremiah, not merely the substitution of Babylon and the Gentile empire for Jerusalem and God's government in Israel, but the setting this last aside in itself, the ground of God's relationship with man where it subsisted, as that which could not subsist when put to the test.

In chapter 3 we find the language of faith, of sorrowing faith, of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant, on the occasion of the judgment of Jerusalem in which God had dwelt. Before, the prophet (or the Spirit of Christ in him) spoke in the name of Jerusalem, deploring her sufferings and confessing her sin, while appealing to Jehovah

against her enemies, relating what He had done in forsaking His sanctuary, and (from v. 11 of chap. 2) expressing the depth of her affliction at the sight of the evil. But in chapter 3 he places himself in the midst of the evil to express the sentiments of the Spirit of Christ; not, it is true, in an absolute manner, according to the perfection of Christ Himself, but as acting in the heart of the prophet (as is generally the case in Jeremiah), expressing his personal distress—a distress produced by the Spirit, but clothed in the feelings of the prophet's own heart—to bring out that which practically was going on in the heart of a faithful Israelite, the reality of that which was most elevated in that day of anguish and affliction, in which alas! there was no more hope from the people's side than from that of the enemies who attacked them, and in which the heart of the faithful suffered without hope of remedy, yet much more on account of a people who hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah, than on account of enemies raised up in judgment. What has Christ not suffered! That which His Spirit produces in the midst of human weakness, He has Himself undergone and felt in its full extent; only that He was perfect in all that His heart went through in His affliction.

In chapter 3 the prophet expresses then in his own person, by the Spirit of Christ, all that he felt as sharing the affliction of Israel, and being at the same time the object of their enmity— a position remarkably analogous to that of Christ. What suffering can be like that of one who shares the suffering of God's people without being able to turn away the evil, because they refuse to hear God's message—like that of one who bears this affliction on his heart with the feeling that, if this foolish people

would but have hearkened, the wrath of God should have been turned away? It was the lamentation of Christ Himself, “Oh, if thou hadst known,” etc. In the main Jeremiah partook of the same feelings. But we see him more as being of the people, and participating in his own person in the consequences of the evil, seeing himself under these consequences with the people, because they had rejected his testimony. This may be said of the Lord at the close of His life, or on the cross. But we see that this sentiment, a little known in the case of Job, takes here the form of a personal prayer, complaining of personal suffering. Jeremiah suffers for the testimony, and for the rejection of the testimony. The first nineteen verses of chapter 3 contain the expression of this state. It is altogether the spirit of the remnant; and, with the exception of the sentiment I have just mentioned, it is that expressed in many of the Psalms. Into it all indeed, if we go on to the cross,110 Christ Himself entered.

The prophet speaks as having borne in his own heart the deep grief of that which Jehovah had brought upon Jerusalem; but feeling it as one who knew God to be his God, so that he could experience what it was to be the object of the wrath of God. He suffered with Jerusalem, and he suffered for Jerusalem. But the truth of this relation with Jehovah, while making him feel the affliction more deeply, sustained him also (v. 22). He begins to feel that, after all, it is better to have to do with Jehovah, although, in another point of view, this made it all the more painful. He feels that it is good to be afflicted, and to wait upon Jehovah who smites: for He will not cast off for ever. He does not afflict willingly, but from necessity. Why complain of the chastening of

sin? It were better to turn unto Jehovah.111 He encourages Israel to do so, and while remembering the affliction of his weeping people, faith is in exercise until Jehovah shall interpose. It is well that an affliction like this should be felt; the only harm is when it is allowed to weaken confidence in the Lord.

The prophet calls to mind the affliction of Jerusalem, and, remembering the way which he had been succoured himself, he makes use of the kindness he had experienced to confirm his assurance that God would shew the same kindness to the people. But with respect to the proud and careless who reject the truth, their enmity against God, manifesting itself in their enmity against those who were the bearers of His word, he asks for the judgment of God upon them.112 Thus relieved in spirit, and his heart filled with the sentiment that, since the evil came from Jehovah, that which gave so much depth to the sorrow was also a comfort to the heart, he can return to the affliction itself, measuring its whole extent, which the anguish of his soul prevented his apprehending till he had been able to arrive at its true source. Now he can enter into details, although with deep grief, yet with more calmness because His heart is with God. The sense of trouble and distress at the thought of God's judgment falling on those whom He loves is not sinful, although in Jeremiah's case his heart sometimes failed him.

It is right to be troubled, and, as it were, overwhelmed, at God's breaking, not perhaps the relationship, but His present connection with that which was the object of His favour, that which bore the name and the testimony of God. Christ felt this for Himself, though in Him distress went much farther: "Now is my soul troubled, and what

shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." Only in Christ all is perfect; and if He feels in perfection the profound distress of the object of God's love becoming the object of His judgment, a feeling of unparalleled grief, seeing it at the same time according to the perfection of God's ways, He can say, "For this cause came I unto this hour; Father, glorify thy name!" He was Himself the necessary object of all God's affection, and consequently (if the judgment was to glorify God) the object also of a perfect judgment, that is, of a complete forsaking on God's part. That which is dreadful in this thought is, that the change of relative position was absolute and perfect in His case according to the very perfection of the relationship. He suffered the forsaking of God, instead of enjoying infinite favour which He knew.

There was something similar in the case of Jerusalem; and Jeremiah, feeling by the Spirit of Christ the preciousness of this relationship, and entering into it as sharing it, he suffers with that which was thus judged of God. Only, although moved by the Spirit of Christ, he must find the equilibrium of his thoughts, he must seek Jehovah to bring Him into the affliction, amidst all his personal grief, and the true but human workings of a heart that was shaken and cast down by the circumstances. He attached himself to Jerusalem, as resting on her position before God, and not solely and absolutely for God, and as God Himself, as did our blessed Lord. There was an object between his soul and God (an object beloved also by God), and it was not loved absolutely in God, and with the affection of God, and hence the affliction had to reach this object, he being in it and of it, reach his heart in this place— and

then God draw it to Himself, so that he may look at all from Jehovah's view of it. But Christ was Himself absolutely in the place, for God's glory and the salvation of others. The judged thing from which He was infinitely far, even as man, he was to be before God. Ever perfect, He learned to the absolute fulness what it was to be this before God, and glorified God there. But this, though we know it true, none can fathom. There was in Jeremiah the right foundation, and he finds Jehovah, first of all in spite of the affliction, but soon in the affliction itself, and he recovers himself immediately, not from the affliction, but in the affliction, by the power of God. Christ can say, "How often would I have gathered," etc. This was the affection of God. Jeremiah confesses sin, and ought to confess it, as himself in the place, though a testimony of God in it. But this thought changes so far the character of the feeling (see chap. 1:19, 20).

Christ sought for nothing as a resource, as if self were concerned in it. His affliction was unmixed and absolute to Himself alone, more profound (for who could share it?) but perfect as being His alone. Thus, in John 12, when it is Himself personally (for this Gospel sets the old vine aside as rejected), He cannot desire that the hour of God's forsaking should come; He ought to fear and be troubled, and He was therefore heard. But it is between God and Himself alone. No other thought comes in between—it is wholly with God. Alas! had it been possible, all was lost. But no; it is the absolute submission of the perfect man, who seeks (and seeks nothing else) that the name of God may be glorified according to God's perfection; that at all cost to Himself God's name may be glorified. Not now as God, who must necessarily maintain its glory, but as one who submits to

everything, who sacrifices Himself, in order that God may glorify His name. For this cause He has been supremely glorified as man—a glorious mystery, in which the glory of God will shine forth throughout eternity.

Jeremiah, having now found Jehovah in the affliction, tranquilly measures its whole extent. But this is itself a consolation. For after all Jehovah who changes not is there to comfort the heart. This is chapter 4. He calls the whole to mind, and contrasts that which Jerusalem was, when under the blessing of Jehovah, with that which His anger has produced. It is no longer only the overwhelming circumstances of the present scene, but what it was before God. The Nazarites pass before his thoughts; that which Jerusalem, as the city of the great King, had been even in the eyes of her enemies; the anointed of Jehovah, under whose shadow the people might have lived (as we have already seen), although the Gentiles ruled—the anointed of Jehovah had been taken in their pits, like the prey of the hunter. But the afflicted spirit of God's servant, who bears the burden of His people, can now estimate not only the affliction that overwhelms them, but the position of the enemies of Jerusalem, and that of the beloved city. Nay, he who would have one run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem to find a just one, now sees the enemies have slain the just in her midst (see v. 13 and Jer. 5:1). The cup of God's wrath shall pass through unto Edom, who was rejoicing in the ruin of the city of Jehovah; and as to Zion, she has doubtless drunk this cup to the dregs; but if she has done so, it was in order that she might drink of it no more. The punishment of her iniquity is accomplished, she shall no more be carried into captivity. All was finished for her: she had drunk the cup

which she confessed she had deserved (see chap. 4:11; 1:18-20). But the sin of haughty Edom should be laid bare. God would visit her iniquity.

The prophet can now present the whole affliction of the people to God, as an object of compassion and mercy. This is an onward step in the path of these deep exercises of heart. He is at peace with God; he is in His presence; it is no longer a heart struggling with inward misery. All is confessed before Jehovah who is faithful to His people, so that he can call on God to consider the affliction in order that He may remember His suffering people according to the greatness of His compassions. For Jehovah changes not (chap. 5:19-21). The sense of the affliction remains in full, but God is brought in, and everything having been recalled and judged before Him, all that had happened being cleared up to the heart, Jeremiah can rest in the proper and eternal relations between God and His beloved people; and, shutting himself into his direct relations with his God, he avails himself of His goodness, as being in those relations, to find in the affliction of the beloved people an opportunity for calling His attention to them. This is the true position of faith—that which it attains as the result of its exercises before God at the sight of the affliction of His people (an affliction so much the deeper from its being caused by sin).

This Book of Lamentations is remarkable because we see in it the expression of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, that is, those produced in persons under His influence, the vessels of His testimony, when God was forced to set aside that which He had established in the world as His own. There is nothing similar in the whole circle of the revelations and of the affections of God. He

says Himself, How could He treat them as Admah and Zeboim? Christ went through it in its fullest extent. But He went through it in His own perfection with God. He acted thus with regard to Jerusalem, and wept over it. But here man is found to have lost the hope of God's interposing on His people's behalf. God would not abandon a man who was one of this people, who loved them, who understood that God loved them, that they were the object of His affection. He was one of them. How could he bear the idea that God had cast them off? No doubt God would re-establish them. But in the place where God had set them, all hope was lost for ever. In the Lord's own presence it is never lost. It is in view of this that all these exercises of heart are gone through, until the heart can fully enter into the mind and affections of God Himself. Indeed this is always true.

The Spirit gives us here a picture of all these exercises. How gracious! To see the Spirit of God enter into all these details, not only of the ways of God, but of that also which passes through a heart in which the judgment of God is felt by grace, until all is set right in the presence of God Himself. Inspiration gives us, not only the perfect thoughts of God, and Christ the perfection of man before God, but also all the exercises produced in our poor hearts, when the perfect Spirit acts in them, so far as these thoughts, all mingled as they are, refer in the main to God, or are produced by Him. So truly cares He for us! He hearkens to our sighs, although much of imperfection and of that which belongs to our own heart is mixed with them. It is this that we see in the Book of Lamentations, in the Psalms, and elsewhere, and abundantly, though in another manner, in the New Testament.

110 I add “if we go on to the cross,” because, though Christ may have felt much of it in His sorrow as He approached the cross, there are expressions which apply to Him only as suffering there. The direct proper application is to the remnant, as is the case with the Psalms, and to Jeremiah in particular.

111 We have here a principle of the deepest interest, and most instructive. I will follow it out with a little more detail. The principles are in the text. Jehovah smiting His own altar and all the holy things, having been set up by Himself in the midst of His people as marking them as His and the formal link with them as their God, their destruction which broke that formal link, as far as God’s own ordinances went, put an end to the connection; and this, as one of that people and living in that bond, had been the deepest distress to the true-hearted Jeremiah; but while this, because they were of God, pressed upon his heart, it led him, when he had got to the depth of the feeling, to the Jehovah whose ordinances they were; Jehovah known in his heart takes then the place of the ordinances which bound the people to Him, and his soul is drawn out in confidence to Him who was within and beyond all those links. He feels and speaks from the place of affliction, but his soul is humbled in him when personally thus in intercourse with Jehovah, and so has hope. And this is a sure and immovable anchor of faith when God our Father is truly known (see v. 22-26). He is brought quite low and subdued in spirit, but Jehovah is before his soul and known, though he must wait for Him (v. 27-30), but Jehovah rises up before him. He does not afflict willingly 1 and now he turns in greater calmness of spirit to try his own ways (v. 39-42). Yet he looks fully at all the

sorrow (v. 42-49). But now Jehovah is in his heart, and the “till “(v. 50), the full assurance of which flows from His very nature, for personally, when at the lowest, he had called and Jehovah had drawn near to him, and pleaded the cause of his soul, and he looks for Jehovah’s judgment on his relentless and causeless enemies. No doubt the call for judgment is characteristic of Jehovah’s relationship with Israel. Still, there will be such on all the open enemies of the Lord.

112 In all this the spirit of these passages is wonderfully in accordance with that of the Psalms, as indeed is very natural. The way in which Christ entered into it is spoken of in what is said on the Book of Psalms. Christ passed, in grace, through all exercises as to it in perfectness— Jeremiah and the remnant, that they might be perfected in their own state and feeling as to it. See what follows in the text.

## Ezekiel

In the prophecy of Ezekiel we have left the touching ground we were on in Jeremiah. He was within with the judgment hanging over the guilty city, and under the oppressive sense of the evil which brought on the ruin, bearing a testimony which, as to apparent result, was of no avail, though it maintained, in personal sorrow of heart according to human measure, the glory of God.

Ezekiel had been carried into captivity with the king Jehoiachin; at least, he was one of those made captive at that time, and he habitually dates his prophecies from that period—an important thing to remark that we may understand the revelations made to him. For himself there is no more question either of dates or of kings, of Judah or of Israel. The people of God are in captivity among the Gentiles. Israel is looked at as a whole; the interests of the whole nation are before the eye of the prophet. At the same time the capture of Jerusalem under Zedekiah had not yet taken place. This occasions the revelation of that king’s iniquity, the measure of which was filled up by his rebellion. For Nebuchadnezzar attached value to the oath made in the name of Jehovah. He counted upon the respect due to that name, and Zedekiah had not respected it.

The first twenty-three chapters contain testimonies from God against Israel in general, and against Jerusalem in particular. After that the surrounding nations are judged; and then, beginning with chapter 33, the prophet resumes the subject of Israel, announcing their restoration as well as their judgment. Finally from

chapter 40 to the end we have the description of the temple and of the division of the land. {Ez 1}

In chapter 1 we find a date which refers to the year of Josiah's passover, but with what intent I do not know. It has been thought that the thirty years relate to the jubilee. On this point I cannot speak with confidence. But other circumstances are very important.

The throne of God is not seen in Jerusalem, but unconnected with this city, and outside. It is the universal sovereign throne of God. God judges the city itself from this throne. The prophecy commences with the description of the throne. We have the attributes of God as the supporters of His throne, under the likeness of the four categories of created beings on earth, the four being united in one, at least the four heads or these categories. These symbols are nearly the same as those used by the pagan inventors of idolatry to represent their gods. Formal idolatry began with a figurative personification of the attributes of God. These attributes became their gods, men being impelled to worship them by demons who governed them by this means, so that it was these demons whom men worshipped—a worship that soon degenerated so far that they set up gods wherever there was anything to desire or to fear, or that answered to the lusts which inspired these desires or these fears (sentiments which the demon cultivated also, in order to appropriate to himself the worship due to God alone). Now these attributes belonged to the only God, the Creator, and the head of all creation; but, whatever their power and glory might be in action, they were but the supporters of the throne on which the God of truth is seated.113 Whatever instruments He may employ, it is the mighty energy of God that manifests

itself. Intelligence, strength, stability, and swiftness in judgment, and, withal, the movement of the whole course of earthly events, depended on the throne. This living energy animated the whole. The cherubic supporters of the throne, full of eyes themselves, moved by it; the wheels of God's government moved by the same spirit, and went straight forward. All was subservient to the will and purpose of Him who sat on the throne judging right. Majesty, government, and providence, united to form the throne of His glory. But all the instruments of His glory were below the firmament; He whom they glorified was above. It is He whom the heathen knew not.

This throne of the supreme and sovereign Lord God is seen in Chaldea114—in the place where the prophet then was—among the Gentiles. It is no longer seen at Jerusalem in connection with the land; nor have we any law embodied, so to speak, in the throne, according to which an immediate government was exercised. Consequently the voice of God speaks to Ezekiel as to a "son of man"—a title that suited the testimony of a God who spoke outside of His people, as being no longer in their midst, but on the contrary was judging them from the throne of His sovereignty. It is Christ's own title, looked at as rejected and outside of Israel, although He never ceases to think of the blessing of the people in grace. This puts the prophet in connection with the position of Christ Himself. He would not, thus rejected, allow His disciples to announce Him as the Christ (Luke 9), for the Son of man was to suffer.115 In testimony and example, as to his prophetic relation, the same thing happens in Ezekiel's case. God is rejected; His prophet takes this place, with the throne, to judge the whole

nation, and especially Jerusalem, announcing at the same time (to faith) their re-establishment in grace. He is sent from Jehovah to a rebellious people, to say, Jehovah has spoken, whether they would hear or not. The judgment would make it known that a prophet had been among them. His first testimony is composed of lamentations, and mourning, and woe; nevertheless the communication of the word of God is always full of sweetness, looked at as a revelation from Him, and as taking place between God and man (chap. 2).

Some important principles in the relations of God with Israel are developed in chapter 3.

But we have yet to notice a feature that characterises the Book of Ezekiel, comparing it with that of Jeremiah. The latter addresses himself immediately to his contemporaries (that is to say, to the people of God) in a testimony which, making its way through the bruised and wounded heart of the prophet, exhibits the marvellous patience of God, who, up to the last moment, invites His people to repentance. It is not thus with Ezekiel. He announces that which necessitates the judgment. He is sent indeed to Israel, but to Israel in a hardened condition. His mouth is shut as to the people; he is not to rebuke them. He may communicate to them certain declarations of Jehovah at a suitable time, when Jehovah opens his mouth to make them understand that there is a prophet among them; but he does not address himself directly and morally to the people, as being still the object of God’s dealings. Jehovah reveals to him the iniquities that oblige Him to cast off His people, and no longer to act towards them on principles of government established by Himself, as with a people whom He acknowledged. It is, on God’s part, a setting forth of

Israel's conduct as the occasion of the rupture of His relations with them. At the same time certain new principles of conduct are revealed. I speak of that part of the prophecy which relates to Israel; for there are also sundry judgments upon the Gentiles, and a description of the future state of the land, as well as of the temple—a state which the prophet was to communicate to Israel in case they should repent. {Ez 3}

Chapter 3. The Lord testifies that Israel is even more hardened than any of the heathen nations. The people are "impudent and hard-hearted." It needed that Ezekiel should have his forehead made as hard as adamant to speak to them the word which he had to declare, saying, "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." The prophet is carried away by the power of the Spirit into the midst of the captives at Tel-abib. Although the house of Israel was hardened, God distinguished a remnant; and in this manner. The prophet was to warn individuals: it was to this work he was appointed. If his word was received, he who hearkened should be spared. Ezekiel should be responsible for the fulfilment of this duty: but each one should bear the consequences of his own conduct, after he had heard the word. Thus the people are no longer judged as a whole, as was the case when all depended on the public conduct of the nation or of the king. Israel had revolted, but still he that hearkened to the word should live. God was acting in accordance with His long-suffering grace. The prophet again sees the glory of Jehovah by himself, and the Spirit announces to him that he is not to go out among the people, but that he shall be a prisoner in his house, and that God will make his tongue cleave to the roof of his

mouth; for they were a rebellious people, and, as a people, the warning was not to be given them. God, when He pleased, would open the mouth of the prophet, and he should speak peremptorily to the people, declaring the word of Jehovah. Let him hear that would, Jehovah would no longer plead in love, as He had done. {Ez 4}

Chapter 4. Besides the general judgment that God pronounced upon the condition of Israel, Jerusalem—on whom lay all the iniquity of the people now come to its height—appears before God whom she had despised. The prophet, in representing the siege of Jerusalem, was also to point out the years of iniquity that had led to this judgment: for Israel in general, 390; for Judah, 40. It is certain that these dates do not refer to the duration of the kingdom of Israel apart from Judah, nor to that of Judah, because the kingdom of Israel only lasted about 254 years, while that of Judah continued about 134 years after the fall of Samaria. It would appear that the longer period mentioned is reckoned from the separation of the ten tribes under Rehoboam, counting the years as those of Israel, because from that moment Israel had a separate existence, and comprised the great body of the nation; while Judah was everything during the reign of Solomon, which lasted forty years. After his reign Judah would be comprised in the general name of Israel according to Ezekiel's usual habit, although on certain occasions he distinguishes them on account of the position of Zedekiah and of God's future dealings. The reason for using this name of Israel for the whole is plain enough, namely, that the captivity had placed the whole nation in the same condition and under one common judgment, and Israel was the name of the

whole people. The entire nation was now set aside, and a Gentile kingdom established. Judah is sometimes distinguished, because there was still a remnant at Jerusalem—judged indeed yet more severely than the mass, but which nevertheless existed, and which will have distinct circumstances in their history until the last days. The same thing happens in the New Testament. In the language of the apostles the twelve tribes are blended. Nevertheless, as a matter of history, the Jews—that is to say, those of Judah—are always distinct. In the main, Ezekiel prophesied under the same circumstances. Hence, in part, as we have said, his title of "son. of man," given also to Daniel, as well as that of "man greatly beloved." The man of power was Nebuchadnezzar. But he who represented the race before God was an Ezekiel, as the man of desire was a Daniel, a man beloved of God.

With respect to the date, it is certain that the 390 years are almost exactly the time of Israel's duration from the death of Solomon to the destruction of the temple. Some persons have wished to reckon the forty years of Judah from Josiah's pass-over down to the same period, supposing that the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar took place four or five years after the captivity of Zedekiah; but this was not the case— it was a month later in the same year. Jehoiachin was carried into captivity in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:12). Zedekiah reigned eleven years (Jer. 52:1). In the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan burnt the house of Jehovah, and, reading from verse 6, we see that it was a month after in the same year. In taking the forty years of Judah to be the reign of Solomon, it would be saying that Israel had done

nothing but sin ever since the establishment of the kingdom, for it was only in the days of Solomon that there was a peaceful reign. David founded the kingdom. The responsibility of his family began with Solomon (2 Sam. 7).

In the revelation given to Ezekiel Jerusalem is taken, and its population almost entirely destroyed. The dispersed remnant are pursued by the sword, and a portion only of this remnant is spared. There would be some even of this portion cast into the fire.116 And this fire should reach to the whole house of Israel. That is to say, the judgment that should fall upon the remnant who do not perish in the city should represent the position of all Israel. It is thus that the prophet is constantly led to speak of the whole nation. For, as long as there was a remnant at Jerusalem, the nation had a place on the earth. But when the iniquitous rebellion of Zedekiah had led to the destruction of Jerusalem, this was no longer the case. But this judgment of Jerusalem contains very important elements for the understanding of all this part of the history of the people and of the dealings of God, “This is Jerusalem, saith the Lord Jehovah; I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries round about her.” And instead of being a testimony in the midst of the nations, so that the house of Jehovah should have attracted them, or at least have placed them under responsibility by a true testimony to God who dwelt there—instead of this, her inhabitants had even gone beyond the idolatrous nations in wickedness. Therefore God would execute judgments upon her in the sight of all the nations—a just retribution for her sins. She should also be laid waste and made a reproach among the nations round about her; and (chap. 6) the judgment

should not be confined to Jerusalem, it should be executed on all the high places, on all the mountains of Israel. Every city should be desolate, all their idols destroyed, and the people scattered. They should know that the Lord had not threatened them in vain with His judgments. The fire should reach those that were afar off as well as those that were in the land; and the land should be laid waste, and the worshippers of idols slain around their infamous gods. Nevertheless God would remember mercy in the midst of judgment; He would spare a little remnant of those who were scattered, and those who should escape should loathe themselves for the abominations they had committed. Thus Jerusalem was judged as well as the mountains of Israel, which were but too notorious for their idols and their high places.

Finally (chap. 7), the whole land of Israel is under the sentence of God, “the four corners of the land.” Those who escape the general judgment mourn alone upon the mountains, having forsaken all in despair—having no power for resistance. The worst of the heathen should possess the land. And the ornament of the majesty of Jehovah, which He had established in glory, having been profaned by their abominations, should be given up into the hands of strangers to be profaned by them. The secret place of His holiness should be polluted. Mischief should come upon mischief, and there should be no remedy. Jehovah would judge the people according to their deserts.

Solemn judgment was thus pronounced on the whole nation. All is desolate, and with respect to the relations of Israel with God—whether on the part of the people themselves, or by means of the house of David which

was responsible for the maintenance of these relations—all was finally lost. Grace may act; but the people and the house of David had totally failed. The name of God had been blasphemed through His people, instead of being glorified. The execution of judgment is now the only testimony rendered to Him. The judgment is complete, it has fallen on the four corners of the land, and Israel is no longer a nation. What a solemn thought it is, that judgment should be the only testimony that can be given to God! {Ez 7}

Chapter 7 closes this first prophecy, which is one of vast importance, as declaring the judgment to be fully executed upon the people of God on earth.

Chapter 8 begins a new prophecy, which comprises several distinct revelations, and extends to the close of chapter 19 (from the eighth to the end of the eleventh being connected). Judah still existed at Jerusalem, although many of them had already been carried into captivity with Jehoiakim. It was not till five years later that the temple was destroyed. It is the state of things at Jerusalem which is judged in these chapters. The elders of Judah presented themselves before the prophet, and Jehovah took this opportunity to shew him all the enormities that would bring down judgment on the people. In the prophecy of the preceding year God, by the mouth of the prophet, had threatened Israel with the giving up of His sanctuary to the profane (chap. 7:20-22). Here Jehovah exhibits in detail the cause of this judgment. The glory of Jehovah appeared to the prophet, and he was taken in the visions of God to Jerusalem, and there in the courts and the chambers, and in the gates, he was shewn every form of hateful and defiling idolatry practised in Jehovah’s own house

by the elders and others of Israel. If we compare the history of Jeremiah, and the outward profession that was made—the pretension that the law should not perish from the priest, we shall understand the excessive iniquity of the Jews and their hypocrisy.

The glory of Jehovah visits the temple. He takes His place on the side that looked towards the city, and, after having shewn the prophet the heinous sins committed there, He gives command to execute the deserved vengeance, but to spare the remnant who mourned over all these abominations. That which declares morally the state of heart of the wicked, and which made them give the loose rein to their iniquity, is that the absence of Jehovah's intervention on account of their sins, had so acted on their belief as to make them say, "Jehovah hath forsaken the earth and Jehovah seeth not." This was obduracy of heart. {Ez 10}

In chapter 10 the whole city is given up to be consumed. The glory of Jehovah presides over the judgment and commands it. He stands upon the threshold of His house which He fills with His glory in judgment, as He had formerly done in blessing. The throne of Jehovah was apart. We have a renewed description of all its parts. Jehovah left His throne and stood on the threshold of the house. This is an interesting element of this judgment. The cherubim and the terrible wheels instinct with living energy and full of eyes could have accomplished all. But Jehovah leads the prophet to take personal cognisance of the various and abominable sins and idolatries by which they profaned His sanctuary. No doubt His providential government wrought in power to carry out His judgment, but it was the Jehovah of the defiled house who stood personally on its threshold to direct the

judgment of the city, and personally have a mark put on the godly and secure them in the hastening judgment (chap. 9:3, 4, following, and from beginning of chap. 8). This personal intervention of Jehovah, both to shew the evil well known to Him, to mark and spare the mourners, and to direct the judgment, is full of interest. {Ez 11}

In chapter 11 God judges the leaders of iniquity, who comforted themselves in the thought that the city was impregnable.117 They should be brought out from the midst thereof and be judged in the border of Israel. One of these wicked men dies in the presence of the prophet, which brings out the sorrow of his heart and his intercession for Israel. In reply, God distinguishes those in Jerusalem from the captives. As to the latter, God had been a sanctuary to them wherever they were. He would restore them, and give them back the land. He would purify them, and give them a new heart. They should be His people, and He would be their God. But as for those who walked after their abominations, their ways should be visited upon them in judgment. The remnant are always distinguished, and individual conduct is the condition of blessing, save that they, the faithful, are established as the people of God at the end.

The glory of Jehovah then forsakes the city and stands upon the Mount of Olives, from which Jesus ascended, and to which He will again descend for Israel’s glory. This part of the prophecy ends here. {Ez 12}

Chapter 12 announces the fight and the capture of Zedekiah, who would be carried to Babylon though he would not see it. All the force of Judah would be dispersed, and the land laid desolate; a small remnant of

captives would declare among the heathen the abominations which had brought the judgment; and the judgment was soon to come, for God's patience with His people had led to the unbelieving comment that God would not interfere, but now the effect of His words would not be delayed. {Ez 13}

Chapter 13 judges the prophets who deceived the people in Jerusalem by their pretended visions of peace. {Ez 14}

In chapter 14 the elders of Israel come and sit before the prophet. Here God sets distinctly before Israel the new principles on which He would govern them. These elders had put their abominations before their eyes. God Himself will judge them according to their transgressions. As a nation they were all alike. Jehovah could only say to them, "Repent ye." The prophets and the people should be punished together. Even if the most excellent of the earth should be found in a land which Jehovah judged, they would not hinder the execution of the judgment, they would only save their own lives by their righteousness. God did not own a nation (the only one He had He had now rejected); He did, the individually righteous (compare Gen. 18). Now God was bringing all His judgments upon Jerusalem. Nevertheless, a remnant should be spared; and the proofs they would give of the abominations committed in the city would comfort the prophet with respect to the judgments accomplished on it. And so it is: the judgment of God, who gives His people up to their enemies, is a burden to the heart of one who loves the people; but when the manner in which the name of God had been dishonoured is seen, the necessity of the judgment is understood and felt. {Ez 15}

Chapter 15 shews that the vine—utterly useless if it bore no fruit—was fit only for fuel, and to be consumed. Thus should it be with the inhabitants of Jerusalem—a striking picture of this destruction, and of the condition of Jerusalem, which was worth nothing more. {Ez 16}

In reading chapter 16 it must be remembered that Jerusalem is the subject, and not Israel. Moreover, the subject treated of is not redemption, but God's dealings. He had caused to live, He had cleansed, ornamented, and anointed, that which was in misery and devoid of beauty. But Jerusalem had used all that Jehovah had given her in the service of her idols, and also to purchase the succour and the favour of the Egyptians and the Assyrians. She has had no idea of independence and of standing alone, leaning on Jehovah. She should be judged as an adulterous woman. Jehovah would bring against her those whom she had sought. Nevertheless, filled with pride, she would hear nothing of Samaria or of Sodom—names which Jehovah now uses to humble her. She was even more worthless than those whom she must own for her sisters, in spite of her pride. Jerusalem being thus justly condemned and humbled, God will yet act in full grace towards her, and will re-establish her, remembering His love and His covenant. She will never be restored on the former ground, any more than Samaria or Sodom; and the grace that will be exercised towards her shall suffice to bring them back also, namely, the sovereign grace of redemption and pardon, which is by no means the covenant of Jerusalem under the law. With Jerusalem Jehovah will also establish a special covenant, and her two sisters shall be given her for daughters. Her mouth shall be shut at the thought of all the grace of God who shall have pardoned her. The

fifty-fifth verse is absolute and perpetual. The promise, in verse 60, is on entirely new ground. Samaria, Sodom, Jerusalem, go together in judgment; but sovereign grace has its own way and time, and thus all three might be and would be restored, but Jehovah would establish His covenant with Jerusalem. The free unconditional covenant of promise would be made good to Jerusalem (chap. 16:8). {Ez 17}

Chapter 17 present the judgment of Zedekiah for despising the oath that Nebuchadnezzar made him take in the name of Jehovah. Israel not having been able to stand in integrity before God, Jehovah had committed the kingdom to the head of the Gentiles, whom He had raised up. This was His determinate purpose; but He had disposed the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to respect the name of Jehovah, and Judah might still have remained the centre of religious blessing, and the lamp of David might still have given light there, although the royalty had been subjected to the head of the Gentiles, until the time should come for the result of the judgment and dealings of God. The covenant between Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah was made on this ground, and the name of Jehovah was brought in to confirm it. It was not the Gentile who broke the covenant. Zedekiah added to his other sins that of rendering impossible the existence of a people and a kingdom that belonged to God. The name of Jehovah was more despised and trampled under foot by him than by the Gentile king. He intrigues with Egypt to escape from the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar, whom God Himself, in judgment, had set up as supreme. This filled up the measure of iniquity, and brought on the final judgment. But it left room for the sovereignty of God, who would

bring down the high tree and exalt the low tree, who would dry up the green tree and make the dry tree to flourish. His grace would take the little forgotten branch of the house of David and raise it up in Israel upon the mountain of His power, where He would cause it to become a goodly cedar, bearing fruit, and sheltering all that would seek the protection of its shadow. All the powers of the earth should know the word and the works of Jehovah. {Ez 18}

Chapter 18 contains an important principle of the dealings of God, unfolded at that period. God would judge the individual according to his own conduct; the wicked nation was judged as such. Neither was it, in fact, judged for the iniquity of the fathers. The present iniquities of the people made the judgment which their fathers had merited suitable to their own actions. But now, with respect to His land of Israel, the principle of government laid down in Exodus 34:7 was set aside, and souls belonging, as they did individually, to Jehovah, would individually bear the judgment of their own sins. God would pardon the repenting sinner. For He has no pleasure in the sinner’s death. The government of Israel on earth is still the subject. Every one shall be judged according to his ways.118 {Ez 19}

Chapter 19 describes the captivity of Jehoiakim, afterwards that of Jeconiah, and finally the complete decay of the house of David. {Ez 20}

Chapter 20 begins a new prophecy, which, with its subdivisions, continues to the end of chapter 23. It will have been remarked that the general divisions are made by years. Chapter 20 is important. The preceding chapters had spoken of the sin of Jerusalem. Here the

Spirit retraces the sin, and especially the idolatry of Israel (that is to say, of the people, as a people) from the time of their sojourn in Egypt. Then already they had begun with their idolatry. For His own name's sake God had brought them up from thence, and given them His statutes and His sabbaths—the latter too in token of the covenant between God and the people. But Israel had rebelled against God in the wilderness, and even then He had thought to destroy them. But He spared them, warning at the same time their children also, who nevertheless followed their fathers' ways. Still, for His name's sake, God withdrew His hand on account of the heathen in whose sight He had brought the people up from Egypt. But in the wilderness He had already warned them that He would scatter them among the nations (Lev. 26, Deut. 32); and as they had polluted the sabbaths of Jehovah and gone after the idols of their fathers, they should be polluted in their own gifts, and be slaves to the idols they had loved, that they might be made desolate by the Lord. For, having been brought into the promised land, they had forsaken Jehovah for the high places. He would no longer be enquired of by them, but would rule over them with fury and with an outstretched arm. He had already in the wilderness threatened the people with dispersion among the heathen; and now, having brought them into the land for the glory of His great name, Israel had only dishonoured Him. He, therefor, executes the judgment with which He had threatened them. Israel, always ready to forsake Jehovah, would have profited by this to become like the heathen. But God comes in at the end in His own ways. He keeps the people separate in spite of themselves, and He will gather them out from among the nations and bring them into the wilderness, as when He led them out

of Egypt, and there He will cut off the rebels, sparing a remnant, who alone shall enter the land. For it is there that Jehovah shall be worshipped by His people, when He shall have gathered them out from all the countries where they have been scattered, and Jehovah Himself shall be sanctified in Israel before the heathen. Israel shall know that He is Jehovah, when He shall have accomplished all these things according to His promises. They shall loathe themselves, and shall understand that Jehovah has wrought for the glory of His name, and not according to their wicked ways.

This is the general judgment of the nation, and in fact of the ten tribes as distinct from Judah. They, as a body, were not guilty of the rejection of the blessed Lord. They had been long scattered for their rebellion against Jehovah. They will be brought back, but passed as a flock under the rod of the covenant, the rebels purged out, and only the spared remnant enter the land. They will not thus be in the special tribulation of the last half week, nor under Antichrist. They are dealt with in the national government of God. Judah will of course be in verse 40, but the object is to shew it is not simply Judah, the Jews as we say. Israel in the land, the whole people will enjoy the blessings once promised. But this brings out some important principles. Though the original promises are referred to and exist for the full blessing, yet the dealings of Jehovah begin with the land of Egypt. Next there is an accumulation of sin. The Lord’s sparing mercy, when it only made them go on in greater oblivion of His goodness, only aggravated and accumulated the evil, as the Lord speaks, from Abel to Zacharias. Thus the people are judged in view of their conduct, from the time of their departure from Egypt; their idolatrous

spirit was manifested even in Egypt itself (compare Amos 5:25, 26; Acts 7). Jehovah had indeed spared the people for the glory of His name, but the sin was still there. Israel as a nation is therefore scattered, and then placed anew under the rod of the covenant, and God distinguishes the remnant, and acts for the sure accomplishment in sovereign grace of that of which the people were incapable as placed under their own responsibility. Israel, as a whole, as a nation, is distinguished from Judah, which continues in a particular position. With regard to the nation, as such, the rebels are cut off and do not enter the land. In the land two-thirds are cut off at the end (Zech. 13:8, 9). But in this latter case, it is the Jews who were guilty of the rejection and death of Jesus who are judged. Here it is the dealings of God with the nation—guilty from the time of Egypt; there it is the chastisement of the enemies and murderers of Christ. Grace is shewn in both cases to the remnant.

From verse 45 it is another prophecy, which contains the application of the threats in the preceding prophecy to the circumstances through which it will be fulfilled, by the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, as unfolded in chapter 21. Jehovah had unsheathed and sharpened His sword to return it no more to its sheath: it was prepared for the slaughter. The prophet sees Nebuchadnezzar at the head of the two roads to Jerusalem and to Ammon. Jerusalem would treat that which he was doing as a false divination, but she would be overtaken by the judgment of Jehovah. Their conduct had brought their whole sinful course to mind, and the profane Zedekiah (who had filled up the iniquity by despising the oath which he had taken in Jehovah’s name) should come to his end when

the iniquity was judged; for he had filled up its measure. Moreover, it was now a definitive judgment, and not a chastisement which would allow the unsheathed sword to return to its scabbard, as for His name's sake they had been so often spared as we have seen rehearsed in the chapter. In fact it was a revolution in God's ways, a taking His throne from the earth and the beginning of the times of the Gentiles. Jehovah overturned everything until He should come, to whom in right it all belonged, and to whom the kingdom should be given; that is to say, until Christ. Ammon likewise should be destroyed.

The more these prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah are considered, the more striking do they appear. First of all, they establish the very important fact with respect to the government of the world, namely, that the throne of God has been removed from the earth, and the government of the world entrusted to man under the form of an empire among the Gentiles. In the second place, the veil is also withdrawn as to the government of God in Israel. This test, to which man had been subjected, in order to see if he were capable of being blessed, has only proved the entire vanity of his nature, his rebellion, the folly of his will, so that he is radically evil. Even from Egypt, it was a spirit of rebellion, idolatry, and unbelief, which preferred anything in the world, an idol, or the Assyrian, to Jehovah the true God. Constant in their sin, neither deliverance nor judgment, neither blessing nor experience of their folly, changed the heart of the people or the propensity of their nature. The idolatry that began in Egypt, and their contempt of the word of Jehovah, were not altered by their enjoyment of the promises, but characterised this people until their rejection of Jehovah. But on God's part we see

a patience that never belies itself, the most tender care, the most touching appeals, everything that could tend to bring their hearts back to Jehovah; interventions in grace, to lift them out of their misery, and bless them when in a state of faithfulness produced by this grace, through the means of such or such a king; rising up early to send them prophets, until there was no remedy. But they gave themselves up to evil; and, as shewn by Ezekiel and Stephen, the Spirit of God returns to the first manifestations of their heart, of which all that followed was but the proof and the expression. And the judgment is executed on account of that which the people have been from the beginning.

After the full manifestation of that which the people were, God changes His plan of government, and reserves for sovereign grace the re-establishment of Israel according to His promises, which He would fulfil by His means who could maintain blessing by His power, and govern the people in peace.

It is not uninteresting to recall, that that sovereign grace, which blesses Israel at last and after all, when responsible human nature has been fully tried, is—though we come to it, where real, through definite conviction of our sins and sinfulness—as to God’s ways, the starting point of our path and what belongs to us. Hence the necessity of a new nature, and God’s love in giving His Son, are the opening of all to us. The cross for both secures the righteousness through which grace reigns. {Ez 22}

Chapter 22 recapitulates the sin of Jerusalem, of her prophets, her priests, and her princes. The eye of God sought for some one to stand in the gap before Him, and

found none. His indignation should consume them. What force the prophecies give to those words of the Lord, “How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” {Ez 23}

In chapter 23 Jehovah justifies Himself for judging Jerusalem by the iniquity and unfaithfulness of her walk. Her whoredom with the Gentiles brought her early course to mind. The same conduct shewed the same nature. She has ended as she began, because at heart she was the same. Samaria’s lot should be hers. The latter is called a tent or tabernacle, and Jerusalem “My tabernacle in her.” {Ez 24}

In chapter 24 definitive judgment is pronounced against Jerusalem, who was not even ashamed of her sins. The day that Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem, the wife of the prophet dies; and, although she was the dearest object of his affections, Ezekiel was not to mourn. Under the figure of his wife’s death he is instructed to refrain his heart before the judgment of Jehovah. The judgment once executed, the mouth of the prophet would be opened, and the word of Jehovah openly addressed to the remnant, so that Jehovah should be known to them. Jerusalem should be set as a caldron on the fire to melt and consume the whole. God had purged her, but she was not purged; and now He causes His fury to rest upon her. {Ez 25}

Chapter 25 has an especial character. The nations that surrounded and that were within the territory of Israel rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the sanctuary. Therefore God would execute judgment upon them. Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines are the

objects of this prophecy. The testimony of God against Edom is yet more developed in Obadiah. Thus, by the judgment that should fall upon them, should these nations know that, although Jerusalem had not been a faithful witness, Jehovah alone is God. Chapters 24 and 25 go together. Chapter 25 anticipates (although the date is similar) the events which gave rise to the manifestations of hatred that are the occasion of the judgments pronounced. But the spirit had shewn itself in these tribes or nations from the commencement of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem. Their introduction here is easily to be understood, for these nations were to share the same fate, and are included in this judgment, because they are all upon Israel's territory. Another remarkable element (found also in other prophecies on Edom, and giving a wider meaning to the one we are considering), is, that it declares that the judgment which shall fall on Edom in the end shall be executed by the hand of Israel. Compare Obadiah 17, 18 with verse 14 of this chapter. Although in a certain sense upon Israel's territory, Tyre has another character, and is the subject of a separate prophecy (chaps. 26-28), because it represents the world and its riches, in contrast with Israel as the people of God; and rejoices, not like the others from personal hatred, but because (having opposite interests) the destruction of that which restrained its career gave free course to its natural selfishness. It is worthy of remark in these prophecies, how God lays open all the thoughts of man with respect to His people and that which they have been towards Him. {Ez 27}

In chapter 27, Tyre is judged for its ill-will to the people and the city of God. It is overthrown as a worldly system,

and all that formed its glory disappears before the breath of Jehovah.

In chapter 28 it is the prince and the king of Tyre that are judged for their pride. Verses 1-10 set before us the prince of this world's glory as a man, exalting himself and seeking to present himself as a god, having acquired riches and glory by his wisdom. Verses 11-19, while continuing to speak of Tyre, go, I think, much farther, and disclose, though darkly, the fall and the ways of Satan, become through our sin the prince and god of this world. The prince of Tyre represents Tyre and the spirit of Tyre. The verses which follow (11-19) are much more personal. I do not doubt that, historically, Tyre itself is referred to; verses 16-19 prove it. But, I repeat, the mind of the Spirit goes much farther. The world and its kings are presented as the garden of Jehovah on account of the advantages they enjoy. (The outward government of God is in question, which till then had recognised the different nations around Israel). This however applies more especially to Tyre, which was situated in the territory of Israel, in Emmanuel's land, and which, in the person of Hiram, had been allied with Solomon, and had even helped to build the temple. Its guilt was proportionate. It is the world in relation with God; and if the prince of Tyre represents this state of things as being the world, and a world that has been highly exalted in its capabilities by this position—an exaltation of which it boasts in deifying itself, the king represents the position itself in which, under this aspect, the world has been placed, and the forsaking of which gives it the character of apostasy. It is this character which gives occasion for the declaration of the enemy's apostasy contained in these verses. He had been where

the plants of God flourished,119 he had been covered with precious stones (that is to say, with all the variety of beauty and perfection, in which the light of God is reflected and transformed when manifested in, and with respect to, creation). Here the varied reflection of these perfections had been in the creature: a creature was the means of their manifestation. It was not light, properly so called. (God is light; Christ is the light here below, and so far as He lives in us, we are light in Him). It was the effect of light acting in the creature, like a sunbeam in a prism. It is a development of its beauty, which is not its essential perfection, but which proceeds from it.

The following are the features of the king of Tyre's character, or that of the enemy of God, the prince of this world. He is the anointed cherub—he is covered with precious stones—he has been in Eden the paradise of God, upon the mountain of God— he walked in the midst of the stones of fire—he was perfect in his ways until iniquity was found in him. He is cast out of the mountain of God on account of his iniquities; his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted himself. Farther, we find that which, as to the creature, is most exalted; he acts in the judicial government of God according to the intelligence of God (this is the character of the anointed cherub). He is clothed with the moral beauty that variously reflects the character of God as light.120 He is recognised among the plants of God, in which God displayed His wisdom and His power in creation, according to His good pleasure, as Creator. He had been there also where the authority of God was exercised—on the mountain of God. He walked where the moral perfections of God were displayed in their glory, a glory before which evil could not stand—"the

stones of fire." His ways had been perfect. But all these advantages were the occasion of his fall, and characterised it. For the privileges we enjoy always characterise our fall. Whence have we fallen? is the question; for it is the having failed there, when we possessed it, that degrades our condition. Moreover it is not an outward temptation, as in man's case—a circumstance which did not indeed take away man's guilt, but which modified its character. "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty." He exalted himself against God, and he was cast out as profane from the mountain of God. His spirit, independent in security, was humbled when he was cast to the ground. His nakedness is manifested to all; his folly shall in the end be apparent to all.

The judgment of Sidon is added. And then, all hope having been taken from Israel, when the judgment of the nations is accomplished, God gathers them and causes them to dwell in their land in peace for ever. {Ez 29-32}

Chapters 29-32 contain the judgment of Egypt. Egypt sought, in the self-will of man, to take the place which God had in fact given to Nebuchadnezzar. All must submit. The mighty empire of Asshur had already fallen. Pharaoh, whatever his pretensions and his ambition might be, was no better. We see this judgment of the Assyrian, the chief of all the nations as to his power, in chapter 31:10, 11; where the "mighty one of the heathen" is distinctly brought out— falling before this decree of God. Pharaoh would be consoled by seeing all the great ones of the earth overthrown like himself. Already fallen like the uncircumcised (that is, like people who were not owned of God, nor consequently upheld by Him), all must give place to this new power in the hands

of Nebuchadnezzar. That which characterised Egypt was the pride of nature, which would follow its own will, and owned no God (chap. 29:9). Such a principle shall no longer be the confidence of God's people (v. 16). Egypt should have her place, but should no longer rule. The judgment of Egypt should be the occasion of Israel's blessing. This reaches to the end. In the destruction of the Assyrian, God had shewn that He would not allow a nation to exalt itself in this manner. The will of man in Pharaoh did not alter His judgment. In Nebuchadnezzar, as we have seen, a new principle was introduced by God Himself into the world.

Observe that in chapter 32:27 Meshech and Tubal are distinguished from the rest of the nations.

This prophecy concerning Egypt has particular importance. It is composed of three distinct prophecies. The first (chaps. 29, 30) is subdivided; the second, chapter 31; the third, chapter 32. But this last extends to the end of chapter 39, and embraces several subjects in connection with the fate of Israel in the last days. Observe that chapter 29:17-21 is a prophecy of a very different date, introduced here on account of its relation to that which precedes it in the same chapter. Chapter 30:20-26 is also a distinct prophecy as to its date.

Until chapter 25 we principally found moral arguments with respect to the state of Israel; from thence to the end of chapter 32 it is rather the execution of the judgment. But the prophecy that announces this execution is remarkable in more than one respect. Nebuchadnezzar is looked at as executing the judgment of God, whose servant he is for the purpose of doing so on Jerusalem, now become pre-eminently the seat of

iniquity although the sanctuary of God. At the same time God sets His land free, by these very judgments from all the nations that wrongfully possessed it. He brings to nought the haughty power of man in which Israel had trusted, that is, Egypt, which shall never rise again as a ruling nation. But it was the day of all nations. The result of these judgments, whether on rebellious Jerusalem or on the nations, should be at the same time the re-establishment of Israel according to promise and by the power of God in grace. The snares which had led them into evil were taken away (see chap. 26:16-21; 27:34-36). Thus, although these events have had their historical accomplishment by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the ways of God in view of the re-establishment of Israel have been manifested, as far as regards the judgments to be executed —judgment, through which all the nations, as well as Israel, who was their centre, disappear from the scene as nations. The Spirit, while recounting the execution of the judgments that were to fall on Asshur, Elam, and Meshech, gives details of those that had invaded the land or been snares to Israel. So that the prophetic recital of these very judgments contains in itself the assured hope granted to Israel by the efficacious grace of the Lord. I cannot doubt that all this prophecy of judgment relates—in a perspective brought nigh by the energy of the Spirit—to the events of the last days, which will be the complete fulfilment of these purposes and intentions of God. {Ez 30:3}

In chapter 30:3, we see that it is universal.121

I have already quoted the passages which shew that for Israel it is the deliverance from their former snares. The pretensions of man are overthrown (chap. 29:3-9), the

spirit of dominion (chap. 31:10-14). The nothingness of the glory of man is shewn at the end of chapter 31, and of each judgment of chapter 32. We have already seen that the fate of Meshech is mentioned separately, perhaps in view of that which will happen to it in the last days, and which is announced farther on (chap. 39:5).

It is important to remark one point in this series of prophecies, which commences with the judgment of Jerusalem, the centre of the former system of nations. They are executed with the object of making them all know Jehovah: only in Israel's case there is, besides this, the understanding and the special verification of prophecy. See chapter 24:24-27, Israel; chapter 25:5, 7, 11, Ammon and Moab; verses 15-17, especial vengeance on the Philistines; chapter 26, Tyre; chapter 28:22, Zidon; chapter 29:19, Egypt; as also chapters 30:26; 32:15. With respect to Edom (chap. 25:14), it is only said that Edom shall know the vengeance of Jehovah by means of Israel—a further proof that in certain respects this prophecy extends to the last days. These prophecies, then, furnish us in general with the manifestation of Jehovah's power, so as to make Him known to all by the judgments which He executed; already partially realised in the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, but to be fully accomplished by-and-by in favour of Israel.

It will be remarked that, in verse 12 of chapter 35 when Edom is again judged, it is only said, "Thou shalt know that I Jehovah have heard all thy blasphemies." But in verses 4, 9, it is said of Edom, "Thou shalt know "or "Ye shall know that I am Jehovah." So that this knowledge of Jehovah is by the judgment itself, not by any resulting spiritual knowledge of Him; for, when all the earth shall

rejoice, Edom shall be made desolate. It will be through judgment that all the nations shall know that Jehovah is God. But when the judgment has been executed and all the earth shall rejoice in blessing, Edom will have only judgment. Compare Obadiah. Edom undergoes judgment by means of the mighty among the nations, but Israel himself shall strike the final blow. We may see the two means of making Jehovah known in the case of Israel (chap. 24:24-27; 28:26; 34:27; 36:11). In the other cases it is by judgment.

We have yet to observe that in the case of Tyre, commercial glory, and in the case of Egypt, governmental pride founded on power, are absolutely judged, cast down and destroyed without remedy (chap. 26:21; 27:36; 31:18). Compare chapter 32:32. This has been literally fulfilled with respect to the continental Tyre, and the Egypt of the Pharaohs. We have seen a total destruction of Edom announced by Jehovah. That which characterised Edom was its implacable hatred to the people of God. {Ez 33}

In chapter 33, in view of these judgments, which put His people on entirely new ground (for they were judged as Loammi, with the nations, and this is why the prophecy can look on to the last days, although the judgments had been but partial)—in view then of these judgments, God establishes an entirely new principle, namely, individual conduct as the ground of the dealings of God, in contrast with the consequences of national sin (v. 10, 11). Thus the door was still fully open to individual repentance founded on a testimony that applied individually, whatever the national judgment might be. The end to which the judgment applies is in contrast with the effect to be produced by it on the individual, and that in order

to confirm the principles. Faith would not be shewn now by reckoning on the promises to Israel, or on the intervention of God in behalf of His people as in possession of His promises, for the people were judged; and the very thing that would have been faith, had it been the time of the promises, and that hereafter also will be faith, is but hardness of heart in the time of judgment (v. 24). Compare Isaiah 51:2, a passage often entirely misapplied. The little remnant in the latter days may trust in a God who had called out one man alone and had multiplied him; but such a thought on the part of the people, when God was cutting off the multitude of them because of their iniquities, would only cause the judgment to be more keenly felt. In this way of judgment on the iniquities of which they had been nationally guilty (and not by a blessing which presumption would snatch from God), they should know that Jehovah was God.

The end of Jeremiah has given us an account of the fulfilment of Ezekiel's words; but all these judgments give room for the intervention of God in behalf of His people by means of sovereign grace accomplished in the Messiah. Still the evil lay in the shepherds, that is, in the kings and princes of Israel, who were not true shepherds (indeed there were none true); and the flock, diseased, scattered, afflicted, and ill-treated, were a prey to their enemies. The shepherds devoured them, and neither protected nor cared for them. But Jehovah now points it out in order to say that He Himself would seek out His poor sheep, and would judge between sheep and sheep, and would deliver them from the mouth of those that devoured them,122 and that He would feed them upon the mountains of Israel, and in fat pastures. He would raise up the true and only shepherd,

David (that is, the well-beloved Messiah). Jehovah should be their God, and His servant David their prince. The covenant of peace should be re-established; full and secure blessing should be the abiding portion of the people of God, the house of Israel. There should be no more famine in their land, and the nations should no more devour them. Observe here the way in which Jehovah Himself delivers His sheep, without calling Himself their shepherd, and then raises up a plant of renown, the true David, as their shepherd. {Ez 35}

In chapter 35 God decides the controversy between Edom and Israel, and condemns Mount Seir to perpetual desolation, because of the inveterate hatred of that people to Israel; and instead of delivering up Israel to Edom in the day that He chastises His people, it is Edom that shall bear the punishment of this hatred, when the whole earth shall rejoice. When God chastises His people, the world thinks to possess everything; whereas that chastisement is but the precursor of the world's judgment. {Ez 36}

Chapter 36 continues the same subject with reference to the blessing of Israel. The nations insulted Israel as a land whose ancient high places were their prey, and—as the spies had said— a land that devoured its inhabitants. God takes occasion from this to shew that He favours His people, and Jehovah declares that He will restore peace and prosperity to the land and take away their reproach. Israel had defiled the land and profaned the name of Jehovah, and Jehovah had scattered them among the heathen. And even in this His name would be profaned through their vileness, because the heathen would say, "These are the people of Jehovah, and are gone forth out of his land." But Jehovah would intervene

and sanctify His great name before the heathen, by bringing His people back from among them, and cleansing them from all their filthiness; taking away the hardness of their hearts, giving them His Spirit, causing them to walk in His statutes, planting them in the land which He had given to their fathers, owning them as His people, and being Himself their God. The reproach that the land devoured its inhabitants would then be evidently without foundation. God would multiply earthly blessings to His people. Jehovah's work should be evident to all men.

It is principally to this passage (although not exclusively) that the Lord Jesus alludes in John 3, telling Nicodemus that He had spoken of earthly things, and that, as a master of Israel, he ought to have understood that this renewing of heart was necessary to the blessing of Israel in the earth. The truth of this, with regard to a Jew, ought not to surprise him, since it was a work of sovereignty in whomsoever should be born of God; and if Nicodemus did not understand the declaration of the prophets, with respect to the necessity of being born again for Israel's enjoyment of earthly things, how could he understand if Jesus spoke to him of heavenly things, for the introduction of which the death of the Son of man, His rejection by the Jews, was absolutely necessary?

We may remark that this prophet speaks of the dealings of God with respect to Israel as a nation responsible to Jehovah, and never says anything of the first coming of Christ or of Israel's responsibility with regard to Him. This took place under the dominion of the Gentiles. Here Nebuchadnezzar is but a rod in the hand of Jehovah, and the times of the Gentiles are not considered. This is the

reason why we find the judgment of the nations by Nebuchadnezzar connected with the events of the last days. The rejection of Christ by the Jews is therefore not mentioned here. It is Israel before Jehovah. This remark is important in order to understand Ezekiel (see preceding note). {Ez 37}

Chapter 37 reveals the definitive blessing of the people as a fact, without entering into any details of the events that terminate in this blessing. The dry bones of Israel, of the nation as a whole, are gathered together by the power of God. God accomplishes this work by His Spirit, but by His Spirit acting in power on His people to produce certain effects rather than in giving spiritual life (although it is not to be doubted that those who are blessed among the Jews will be spiritually quickened). The result of this intervention of God is that the dispersed of Israel, hitherto divided into two peoples, are gathered together in the earth, reunited under one Head, as one nation. It is the resurrection of the nation, which was really dead and buried. But God opens their graves, and places them again in their land restored to life as a nation. The fact of their division before this operation of God is recognised. But the result of the operation is Israel in their unity as a people. One king should reign over them. This, under God’s hand, is the result of all their iniquity, and of the devices of the enemies who had carried them into captivity. David (that is, Christ) should be their king. They should be thoroughly cleansed by God Himself. They should walk in His statutes and His judgments, and dwell for ever in their land. The sanctuary of God should be in their midst for evermore; His tabernacle. His dwelling-place, should be among them, He their God and they His people. The

heathen should know that Jehovah sanctified Israel, when His sanctuary should be there for ever. It is the full national blessing of Israel from the Lord Jehovah. {Ez 38}

Chapter 38. Gog, not fearing Jehovah, seeks to take possession of the land. He has no thought that Jehovah is there. His pride blinds him.

It is very important to remark that Ezekiel speaks neither of the first nor the second coming of Christ, nor of the circumstances of the Jews in connection with the empire of the Gentiles. The latter only appear as instruments performing the will of God. The prophet brings Jehovah and Israel into the scene. He presents Christ indeed, but as being there already and in the character of David. Jehovah raises up for them a plant of renown. His coming is not the question. The judgments of Jehovah upon the earth make Him known to the nations and to Israel (to the latter His blessings also). The nations learn through these, a point of capital importance in God's ways, that Israel went into captivity because of their sins, and not because their God was like the idols of the heathen. But in all the ways of God thus presented, not only is the coming of Christ not mentioned, but it has even no place. It belongs to another series of thoughts and revelations of the Spirit of God— another order of events.

It is well also to observe that chapters 36 and 37, and the two following ones taken together, are not consecutive; but each of the first two by itself, and the last two, taken together as a whole, treat of distinct subjects, each subject being complete, and presenting the introduction of Israel's blessing in connection with

the subject treated, and closing with the assurance that it will be final and perpetual. The subject of all these prophecies is the land, and the blessings of God upon the land of Israel. This land, which belonged to Jehovah, He would not have defiled. He drives out Israel from it in judgment; and when He has cleansed the people, He makes the nations, as well as Israel, understand His ways in this respect. He acts in full grace towards His people. He makes it known that they are His people, that He will be sanctified, and that He is sanctified, in their midst.

I think, then, that Gog is the end of all the dealings of God with respect to Israel, and that God brings up this haughty power in order to manifest on earth, by a final judgment, His dealings with Israel and with the Gentiles, and to plant His blessing, His sanctuary, and His glory in the midst of Israel (none of the people being henceforth left in exile afar from their land).

Besides the numerous verses in which it is said, “And they shall know that I am Jehovah,” the following passages may be referred to, which will shew the leading thought in those declarations and judgments of God, namely, the manifestation of His government on the earth—a government making manifest the true character of God in His rule, and securing its demonstration in the world, in spite of the unfaithfulness of His people; and that, in grace as well as in holiness, chapters 36:19-23, 36; 39:7, 23, 24, 28. With respect to Israel, see chapter 34:30; to the enemy, chapters 35:12 and 37:28.

That which I have just said of Gog supposes that all the events which relate to the coming of the Son of man are

omitted in the writings of this prophet—which I believe to be the case. The Book treats only of the governmental ways of God on the earth, of Jehovah in Israel. The power designated by “Gog” is that of the north, outside of the territory of the beasts in Daniel. I doubt not that the right translation would be “Prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,” as learned men have remarked. Cush and Phut were on the Euphrates, as well as on the Nile. Persia is known. Togarmah is the northeast of Asia Minor. The audaciousness of this king causes the wrath of Jehovah to break forth.

I will add, in order to facilitate the establishment of the connection of this with other passages, that I doubt not Jesus will reign in the character of David before assuming that of Solomon. He suffered as David, driven away by the jealousy of Saul. The remnant will pass through this in principle. This is the key to the Book of Psalms. He will reign as David, Israel being blessed and accepted, but all their enemies not yet destroyed. And, finally, He will reign as Solomon, that is to say, as Prince of peace. Many passages, such as Micah 5, several chapters in Zechariah, Jeremiah 51:20, 21, Ezekiel 25:14, speak of this time, in which Israel, already reconciled and acknowledged and at peace within, shall be the instrument for executing Jehovah’s judgments without (compare Isaiah 11:10-14).

All, then, that related to the destruction of the empires which are the subject of Daniel’s prophecies has no place in the prophecies of Ezekiel; nor that which takes place in order to put Israel again in relation with God; nor the consequences to the Jews of their rejection of Christ. These subjects will be found elsewhere, as in Daniel, Zechariah, and more generally in Isaiah. Here

God makes Himself known in Israel. Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, falls upon the mountains of Israel, and Jehovah makes Himself known in the eyes of many nations (chap. 38:21-23). The judgment shall reach the land of Gog, and the isles (chap. 39:6). The name of Jehovah shall be known in Israel, and the heathen shall know that Jehovah, the Holy One, is in Israel (v. 7). And, the glory of Jehovah being thus manifested in the midst of the nations, Israel from this day forth shall know that it is Jehovah Himself who is their God, and the nations shall know that it was the iniquity of Israel that brought judgment upon them, and not that Jehovah had failed either in power or in the stability of His counsels (v. 22-24). In a word, Jehovah and His government should be fully known in Israel, and by means of this people in the world; and from that time God would no more hide His face from them. His Spirit should be poured out upon His people. Verses 25-29 recapitulate the dealings of God towards them for the establishment of His government, and to make Himself known among them.

The remaining part of the prophecy is the establishment of His sanctuary in the midst of His people. The reader will perceive that we find in these last chapters a revelation of the same kind as that given to Moses for the tabernacle, and to David for the temple—only that in this case the details are preserved in the writings given to the people by inspiration, as a testimony for the time to come, and to conscience in all times. God takes an interest in His people. He will reestablish His sanctuary among men. Meantime the testimony of this has been given to the people to bring them under the responsibility which this good-will of God towards them

involved. For the prophet was commanded to tell the house of Israel all that he had seen; and he did so. When the dimensions of the different parts of the house have been given, the glory of Jehovah fills the house, in the vision, as happened historically at the dedication of the tabernacle and of the temple. {Ez 43:7}

Chapter 43:7 proclaims that the house, which is the throne and the footstool of Jehovah, should no more be defiled by profane things. The prophet was then to declare that, if Israel renounced their unfaithfulness, Jehovah would return to dwell there. Thus the people are placed at all times under this responsibility. The prophet was to shew the house to Israel that they might repent; and, if they repented, he was to explain it to them in detail. And it is this which takes place at the end. The ordinances of the house were to be shewn them, if they humbled themselves; and in view of this the prophet announces all that was to be done for the cleansing and the consecration of the altar, in order that the regular service might be performed. {Ez 44}

Chapter 44 makes known the fact that Jehovah is returned to His house, and the memorial of His having done so is preserved in that the door by which He entered is to remain for ever shut. The Prince alone (for God will raise up a Prince in Israel) is to enter through it —to sit before Jehovah. We have seen that this prophet always contemplates Israel on their own ground, as an earthly people in relation with the throne of God on the earth (compare Zech. 12:7, 8, 10). Finally God maintains the holiness of His house against all strangers, and even against the Levites who had forsaken it. The family of Zadok is established in the priesthood, and directions are given to keep it from all profanation. {Ez 45}

Chapter 45. The portion of the priests in the land is assigned them—close to that of the sanctuary. The portion of the Levites was to adjoin that of the priests, and then came the possession of the city and its suburbs. That which remained of the breadth of the land was for the Prince and for the inheritance of His children, in order that the people should no longer be oppressed. All the rest of the land was for the people. Provision is also made for the daily offerings, and for those of the Sabbath. The other appointed offerings were to be made by the Prince.

Some details require one or two remarks. The cleansing of the sanctuary commences the year. It is no longer an atonement at the end of seven months to take away the defilements that have been accumulating. The year opens with an already accomplished cleansing. Afterwards, in order that all may have communion with the sufferings of the Paschal Lamb, an offering is made on the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and every one that is simple (v. 20). During the feast they offered seven bullocks instead of two. The character of worship will be perfect. The sense of Christ’s acceptance as the burnt-offering will be perfect in that day. The feast of Pentecost is omitted—a circumstance of great significance, for this feast characterises our present position. Not that the Spirit will not be given in the world to come, when Christ shall establish His kingdom. But this gift is not that which, connecting us with a heavenly Christ and the Father in Christ’s absence, characterises that period as it does the present time. For Christ will be present.

We have observed that the prophet sees everything in a point of view connected with Israel. Thus the

remembrance of redemption, the passover, the basis of all, and the enjoyment of rest celebrated at the feast of the tabernacles, will characterise the position of Israel before God. The two feasts are celebrated in the recognition of the full value of the burnt offering presented to God. Another circumstance which distinguishes the worship of this millennial day is, that the two feasts which are types of that period are marked out in the worship—the Sabbath, and the new moon, rest and re-establishment, Israel appearing anew in the world. The inner gate on the side of the east was open on that day, and the Prince worshipped at the very threshold of the gate and the people before the gate (chap. 46). The other days it was shut. They stood thus before Jehovah in the consciousness of the rest which God had given to Israel and of His grace in again manifesting His people in the light. Nevertheless it still remains true that neither the people nor the Prince entered within. Those who are the most blessed on the earth in that day of blessing will never have that access into God’s presence which we have, by the Spirit, through the veil. Pentecost belongs to, and links itself with, the rending of the veil; and gives us to walk in all liberty in the light, as God Himself is in the light, having entered into the holy place by the new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.

The Prince entered by the outer door on the side of the east, and he went out by the same door. In the solemn feasts, the people went in by the north gate and came out by the south gate, and the Prince in their midst. When he went in alone, as a voluntary worshipper, he entered and retired again by the eastern gate. These

ordinances, while giving remarkable honour to the Prince, in connection with the glory of God, who gave him his place among the people, equally secured that which follows (v. 16-18) of the brotherly and benevolent relations between him and the people of God, and took away all opportunities of oppression.

The last two chapters do not require any lengthened remarks. The waters that issue from the sanctuary represent the life-giving power that proceeds from the throne of God, flowing through His temple, and healing the Dead Sea, the abiding token of judgment. The waters abound in fish, the trees that grow beside them are filled with fruit, the marshes alone remain under the curse—they are "given to salt." The blessing of that day is real and abundant, but not complete. The land is divided between the tribes in a new manner, by straight lines drawn from east to west. The portion for the sanctuary and for the city, or the 25,000 square reeds, are situated next to the seventh tribe, beginning from the north. The name of the city thenceforth shall be "Jehovah is there." Compare, for the waters that flow from the temple, Joel 3:18; Zechariah 14:8—passages that refer to the same period.

It appears that the two places pointed out to the fishermen as a boundary were the two extremities of the Dead Sea (we may compare Gen. 14:7; 2 Chron. 20:2; and Isa. 15:8). The main features in the whole passage are the re-establishment of Israel, but on new grounds and blessing, analogous to that of paradise (an image borrowed from this prophecy in the Apocalypse);123 but, after all, with the reserve that this blessing did not absolutely remove all evil, as will be the case in the eternal ages.

There is a powerful and abiding source of blessing which greatly surmounts the evil, and almost effaces it; nevertheless it is not entirely taken away. Still the name of the city, of the seat of power, that which characterises it, is “Jehovah is there”—Jehovah, that great King, the Creator of all things, and the Head of His people Israel.

113 Wise infidels, always petty in their conceptions because they know not God, have seen in the winged human-headed bulls and lions of Nineveh the origin of Ezekiel’s vision. They betray themselves. They do not see or know Him who sat above them. I do not doubt a moment that these images represented the same thing essentially as the cherubim; but these poor pagans, misled by Satan, like these infidels in their wisdom, worshipped what was below the firmament. In Ezekiel’s vision they were merely symbolic attributes, and He who was worshipped was above the firmament. It is just the difference in this respect between idolatry and the revelation of God.

114 I mean merely in the limits of the empire of the Chaldeans. It was by the river Chebar, which was more to the north-west.

115 This distinction is always carefully maintained, based on Psalms 2 and 8. (Compare Nathanael, John 1.)

116 It is thus that I understand this passage. We should imagine, from our translation, that it was some of the hairs that were cast into the fire. But in the Hebrew the pronoun is in the singular, and it is masculine as well as feminine.

117 Jeremiah’s exhortations will be remembered—to submit themselves to Nebuchadnezzar, and even to quit the city and go forth unto him.

118 It is important to remark that it is temporal judgment in death which is spoken of here. The question treated of is the allegation of Israel that they, according to the principle laid down in Exodus, were suffering for their fathers' sins. The prophet declares that this principle is not that on which God will act with them, that the soul or life of every one belonged to God, one as another, and that in judgment He would deal with each for his own sins, not the son for the father's; and then proceeds to lay down the principles on which He would deal in mercy and judgment; but the judgments are temporal judgments, and the death physical death in this world. If the wicked turned from his ways, he would live and not die—not be cut off for the sins he repented of; so of the wicked, he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him. So the soul that sinneth, it shall die. It is not the father, nor the son because of a father's sins; the soul or person himself that sins shall die, each for his own. The emphasis is on "it."

119 We may see, chapter 31:8, 9, 16, that this is a description of the kings of the earth, at least before Nebuchadnezzar, who first substituted one sole dominion given by God, for the many kings of the nations recognised by God as the result of Babel, and in the centre of which His people were placed, to make the government of God known through their means.

The special relation of Tyre with Israel added something to the position of the merchant city, and gave room also for the use made here of the history of its king as a type or figure of the prince of this world.

120 Observe that this takes place in the creature. In the case of Aaron, the type of Christ as priest, it exists in the

absolute perfection of grace, which presents us to God according to His perfection in the light. It is afterwards seen in the glory as the foundation of the city, the bride, the Lamb's wife, in the Revelation. That is, these stones present the fruit of perfect light—what God is in His nature shining in and through the creature, in creation, grace, and glory.

121 It will be remembered that with Nebuchadnezzar God set aside the order He had previously established in the world, revealed in Deuteronomy 32 (namely, of nations and peoples arranged around Israel as a centre). He owns Israel no longer as His people. This order then falls of itself, and Babel of old, the place of dispersion, becomes the centre of one absorbing empire. In connection with the fact that Israel is no longer owned as a people, being judged as such, God addresses Himself to individual conscience in the midst of the nation. But this was the judgment of the nations, and the call of a remnant. And this is why the prophecy reaches in its full bearing to the final judgment of the earth, when that judgment and call are to be fully accomplished. God consequently Himself delivers and saves His people, judging between sheep and sheep, and executing wrath against all those who have trodden them under foot. The judgment of the one absorbing empire does not form part of the prophecies of Ezekiel (this is found in Daniel), save so far as every oppressor and evil shepherd is judged (chap. 34). The connection of this empire with Israel in the last days will not be immediate. It will politically favour the Jews who do not own the Lord. What I here notice forms the key of the prophecy. Ezekiel speaks from the midst of Israel

captive, and does not occupy himself with Judah, owned by itself in the land under the power of the Gentiles.

122 The thirty-third chapter having stated the great principles of God’s dealings in the last days, namely, individual condition before God, chapter 34 exhibits the conduct of their leaders: Jehovah judges the latter as having misled and oppressed His people; He discerns Himself “between cattle and cattle.” Then in chapter 35 Edom is judged (compare Isaiah 34). Here, in general, it is the effect, relating to all Israel (“these two countries “). In chapter 36 is the moral renewing of all Israel, that they may judge their ways; in chapter 37, the restoration of the people, as quickened by God in national resurrection; and at last (chaps. 38 and 39) the judgment of the enemies of the people thus restored in peace, or rather, of the enemy (that is, Gog). All these things are connected with the relationship between Jehovah and His people. Although He gives David as king, yet the Messiah is not named as having had relations with the people; for in fact this was only true of Judah. It is a general picture of the last days in their great results and their events, everything having its place in reference to all Israel, without giving a history of details.

123 When I say “borrowed,” it is not that the Spirit of God has not given us an original image in the Apocalypse: one has but to read it to be convinced of the contrary. But Old Testament imagery is constantly employed in the descriptions there given—only in such a manner as to apply it to heavenly things, a circumstance that makes it much easier to understand the book by helping us to enter into its real character through its analogy with the Old Testament.

# Daniel

In the Book of Ezekiel we have seen the government of God on earth fully developed in connection with Israel; whether in condemning the sin which occasioned the judgment of that people, or in their restoration under the authority of Christ, the Branch that should spring from the house of David, and who, in the book of that prophet, bears even the name of David, as the true "beloved "of God, the description of the temple, with its whole organisation, being given at the end. In this development we have found Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the Gentiles, introduced as Jehovah's servant (chapters 29:20; 30:24) for the judgment of sinful Israel, who were rebellious and even apostate, worshipping false gods. God had made Israel the centre of a system of nations, peoples, and languages, that had arisen in consequence of the judgment on Babel, and existed before God independently of each other. The nation of Israel was doubtless very distinct from all that surrounded it, whether as a people to whom the true God was known, or as having in their midst the temple and the throne of God; but, whatever the contrast might be between the condition of Israel as a nation, and that of the other nations, still Israel formed a part of that system of nations before God (Deut. 32:8).

In executing the judgment of God on Israel Nebuchadnezzar set aside this whole system at once, and took its place in the absolute and universal dominion which he had received from God. It is of this order of things and of its consequences—of this dominion of the head of the Gentiles, and of the Gentile

kings, in the successive phases that characterised their history— that the Book of Daniel treats, bringing into notice a remnant of Israel, in the midst of this system, and subject to this dominion. The king of Judah having been given up into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, the royal seed is found in the same position. The remnant becomes the especial object of the thoughts of God revealed by His Spirit in this book.

Besides the testimony rendered to Jehovah by the fact of the faithfulness of the remnant in the midst of the idolatrous Gentiles, two important things characterise their history as developed in this book. The first is that the Spirit of prophecy and of understanding in the ways of God is found in this remnant. We have seen this raised up in Samuel, when all Israel had failed, and subsist through their whole history under the shadow of royalty. The Spirit of prophecy now again becomes the link of the people with God, and the only resting-place for their faith, amid the ruin which the just judgment of God had brought upon them. The second circumstance that characterises the dealings of God with regard to this remnant is, that, preserved by God through all the misfortunes into which the sins of the people had cast them, this remnant will assuredly share the portion which God bestows on His people according to His government and according to the faithfulness of His promises. We find these in the first and last chapters of the Book we are considering.

This Book is divided into two parts, which are easily distinguished. The first ends with chapter 6, and the second with the close of the Book, the first and last chapters having nevertheless a separate character, as an introduction and a conclusion, respectively making

known the position of the remnant, to whom, as we have said, the testimony of God was confided at the beginning and at the end.

The two great divisions have also a distinct character. The first sets before us the picture of the dominion of the Gentiles, and the different positions it would assume before God according to the human pride which would be its animating principle. This picture contains historical features which plainly indicate the spirit that will animate the ruling power in its different phases; and then the judgment of God. This division is not composed of direct revelations to Daniel, except for the purpose of recalling Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is the heads of the Gentiles that are presented. It is the external and general history of the monarchies that were to succeed each other, or the different and successive features that would characterise them, and their final judgment, and the substitution of the kingdom of Christ; and especially, the course and judgment of the one which God had Himself established, and which represents all the others, as being invested with this character of divine appointment. The others did but inherit providentially the throne which God had committed to the first. It was a question between God and Israel that gave this monarchy its supremacy. It is the spirit of presumptuous idolatry, and of blasphemy against the God of Israel that leads to its destruction. Chapter 6 does not give the iniquity of the king, except as submitting to the influence of others. It is the princes of the people who will have none but the king acknowledged as God, and who undergo the same punishment that they sought to inflict on those who were faithful to the Lord.

The second part of the Book, which consists of communications made by God to Daniel himself, exhibits the character of the heads of the Gentiles in relation to the earth, and their conduct towards those who shall acknowledge God; and at last the establishment of the divine kingdom in the Person of the Son of man—a kingdom possessed by the saints. The details of God's dealings with His people at the end are given in the last chapter. We may also remark that chapter 7 gives essentially the history of the western power, chapter 8 that of the eastern—the two horns. Chapter 9, although especially regarding Jerusalem and the people—the moral centre of these questions, is connected on that very account with the western power that invaded them. From chapter 10 to the end of chapter 11 we are again in the east, closing in with the judgment of the nations there, and the establishment of the remnant of Israel in blessing.

Let us now examine these chapters consecutively. {Da 1}

Chapter 1 sets before us the royalty of Judah, formerly established by God over His people in the person of David, falling under the power of Nebuchadnezzar; and the king, Jehovah's anointed, given up by Jehovah into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, on whom God now bestowed dominion. That which was announced by Isaiah (chap. 39:7) falls upon the children of the royal seed; but God watches over them and brings them into favour with those that kept them. This was especially the case with respect to Daniel. The two characteristics of the faithful remnant in captivity are prominently marked in this chapter: —firstly, faithful to the will of God, although at a distance from His temple, they do not

defile themselves among the Gentiles; secondly, their prayer being granted, understanding is given them, as we see in chapter 2 in Daniel's case, even the knowledge of that which God alone can reveal, as well as His purpose in that revelation. They alone possess this understanding, a token of divine favour and the fruit of their faithfulness through grace. This is the case with Daniel in particular, whose faith and earnest fidelity marks out the path of faith for his companions. This did not interfere with their subjection to the Gentiles, whose power was the ordinance of God for the time being. But this is a most important element: the place of true knowledge, of intelligence of the divine mind, what is called the secret of the Lord, in the days of Babylonish corruption and power, is the thorough keeping oneself undefiled by the smallest contact with what it gives, with the meat with which it would feed us.

On the other hand, we see in the second chapter the mighty king of the Gentiles made the depositary of the history of the Gentiles, and of God's entire plan, as the recipient of these divine communications; yet in such a manner as to exhibit Daniel, the captive child of Israel, the faithful one who kept himself separate in Babylon as the one whom the Lord acknowledged, and who enjoyed His favour. But the details of this chapter, as a general picture of Gentile power, beginning with the dominion bestowed on Nebuchadnezzar, must be considered more attentively.

We may first observe that the Gentile kingdoms are seen as a whole. It is neither historical succession nor moral features with respect to God and man, but the kingdoms all together forming, as it were, a personage before God, the man of the earth in the eye of God—glorious and

terrible in his public splendour in the eyes of men. Four imperial powers were to succeed each other, as the great head of which God had set up Nebuchadnezzar himself. There should be in certain respects a progressive deterioration; and at length the God of heaven would raise up another power that would execute judgment on that which still existed, and cause the image to disappear from off the earth, setting up in its place a kingdom that should never be overthrown. In the progressive decline in principle and character of imperial power there would be no diminution of material strength. Iron, that breaks in pieces and crushes all things, characterises the fourth power. The peculiar excellency of the head of gold appears to me to consist in its having received authority immediately from God Himself. In fact the absolute authority of the first power was founded on the gift of the God of heaven; the others succeeded by providential principles. But God, known as supreme, bestowing authority on the head, replacing His own authority on the earth by that of the head of the Gentiles, was not the immediate source of authority to the others. Babylon was the authority established of God. And therefore we found in Ezekiel (and the same thing is seen elsewhere) that the judgment of Babylon is connected with the restoration of Israel and of the throne of God.

Observe, nevertheless, that God does not here present Himself as God of earth, but of heaven. In Israel He was God of the earth. He will be so again at the restitution of all things. Here He acts in sovereignty as God of heaven, setting up man, in a certain sense, in His place on the earth (see v. 37, 38). Although more limited, it is a dominion characterised by the same features as that of

Adam. It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist. Human strength is found at the end of its history; but the subsisting power is much more remote from the ancient relationship of God with the world.

The mixture of iron and of potter's clay is a change wrought in the primitive character of the imperial Roman power— another element is introduced into it; the character remains in part, but another element is added. The energetic will of man is not there in an absolute manner. It is the introduction into the imperial Roman power of an element distinct from that which constituted its imperial strength, namely, the will of man devoid of conscience—military and popular power concentrated in one individual without conscience. There are two causes here of weakness—division and the want of coherence between the elements. The kingdom (v. 41) shall be divided, and (v. 42) it shall be partly strong and partly brittle. The "seed of men "is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom. But these two elements will never combine. It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire. The fact of a subdivision is seen in verse 43. It is then announced that, in the days of these last kings, He who rules from heaven will set up a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and that shall never pass into other hands. This is properly the only kingdom that, on God's part, takes the place of the kingdom of Babylon. The God of heaven had established Nebuchadnezzar in his kingdom,

and had given him power, and strength, and glory, making all men subject to him. Doubtless the three others had followed, according to the will of Him who orders all things. But it is only with respect to the kingdom of verse 44, that it is once more said, “the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom.” The character, and some leading features in the history, of the last four of the kingdoms are given. Nothing but the existence of the two preceding ones is stated, except the inferiority of the latter of the two to the first. So that the Spirit of God gives us the divine establishment of the first, the character of the fourth, and the divine establishment of the fifth or final kingdom.

We will now observe the manner in which this last kingdom is established; and we see that it is accomplished by means of a judicial and destructive act which reduces the image to powder, bringing about its complete dissolution, so that no traces of it are left (v. 34, 35). The instrument of this destruction was not formed by the wisdom or the schemes of man. It is “cut out without hands.” It does not act by a moral influence that changes the character of the object on which it acts. It destroys that object by force. It is God who establishes it and gives it that force. The stone does not gradually increase in size to displace the image. Before it extends itself, it destroys the image. When it has become great—it is not merely a right given by God over men, it fills the whole earth—it is the exalted seat of a universal authority. It is on the last form of power, exhibited in the image, that the stone falls with destructive force—when the empire is divided and is partly strong and partly weak on account of the elements of which its members are composed. We may

observe, that it is not God destroying the image in another way to establish the kingdom. The kingdom which He is establishing smites the feet of the image as its first act. It is the outward and general history of that which, by God's appointment, took the place of His throne and His government in Jerusalem, and which had gradually degenerated in its public character with respect to God, and which at length comes to its end by the judgment executed by the kingdom established of God without human agency. The kingdom of Christ, which falls on the last form of the monarchy formerly established by God, destroys the whole form of its existence, and itself fills the world.

I have nothing particular to say on the four monarchies. We find Babylon, Persia, and Greece named in the book, as being already known to the Jews, and the Romans introduced by the name which their territory bore, the coasts of Chittim; so that I receive, without further question, the four great empires ordinarily recognised by every one as pointed out in this prophecy. It does not appear to me that these prophecies leave room for any doubt on the subject.

The effect of the communication, which proves that God is with the remnant who alone understand His mind, is that the haughty Gentile acknowledges the God of Israel as supreme in heaven and on earth. That which characterises the remnant here is that God reveals to them His mind.

After this general picture, we have, historically, the characteristic features of these empires, marking the condition into which they fall, through their departure from God—primarily and principally Babylon. {Da 3}

In chapter 3 we have the first characteristic feature of man invested with imperial power, but whose heart is afar from God —a distance augmented by the very possession of power. He will have a god of his own, a god dependent on the will of man; and, in this case, dependent on the depositary of the imperial power. This is man's wisdom. The religious instincts of men are gratified in connection with the supreme power; and the influences of religion are exercised in binding all the members of the empire in one blended mass around the head, by the strongest bond, without any appearance of authority. For the religious wants of man are thus connected with his own will; and his will is unconsciously subject to the centre of power. Otherwise religion, the most powerful motive of the heart, becomes a dissolvent in the empire. But the will of man cannot make a true god; and consequently Nebuchadnezzar, although he had confessed that there was none like the God of the Jews, forsakes Him and makes a god for himself. The Gentile government rejects God, the source of its power; and the true God is only acknowledged by a faithful and suffering remnant. The empire is idolatrous.

This is the first great feature that characterises the dominion of Babylon. But the faithfulness that opposes this wise system which binds the most powerful motive of the whole people to the will of their head, uniting them in worship around that which he presents to them —faithfulness like this touches the mainspring of the whole movement. The idol is not God at all; and, however powerful man may be, he cannot create a god. The man of faith, subject indeed to the king, as we have seen, because appointed of God, is not subject to the false god which the king sets up, denying the true God

who gave him his authority, and who is still acknowledged by the man of faith. But power is in the king's hands; and he will have it known that his will is supreme.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace. But it is in the sufferings of His people that God in the end appears as God. He allows their faithfulness to be tried in the place where evil exists, that they may be with Him in the enjoyment of happiness in the place where His character and His power are fully manifested, whether on this earth, or in a yet more excellent manner in heaven.

We may observe that faith and obedience are as absolute as the will of the king. Nothing can be finer and more calm than the answer of the three believers. God is able to deliver, and He will deliver; but, happen what may, they will not forsake Him. The king in his fury defies God. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" God allows him to take his own way. The effect of his headlong rage is that the instruments of his vengeance are destroyed by the fierce flames prepared for the faithful Hebrews. The latter are cast into the furnace, and (outwardly) the king's will is accomplished. But this is only to manifest more brightly the power and the faithfulness of God, who comes, even into the midst of the fire, to prove the interest He takes in the fidelity of His servants. The effect, to them, of the fire is that their bands are consumed, and that they have His presence whose form is like the Son of God, even in the eyes of the king who denied His almighty power. The result is a decree forbidding the whole world to speak against the God of the Jews, the glory of that weak and captive people.

Remark here that the remnant are characterised by their faithfulness and obedience. They manifest their faithfulness by refusing to have any god but their own God: no concession —it would be to deny Him. For, to acknowledge the true God, He alone must be acknowledged. Truth is but the full revelation of Him and can only recognise itself. To put itself on a level with falsehood would be saying it was not truth.

We find three principles marked out with respect to the remnant. They do not defile themselves by partaking of that which the world bestows—the king's meat. They have understanding in the mind and revelations of God. They are faithful in refusing absolutely to acknowledge any god but their own, who is the true God. The first principle is common to them all. The second is the Spirit of prophecy, of which Daniel is here the vessel. The third is the portion of every believer, although there may be no Spirit of prophecy. The nearer we are to the power of the world, the more likelihood there is of suffering if we are faithful. It must be observed that all this is connected with the position and the principles of the Jews.

Remark also that the Gentile will and power recognise God in two ways, and by different means; both being the privileges granted to the remnant. The first of these privileges is having the mind of Jehovah, the revelation of His thoughts and counsels. This leads the Gentile to own the God of Daniel as God of gods and Lord of kings. That is His position in respect of all that was exalted above the earth. He was supreme in heaven and earth. The second is that He interests Himself in the poor remnant of His people, and has power to deliver them in the tribulation into which rebellious and idolatrous (and

thus apostate) power has thrown them. The result here is that He is acknowledged, and His faithful ones are delivered and exalted. The first is more general and Gentile—the Gentiles' own recognition of God; the second, the effect of deliverance for this Jewish remnant.

The establishment of idolatrous unity in religion, and the pride of human power, are the characteristics here given of Babylon. This folly, which does not know God, fills the whole course of time allotted to this power—"seven times." At the end the Gentile owns for himself and praises and blesses the Most High. This chapter then gives the Gentile power's own relationship with God, not merely his connection with the God and people of the Jews. Hence the title of God, in chapter 4, is the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men; in chapter 3 it was 'our God' for the heart of the faithful remnant, and 'the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,' for the world that saw the deliverance. {Da 4}

In chapter 4 we see the manifestation of human pride; the king glories in the work of his hands, as though he had created his own greatness. This pride brings judgment. Power is reduced to the condition of the beasts that know not God, and are devoid of man's understanding. The only true privilege of man, that which ennobles him, is that he can look up to God and acknowledge Him. Without this he looks downward; he cannot suffice to himself; he is degraded. Dependence is his glory, for it sets him before God, gives him to know God; and his mind, associated with God, receives from Him its measure and its knowledge. Pride and independence separate man from God; he becomes a beast, devoid of real intelligence. Now this condition

depicts that of the kingdoms of which the prophet speaks (looked at as a whole before God, and represented by the head established by God, Nebuchadnezzar). Seven times, or seven years, pass over the head of Nebuchadnezzar deprived of his reason. He had exalted himself; he had been humbled. The times of the Gentiles are characterised by the absence of all such understanding as would put governmental power in connection with God. To make idols, to build Babylon, and not to know God; such were the moral characteristics of a power that God had established in place of His own throne at Jerusalem. Such is the moral capacity of man in possession of that power which has been committed to him.124 But the scene closes with testimony to the glory of the Most High God, the King of Heaven. Nebuchadnezzar recognises His majesty and blesses Him, now that His judgment is removed. He acknowledges Him as Him who liveth for ever, who abases and exalts whom He will, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth, all men being but vanity before His power and majesty. Here it is not the deliverance of the faithful which produces its effect, but the judgment that fell on the Gentiles themselves, who, after the judgment, are delivered, and understanding given them with respect to Jehovah; and that in connection with the testimony committed to the Jews by the Spirit of prophecy which God had bestowed on the remnant. The king lifts up his eyes to heaven, instead of being only a beast that looks down upon the earth. He becomes intelligent and submissive, and joyfully blesses the Most High God.

We may remark this title of “Most High.” It is the name given to Jehovah in the interview between Melchisedec

and Abraham, in which is added thereto, “Possessor of heaven and earth.” This is, in fact, the character that God will assume when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; and Christ shall be the true Melchisedec. The Gentiles shall be fully subjected to God. This will be the time of “the restitution of all things “spoken of by the prophets.

There are yet some detailed observations to be made. It is judgment, followed by deliverance, which produces this result. We may notice the force of this symbol of a great tree. It is a mighty one of the earth, capable of taking others under its protection. In this case it was one in the highest position possible for man. The fowls of the heaven had their habitation in it; that is to say, that all classes of persons sought shelter and protection in it. We learn also that God takes knowledge of the principles that guide the governments of the earth, considered as the depositaries of the power which they hold from God. Although it is not (as in Israel) His throne on the earth, God watches over all, and judges that to which He has committed authority. He does not rule immediately; but He holds responsible him to whom He has entrusted the rule, in order that he might own the authority of God as supreme in this world.

With respect to the term “watcher,” I do not think that intelligence as to who it was that brought the decree of judgment goes beyond Nebuchadnezzar’s religious condition. Daniel ascribes it immediately to the Most High. That angels may be its intelligent instruments, and that its administration may be in some sort committed to them, presents no difficulty; and the epistle to the Hebrews, as well as other scriptures, teaches us that

angels are thus employed. The world to come will not be thus subjected to them.

We see, in verse 27, that Daniel sets his responsibility before Nebuchadnezzar, exhorting him to alter his conduct.

We may also remark here, that it is the “King of heaven” whom Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges. This was necessarily His place. The God of the earth had His throne at Jerusalem. But then Nebuchadnezzar would have had no place there. We never find the throne at Jerusalem in Daniel, either morally or prophetically. His prophecies always stop short of that. He is a captive among the Gentiles, faithful to God there, and taught of Him. But God cannot be to him the God of the earth125It is the God of heaven, ruling everywhere and over all things, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth; but not yet reigning over the earth as the king of the earth. On the contrary, He had just renounced this; and had committed the power to Nebuchadnezzar, while He withdrew from the presence of His earthly people’s iniquity to shut Himself up in His supreme and immutable power; the results of which would not be shewn till afterwards, but according to which He even then governed, although hidden from the eyes of men.

The reader may perhaps expect more detail. It will be found in the communications made immediately to Daniel. But those who have laid hold of the principles we have been establishing (and the great object of these chapters is to present them) will possess elements of the greatest importance for understanding all the prophecies of this book; and without these principles the meaning of its revelations will never be clearly

apprehended. It must be remembered that we are on the ground here of the Jews in captivity among the Gentiles, understanding God's dealings with them, and His judgment of their condition while the power had been left in their hands. {Da 5}

In chapter 5 the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles with respect to the God of Israel reaches the highest point, and assumes that character of insolence and contempt which is but the effort of weakness to conceal itself. In the midst of the orgies of a great feast to his lords and courtiers Belshazzar causes the vessels of the temple of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his guests might drink therein; and he praises the gods of gold and of silver and of stone. The madness of the king puts the question between the false gods and Jehovah the God of Israel. Jehovah decides the question that very night by the destruction of the king and of all his glory. The warning which God gives him is interpreted by Daniel. But, although subject to the king, Daniel does not treat him with the same respect that he had for Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had taken the place of an insolent enemy to Jehovah, and Daniel answers him according to God's revelations of his doom, and to the ostentatious manifestation which the king made of his iniquity, magnifying his own gods and insulting Jehovah. Accordingly the warning was no longer remedial and left no room for repentance. It announced judgment; and the very annunciation sufficed to destroy all the insolence of the impious king. For he had neglected the warning given him by the history of Nebuchadnezzar. This narrative gives us the last character of the iniquity of the sovereign power of the Gentiles, in opposition to the

God of Israel, and the judgment which falls in consequence upon the monarchy of which Babylon was the head, and to which Babylon had given its own character. For, whatever may have been the longsuffering of God, and His dealings in other respects towards the monarchy of the Gentiles, as the power to which He committed authority in the world, all was already lost for these empires, even in the days of Babylon.

Another form of iniquity appears besides that of Babylon (chap. 6). Cyrus, personally, had better thoughts; and God, from whom they came, made use of him for the temporary re-establishment of His people, in order that the Messiah should come and present Himself to them—the last trial of His beloved people. It is not Cyrus, therefore, whom we find here the instrument of the iniquity which sought to destroy Daniel—of that human will which can never endure faithfulness to God. Here it is not idolatry, nor is it insult offered to Jehovah, but the exaltation of man himself, who would shut out all idea of God, who would have no God. This is one of the features that characterise the depths of the human heart.

Man in general is well pleased with a god who will help him to satisfy his passions and his desires—a god who suits his purpose for the unity of his empire and the consolidation of his power. The religious part of man's nature is satisfied with gods of this kind, and worships them willingly, though he who establishes them imperially may do it only politically. Poor world! the true God suits neither their conscience nor their lusts. The enemy of our souls is well pleased to cultivate in this manner the religiousness of our nature. False religion sets up gods that correspond to the desires of the

natural heart, whatever they may be; but which never call into communion and never act upon the conscience. They may impose ceremonies and observances, for these suit man; but they can never bring an awakened conscience into relationship with themselves. That which man fears, and that which man desires, is the sphere of their influence. They produce nothing in the heart beyond the action of natural joys and fears.

But, on the other hand, the pride of man sometimes assumes a character that changes everything in this respect. Man will himself be God and act according to his own will, and shut out a rivalship which his pride cannot endure. A superiority which cannot be disputed, if God exists, is insupportable to one who would stand alone. God must be got rid of. The enemies of the faithful avail themselves of this disposition. Cruelty is less inventive, save that its subtlety is shewn in this, that, in flattering the higher power, it does not appear to blame any except those who disobey and despise his word.

The contest being with God Himself, the question with men is decided with more carelessness and less passion as to them. Passion allies itself less with the pride than with the will of man. Man, whatever his position, is the slave of those who pay him the tribute of their flattery. Self-will is more its own master. In this case, deceived by his vanity, the king finds himself bound by laws, apparently instituted to guard his subjects from his caprices, under colour of attributing the character of immutability to his will and to his wisdom—a character that belongs to God alone. Daniel is cast into the lions' den. God preserves him. He will do the same for the remnant of Israel at the end of the age. The judgment,

which the enemies of Israel sought to bring upon those who were faithful among that people, is executed upon themselves. But the effect of this judgment extends farther than in the former cases. Nebuchadnezzar forbade any evil being spoken of the God of Israel, and He extolled the King of heaven by whom he had been humbled. But Darius commands that in every place the God of Daniel and of Israel should be acknowledged, the only living God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and who had indeed delivered the man that trusted in Him. Historically it appears that Darius had some feelings of respect for God and for Daniel's piety. It was not his God, but the God of Daniel: still he honours Him, and even calls Him the living God.

Thus we see that idolatry, impiety, the pride that exalts itself above everything, are the characteristics of the great empires which Daniel sets before us, and the causes of their judgment. The judgment results in owning the God of the Jews as the living and delivering God and the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men. The same features will be found in the last days. This terminates the first part of the book.

We come now to the communications made to Daniel himself, which contain not merely general principles, but details relative to God's people, and the Gentiles who oppressed them —historical details, though given beforehand prophetically.

The chief object of chapter 7 is the history of the fourth beast, or the last form of the Gentile empire, which commenced at Babylon—the great western power, in which was to be developed all that man in possession of power would become with respect to God and to the

faithful. And with that its relation with the saints is given in the interpretation. But the introduction of this western beast is briefly given. Four beasts come up from the sea, that is to say, from the waves of human population. These powers are not looked at here as established by God, but in their purely historical character. We have seen the empire established immediately by God in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. But here—although every existing power is established by God—they are seen in their historical aspect. The beasts come up out of the sea. The prophet first sees them all at once arising out of the agitation of the nations. This part of the vision contains characteristic features, but gives no date.

In verse 4 we have Babylon in power and then abased and subdued. The body of a lion with eagle's wings; that which, humanly speaking, was most noble and energetic in strength— that which hovered over the nations with the highest and most rapid flight—characterised this first energy of the human mind, when the will of God had committed to it the empire of the world. This place it loses.

The second beast devoured much, but had neither the energy nor the rapid flight of the first; it appropriated other kingdoms to itself rather than created an empire; twofold in its strength at first, it raised itself up more on one side than on the other. It is ferocious, but comparatively unwieldy; it is the Medo-Persian empire.

This chapter says but little of the third; lightness and activity characterise it, and dominion was given to it. It is the empire founded by Alexander.

The fourth is the subject of a separate vision.

It will be well to remark, in passing, that the chapter is divided into three visions, followed by the interpretation given to the prophet. The first vision comprises the four beasts seen together, and the character of the first three slightly sketched. The second vision contains that of the fourth beast with much more detail. The third vision presents the appearing of one like the Son of man before the Ancient of days. They commence respectively at the first, seventh, and thirteenth verses; the interpretation occupies the remainder of the chapter from verse 15.

The features of the fourth beast are clearly drawn. It is strong exceedingly; it devours and breaks in pieces, and tramples the residue under foot. It has not the same character as the preceding monarchies. It has ten horns; that is to say, its strength was to be divided into ten distinct powers. Strength and rapacity, which spare and respect nothing, appropriating everything, or trampling it under foot without regard to conscience; such are morally the characteristics of the fourth beast. Its division into ten kingdoms distinguishes it as to its form. The uniform simplicity of the other empires will be lacking to it. But this is not all. Another very distinctive and special element attracted the particular attention of the prophet. While considering the horns, he saw another little horn come up among them: three of the first fell before it; it possessed the penetration and intelligence of man; its pretensions were very great. Such was its character. A power rises among the ten by which three of them are overthrown. This power is clear-sighted and penetrating in its intelligence. It not only possesses strength, but it has thoughts and plans besides those of ambition and government. It is a beast that works morally, that occupies itself with knowledge,

and sets itself up with pretensions full of pride and daring. It has a character of intelligence, moral and systematic (in evil), and not merely the strength of a conqueror. This horn has the eyes of a man.

Afterwards the thrones are set,126 and the Ancient of days sits. It is a session of judgment, the throne of Jehovah's judgment; it is not said where, but its effect is on earth. The words of the little horn are the occasion of the execution of judgment. It is executed on the beast, which is destroyed, and its body given to the flames. With respect to the other beasts, their dominion had been taken away, but their lives prolonged; the fourth loses its life with its dominion. The scene of judgment forms a part of the vision of the fourth beast, and especially relates to it.

In verse 13 there is another vision. One like the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days, and receives the kingdom and universal dominion—the rule of Jehovah entrusted to man in the Person of Christ, and substituted for the kingdom of the beast. Observe that this is not the execution of the judgment that had been spoken of, but the reception of the earthly kingdom; for, in all this, the government of the earth is the subject.

There are two parts in the interpretation. Verses 17, 18 are general; and then, with reference to the fourth beast (v. 19-28), there is more of detail. The general part declares that these four beasts are four kings, or kingdoms, that shall arise out of the earth: but that the saints of the high places shall take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. These are the two great facts brought out in this history: the earthly empire, and that of the saints of the high places (the first being composed

of four kingdoms). We are then given some details with respect to the fourth of these. It will be noticed here, that, in the interpretation, an element of the highest interest is added, which was not in the vision to which the interpretation belongs; namely, that which relates to the saints. In communicating to the prophet the meaning of the vision, God could not omit them. Verse 18 already presents them in contrast with the empires of the earth. These empires were seen to arise in the vision according to their public or external character. Here the Spirit of God tells of that which made their conduct a subject of interest even to the heart of God, who would testify this interest to the prophet. The saints are immediately brought into view, but in a suffering condition (v. 21). This is the first characteristic of the little horn, when his actions are in question.

But verses 21, 22 demand a few more remarks. The little horn not only makes war with the saints, but prevails against them up to a certain time (that is, until the coming of the Ancient of days). Something more definite is given here than the fact that God will judge the audacity of man. We are no longer occupied with the public history and with general principles, but with explanations for the saints in the person of the prophet. It is the coming of the Ancient of days that puts an end to the power of the little horn over the saints. Other important events are the result of this great change, of this intervention of God: first, judgment is given to the saints of the high places; and, second, the saints take the kingdom. Observe here the especial title “of the high places.” The little horn persecutes the saints on earth, and prevails against them until the Ancient of days comes. But it is only to the saints of the high places that

judgment is given. “Know ye not,” says the apostle, “that the saints shall judge the world? “Nevertheless we must not go beyond that which is here written. It is not said, “to the assembly “—an idea not found in these passages. It is the saints who are linked with the Most High127 God in heaven, while the earth is in the hands of those who do not acknowledge Him, and while His government is not exercised to preserve them from suffering, and from the malice of the wicked. This applies in principle to all times since the fall, until the Ancient of days comes. But there is a period especially characterised by this spirit of rebellion, namely, that of the power of the little horn. There is another class of persons spoken of farther on—the people of the saints of the high places. “The kingdom is given to them.” But in this case the Spirit does not say, “the judgment.”

Thus, in verse 22, when the kingdom is mentioned, it is not said “the saints of the high places,” but simply “the saints possessed the kingdom.” We have thus the power of the little horn exercised against the saints, and prevailing against them, put an end to by the Ancient of days, the earth being the scene of that which is taking place. This event is accompanied by two other events, which result from it, and which change the whole aspect of the world. Judgment is given to the heavenly saints, and the kingdom is given to the saints. The first of these two events is confined to the heavenly saints. The second is more general, the saints on earth sharing it according to their condition, without excluding the saints in heaven according to their condition.

In verse 23 begin the historical details of the little horn. The general character of the fourth beast is set forth. It devours, treads down, and subjugates everything. It is

not only a consolidated empire, of such or such an extent; it ravages the whole earth as by right. There are, then, ten kingdoms arising in the bosom of the empire, and dividing its power. This is its outward and general character. But when the ten are already existing, another power arises of a different character from the ten, three of which it subdues. Now this horn speaks against the Most High—magnifies itself in words against Him. In its malice it destroys the saints who are united in heart to the God of heaven, and confess His name and His authority on the earth. It seeks to change the religious feasts and the laws; and they are given into its hand for three years and a half. In this last circumstance we find pretty clearly the oppressor of the Jews. Their whole system is given into his hands. These three characteristics are sufficiently plain and distinct: he speaks against the Most High; he persecutes those who own God in heaven, and whose hearts turn there (compare Psalm 11:4); and he does away with all public evidences of the earthly religion.

It will be remarked that there is no question at all here of the assembly, except in such general terms as must apply to any saints whatever on the earth who looked up higher. It is well also to observe, that it is not the saints (as has been thought) who are given into the hand of the little horn, but the forms of the Jewish religion. God may will and permit, for the good of the saints, that there should be persecution; but He never gives up His saints to their enemies. He could not do it. He cannot leave and forsake His own. In a word, whatever may be the general principles capable of application during the course of the ages, this prophecy, as an especial and definite revelation, refers, like the whole Book, to the

earth, of which the assembly is not, and to the Jews, with respect to whom God exercises His government on the earth.

This, understood, throws light on the three characteristics of the little horn. He rebels against the Most High. He speaks great words against God, and against all the saints who, rising in spirit above the earth, acknowledge the Most High God in heaven, and expect deliverance at His hand; whose hearts take refuge in Him, when the earth is given up, as it were, into the hands of the wicked. All those who thus maintain a true testimony against the man who arrogates to himself every prerogative on earth, and will have nothing to do with heaven, are persecuted by him. At length, the Jews having re-established their regular feasts and ordinances, his tyranny, which allows no power but his own, destroys all traces of these ordinances; which, however vain, as restored in unbelief, were nevertheless a testimony to the existence of a God of the earth. But the judgment sits to take cognizance of all this pride. The dominion of the little horn is consumed and destroyed. We may notice here that it is in fact the little horn that in the end wields the supreme power. It is his dominion which is destroyed. Afterwards the kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven is given to “the people of the saints of the high places.” It appears to me that the meaning of this expression, remarkable as it is, is yet sufficiently plain. The Most High reigns, but He reigns in connection with the system which makes it manifest that “the heavens rule “(as it is said on this subject in the case of Nebuchadnezzar). The man of the earth would reign, and he defies heaven; and, withdrawing the earth from

the government of Him who dwells in heaven, he would possess it independently of God. But the judgment proves his folly, and the Most High reigns for evermore. The saints who have acknowledged Him are given the judgment and the glory, and the people who belong to them on the earth have the supremacy and reign. These are the Jews. But, definitely, it is God who reigns.

There are two words translated “Most High,” the one singular and the other plural. The latter signifies “the high (places).” I do not doubt that this word gave rise to the expression “heavenly places “in the epistle to the Ephesians, which however goes much farther in the revelation there made. For here government only is the subject, and in the Ephesians it is the things that belong to the heavenly places, or that are in them. This distinction enables us to understand the difference between the assembly, or even Christians, and the saints of the high places in Daniel 7. With respect to the Christians, it is those who enjoy—in spirit at least—the blessings of the heavenly places, sitting there in Christ, and wrestling against the spiritual wickedness that is there. Here, on the contrary, it is the government which belongs of right to the heavens and to Him that reigns there which is to be recognised, in the presence of a power that denies and sets itself up against this, choosing to own no other power than itself on the earth. The meaning of the prophecy is plain and easily understood. To recognise the right of government in the heavenly places, and to be sitting there in the enjoyment of the blessings proper to them, are two very different things. Everything has its own place in the mind of God, where perfect order reigns.

In sum we have, besides the power of the four beasts in general, the western power divided among ten, and at last the empire in the hands of the little horn, which subdues three of the ten horns, and sets itself up against God in heaven, persecutes and prevails against the saints, destroying by its persecutions those who identify themselves with the God of heaven, abolishing all the Jewish ordinances, and finally is itself destroyed. This abolition of the Jewish system continues for three years and a half, or 1260 days; which period of time belongs only to this last point. All the others are characteristic and not chronological.

The government of the earth, formerly given to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, is not again established —as it had been at Jerusalem—in a merely earthly throne. During the interval, in the presence of the rebellion of the earthly power against the Most High, the saints have assumed a character which is the result of their looking to heaven and to Him who reigns there (God, with respect to His government of the earth, having taken the name of the God of heaven)—a very intelligible position, seeing that He had forsaken Jerusalem.

It is the saints of the high places who will take the kingdom; but after the judgment of the rebellious horn, the earthly people possess the dominion under the whole heaven, in dependence on those who are seated in heaven.

So that we have three clear and important elements in the dealings of God. Firstly, the earthly throne at Jerusalem is forsaken; the Gentile throne established by the authority of God, the God of heaven; the rebellion of

this Gentile power against Him that had given it authority. Secondly, the saints are distinguished by their acknowledgment of that God whom the earthly power denied; they are of the heavens, where God had now His place and His throne, being no longer on earth at Jerusalem. Thirdly, we have, then, judgment executed on the rebellious power; judgment given to these saints of the high places; the earthly people established in the kingdom under the heavens, in connection with them. This was the dominion of the God of heaven which should not pass away. In connection with this is the character given to Him that pre-eminently receives the kingdom. It is not now the Messiah, owned as king in Zion, but ONE in the form of the Son of man; a title of far greater and more wide significance. It is the change from Psalm 2 to Psalm 8.128 Nor this only; for, when the events are accomplished, we find that it is the Ancient of days Himself who comes and puts an end to the power which afflicted the saints—that Christ (as the Psalms so largely shew and the gospels too) is Jehovah.

We have here the great picture of man's government—coming into all its characteristic development at the end — and its setting aside by the government of God, which establishes the faithful in authority, and, above all, the Son of man Himself, and His people on the earth.

The saints of the high places would be thus those who, when the assembly, not noticed here, is gone, look up and own power there, and, if put to death by power in rebellion, have their place above. We find them again in Revelation, specially in chapter 20, and there two classes. The people of the saints are the spared remnant on earth. {Da 8}

Chapter 8 gives details of that which takes place from another side of Judea, with reference to the Jews. The two empires of Persia and Greece, or of the East, which succeeded that of Babylon under which the prophecy was given, are only introduced to point out the countries in which these events are to take place, and to bring them before us in their historical order. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterwards divided into four kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy.

In the interpretation, we find the positive declaration that the events here related happen “in the last end of the indignation.” Now it is the indignation against Israel that is here meant (chap. 11:36). This time of indignation is spoken of in Isaiah 10:25; it ends with the destruction of the Assyrian, who (v. 5) is its principal instrument. All these passages shew us, especially in studying their context, that it will be in the last days that the events of these prophecies will be fulfilled. It will be “the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be delivered out of it.” The Lord Himself alludes to this period (Matt. 24) calling His disciples’ attention to that which Daniel says respecting it (compare Daniel 12:1-11 with the Lord’s words). It appears to me that the prophecy in our chapter does not relate so absolutely to the last days as the interpretation does.129 The thing spoken of in the prophecy is not the last end of the indignation; but the fact that a little horn arises out of one of the four kingdoms, which had succeeded Alexander. Nevertheless, the grand object of the Spirit is to reveal that which will happen at the time of the end (v. 17).

Let us examine the principal feature of the little horn. The power designated by “the little horn “enlarges its territory towards the east, and towards the pleasant land, or ornament [of the earth], that is to say, as it appears to me, towards Jerusalem or Zion. This horn exalts itself against the host of heaven, and casts down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and tramples on them.

Who are the persons intended by this expression—“the host of heaven and the stars?” Let us remember, that it is the Jewish system that is before us. When once we have got hold of this, the application of the passage is not difficult. The expression applies to those who, professedly at least, surround the throne of God, and particularly those who shine eminent among them. It is not the faithful who look towards heaven, of which chapter 7 speaks. To be the host of heaven describes a position and not a moral state (compare v. 24). But this passage assumes that the Jews are again in this position before God, even although it would be but for judgment. That is to say, they are again under the eye of God as in relation with Him, as an object about which He concerns Himself, as a people still responsible for their former relationship with Him, although the Gentile power still exists. Now, if their condition does not answer to the position they reassume in His presence, they are, by the very fact of this position, the object of God’s judgments.

Observe here, moreover, that transgression is the thing spoken of, and not the abomination which some one sets up, and which makes desolate; and in the interpretation also, the transgression is come to its height.

This horn is, then, the instrument of chastisement on the Jews, who have returned—as to profession—into relationship with Jehovah, and into their land, assuming the character of His people, yet carrying transgression against Him to the highest point. The horn completely destroys some of them. But this is not all; he (for the word is no longer it, in agreement with the word horn—perhaps changed to designate the king in person) magnifies himself even against the Prince of the host. He carries his pretensions so far as to oppose himself to Him, to set himself against Christ in His character of Prince of Israel, against the Judge who comes, the Head of Israel, who is Jehovah Himself; for it is the Ancient of days who comes. Here, however, all is looked at in a Jewish aspect. He is the Prince of Israel. We see that it is Jehovah, because it is His sacrifice that is taken away—His sanctuary that is cast down; but He is presented as the Prince of the host.130 The daily sacrifice is taken away from Him, not "by him."131 The Jewish worship rendered to Jehovah is suppressed, His sanctuary cast down, and a time of distress appointed for the daily sacrifice (it is thus that I understand the verse), on account of transgression; and the little horn132 (for here the it, agreeing with horn, is again used) casts down the truth, practises and prospers. The duration of the whole vision, with especial reference to the transgression which occasions it, and, it may be, comprising also the duration of the transgression that maketh desolate; in a word, the whole scene of transgression, and consequent desolation (the sanctuary and the host being trodden under foot), continues for 2300 evenings and mornings.

In verse 19 we see that the interpretation relates to the time of the end—a very important notice for the understanding of the passage.133 And this is what shall happen in the last end of the indignation (upon Israel) when the transgression of the Jews is at its height. A king of fierce countenance, who understands dark sentences, shall arise; a kind of teacher or rabbi, but proud, and audacious in appearance. He will be mighty, but not by his own power. He will make great havoc, will prosper and practise, destroying the mighty, or a great multitude of persons, and especially “the people of the holy ones,” that is, the Jews (chap. 7:27). He is subtle, and his craftiness is successful. He will magnify himself in his heart, and will destroy many by means of a false and irreligious security. At length, he will stand up against the Prince of princes. He will then be destroyed without human intervention. That is to say that at the time of the end, when the purposes of God will be unfolded, when His indignation against Israel draws to an end, the transgression of this people being already at its height, a king shall arise in one part of the former Grecian empire, whose power will be characterised by its increase towards the east and south, and towards Jerusalem; that is, it will be established in the present Turkey in Asia— Jerusalem being the point it aims at. This power will cause much destruction, and its strength will be great; yet, properly speaking, it will not be its own strength. The king will be dependent on some other power. He will also destroy the Jewish people. But there is something more than destructive power; there is a character of wisdom resembling that of Solomon in some respects. He is very subtle, and succeeds in destroying the Jews, by lulling them into a security in which they forget Jehovah. We see him then occupying himself

about the Jews, not only as a conqueror, but as a teacher, by craft and by a deceptive peace. At length he stands up against Christ in His character of the Prince of princes or kings of the earth, that is, in His character of earthly supremacy. He is destroyed by divine power, without the hand of man.

This king is distinct from the little horn of chapter 7, who rules the great western beast. He is a king of the east, who arises, not from the Roman empire, but from the former Grecian empire established in Syria, and the adjacent countries, who derives his strength from elsewhere, and not from his own resources. He will interfere (in his own way) with the religious affairs of the Jews; but it seems to me that that which is said of him is more characteristic of the desolator, whom God allows the enemy to raise up on account of the transgressions of His people, than of the one who makes a covenant with them for a time, in order to ruin and drag them afterwards into the depths of apostasy. It is one who will oppress them, having his seat of action in the east, as the little horn of chapter 7 rules in the west. 134 The desolation is brought before us on the occasion of this little horn. Verse 11135 if is a kind of parenthesis which relates entirely to the Prince of the host; and the two last things it mentions (namely, that the sacrifice is taken away from Him and His sanctuary cast down) are introduced in connection with the Prince of the host, as a part of the desolation of Israel, to complete its description, without, as it appears to me, pointing out who it is that does these things. They are not spoken of in the king’s own history, at the end of the chapter. They form a part of the desolation of the days alluded to in verse 11. {Da 9}

Chapter 9 gives us a vision concerning the people and the holy city, consequent on Daniel's confession and intercession. It is, as has been remarked, in connection with the oppression of the western power. Indeed, the details relate to oppression. The prophet had understood (not by a direct revelation, but by the study of Jeremiah's prophecy, by the use of those ordinary means that are within the reach of the spiritual man) that the captivity, the duration of which Jeremiah had announced, was near its end. The effect on Daniel's mind (true sign of a prophet of God) was to produce an ardent intercession on behalf of the desolate sanctuary, and the city which Jehovah loved. He pours out his heart in confession before God, acknowledging the sin of the people and of their kings, the hardness of their hearts, and the righteousness of God in bringing evil upon them. He pleads the mercies of God, and demands favour for Jehovah's own sake. The prophecy is God's answer to his prayer. Seventy weeks are determined upon the people of Daniel and upon his holy city. Jehovah does not yet acknowledge them definitely for His own; but He accepts the intercession of the prophet, as He had formerly done that of Moses, by saying to Daniel, "thy people and thy city." Daniel stands in the place of mediator. He has the mind of God—His words; and thus he can intercede (compare on this deeply interesting point, Gen. 20:7; Jer. 27:18; John 15:7).

At the end of these seventy weeks, separated from among the ages, the time should come, decreed of God, to finish the transgression, to seal up, that is, to make an end of sin, and to put it away; to pardon iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up [all] vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies: this,

observe, with respect to the people of Israel and to the city. It is the entire re-establishment of the people, and of the city, in grace.

This period of seventy weeks is divided into three parts — seven, sixty-two, and one. During the first part, or the seven weeks, the desolate city and its overthrown walls would be rebuilt in troublous times, or in the strait of times. After sixty-two weeks, that is, after sixty-nine altogether, the Messiah should be cut off, and should have nothing (this is the true sense of the words). He to whom the kingdom and the glory belonged, instead of receiving them, should be cut of and have nothing. But after this event the city and the sanctuary, which had been rebuilt, should be destroyed, and the end should be like a desolating flood; and there should be an ordinance, or determinate decree, of desolation until the end of the war. This is, in general, the complete history of the desolations. Sixty-nine weeks have been accomplished—after that, the Messiah is cut off; but the precise moment at which this takes place is not indicated. The course of the seventy weeks is thus entirely interrupted. The cutting off of the Messiah was not the moment of the re-establishment of the people and of the city. The result is plainly announced—a period of desolation until the end: its duration is not given. We shall find in chapter 11 the same manner of treating an analogous period. The people of a prince who was yet to come should destroy the city.

After this, the Spirit of God takes up the seventieth week, the details of which were not yet unfolded. The prince that shall come confirms a covenant with the mass of the Jews. (The form of the word many136indicates the mass of the people). This is the

first thing that characterises the week; the Jews form an alliance with the head, at that day, of the people who had formerly overthrown their city and their sanctuary. They form an alliance with the head of the Roman Empire. This refers to the week as a whole. But, the half of the week spent,137 things assume another aspect. This head causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of idols, there is a desolator; and until the consummation that is determined,138 there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolate.

That which is here announced, then, is, that seventy weeks are set apart for the history of the city and people of Daniel. During these seventy weeks, God is in relationship with Israel;139 nevertheless, not immediately so, but in connection with the faith of the believing remnant, of a Daniel, of an intercession which, linking itself with the existence of a remnant, serves as a bond between God and the people: an intercession without which the people would be rejected. It is the same principle as that which governed the relations between God and the people by means of Moses, after the golden calf— the people being called the people of Daniel, as formerly the people of Moses. This position is remarkable, as taking place after the establishment of the authority of the Gentiles. The Jews are at Jerusalem, but the Gentiles reign, although the empire of Babylon is overthrown. In this anomalous position prophetic faith seeks the complete re-establishment of the city, the seat of government of God and of His people. It is to this that the answer of God refers. A brief but complete history is given of the period which should elapse until the judgment upon the Jews was accomplished and past.

A new element of great importance is also introduced: the Messiah should be cut off. He would have nothing of that which in right belonged to Him. The consequence of this would be the destruction of the city and of the sanctuary, desolation and war. It would be the prince of another empire, not yet in existence, who should thus destroy the city and the sanctuary. The relations between God and the people were now completely broken off for the time—even as regarded a believing remnant. The faith of Daniel was rejected in the Person of Christ as the prophet, and in the denial of Christ expressed by the declaration that they would have no king but Caesar; and the people and the city were given up to desolation.

But there remained one week yet unaccomplished with this faithless and perverse, but yet beloved, race, before their iniquity should be pardoned, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and the vision and the prophecy closed by their fulfilment. This week should be distinguished by a covenant which the prince or leader would make with the Jewish people (with the exception of the remnant), and then by the compulsory cessation of their worship through the intervention of this prince. After that the Jews having placed themselves under the protection of idols—this unclean spirit, long driven out of the people, having again entered into them with seven others worse than himself, the desolator comes, and the final judgments are inflicted on the people—terrible judgments; but the extent of which is definitely fixed by God when their measure shall be full. Thus we find a very precise answer is given to the prophet’s request; an answer which very distinctly unfolds the consequences of the connection of Daniel’s people with the Gentile

power. Their position is very clearly set forth, while the relationship with God, by means of the prophet's intercession, still exists.

The prophecy announces at the same time the general fact of the people's desolation after the sixty-ninth week was past, and (with a seeming lull from the favour of the beast), on to the end of the seventieth, occasioned by their rejection of the Messiah, which took place at the very time when the promise attached to the prophecy should have been on the point of fulfilment; and the rejection of whom (coming in the name of His Father) has led to the long dispersion of the Jews, which will continue until the time of their being gathered, a prey to the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles; the time, in fact, of their falling into the hands of the one who should come in his own name—a sorrowful condition developed during, the last week, but to which God has set a limit; and beyond that, no malice of the enemy can reach.

In chapter 10 we return to the East.140 Chapters 10, 11, and 12 form but one prophecy; only chapter n closes the history of the Gentiles, and chapter 12, as we remarked at the beginning, is occupied with the condition of the remnant during the last period of the Gentile power, and with their deliverance (concluding thus the revelation of God's mind with respect to the remnant who are preserved in the midst of the Gentiles).

Daniel, ever intent on the welfare of his people, made supplication (v. 2, 3, 12) to God, with a renewed and a persevering desire to understand His dealings. After three weeks of fasting and prayer an angel is sent to him, revealing the opposition of the enemies of God's glory to the accomplishment of His purposes of favour to

His people, and to the communication of these purposes for their encouragement. But if faith is exercised, God is faithful; and the perseverance of Daniel puts him morally in a condition to appreciate the communications of God, being a proof of his fitness to receive them. The angel informs him that the vision has reference to the Jews, and that it belongs to the latter days (chap, 10:14). The strength which is given him enables him to receive the communication. The kings of Persia, under whose reign he received the vision, are enumerated; and the attack on Greece by one amongst them is announced. This gives rise to an attack on Persia by Greece; and the Greek empire is established; but it is afterwards divided into four parts. Two of these four monarchies shall be more powerful than the others. They are also territorially in relation with the Jews. It is on the territory of the latter that their wars are carried on. The history of the kings of these two monarchies, thus in conflict on the territory of Israel, is given with considerable detail under the names of king of the north and king of the south. I do not enter into these details.

The history is carried on until the intervention of the Romans, the ships from the coast of Chittim,141 and the attack upon the Jews, and the temple, and the holy covenant. The king of the north allies himself with the apostate Jews; he pollutes the sanctuary, and sets up an idol; he takes away the daily sacrifice; he leads the wicked into apostasy (this is the force of the expression in verse 32). But they who know God shall be strong, and shall act with energy. They who understand, being taught of God, shall instruct the many. Thus far is the succession of the first kings, and the history of the Maccabees, and of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The result, on to the end, is then given in general terms —the last part of the preceding history being a type of what shall happen in the last days. The people again fall for a time under the hands of their enemies. They shall be helped a little: some shall cleave to them with flatteries. A few even of those who understand, who might have been expected to be preserved providentially by God, will also fall by violence, to try the faith of all, and purge them, until the time of the end. For this state of things is to continue until the period appointed by God. It is the condition of the Jews, especially in those days, that is, of the Seleucidæ and Lagidæ, kings of north and south, and in general, until the last days.

Some observations on the details may here be of use to the reader. In chapters 9:27, 11:33, 12:3, the word translated “many “has the article in Hebrew, and signifies the mass of the people, which makes the force of these verses much more simple. The reader will also remark, in contrast with the masses (chap. 11:33), “the Maschilim,” a word found in the titles of many of the Psalms. They that understand, they that are taught of God, shall instruct the many: there will be the activity of love for the truth in these times of trial. In chapter 12:3, we have again those that understand associated with those that instruct the many in righteousness. Compare chap. 11:33. They become victims, in verse 35, to violence. This last verse reaches, as we have seen, to the end of this people’s history, while under the dominion of the Gentiles. But more positive details are given with respect to the end.

The king142is introduced—the wicked one who will exercise power in Judea at the end of the age; and will prosper until the indignation comes to an end—a period

of which we have already spoken. It is a king who acts in the land of Judea; one of an impious character, and who follows his own unbridled will, exalting himself above all, forsaking the religion of his fathers, regarding neither Christ nor any God, blaspheming the God of heaven, and establishing idolatry; but in a way of his own; “he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land for a reward.” It is rather difficult to say who these are that he will cause to rule—I apprehend his followers; but the general character of this self-willed, impious, and idolatrous king who magnifies himself above all, is sufficiently plain. We find, as the chapter goes on, that the king of the south pushes at him, and the king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind, overflows and passes over and enters into the land of delight, Judea. But Edom, Moab, and Ammon escape his power, being reserved (Isaiah n: 14) to be subdued by Israel itself. But he stretches out his hand over the countries and pillages them. Egypt does not escape, and they who dwell in Africa are at his feet. But, disturbed by tidings from the east and north, he sets up his tabernacles between Jerusalem143 and the sea, and comes to his end, with none to help him. The end of the king is not given here. It is the end of the king of the north, the subject here being the nations and the land of Israel, and that which shall happen to the people of Daniel in the last days. In the land there will be the wicked and impious king, who shall be attacked by the king of the south. The king of the north then pillages all the countries round, with the exception of three, and he perishes in the land of Israel. {Da 12}

Chapter 12 gives us more of Israel’s own history. In the midst of all these events Michael, the archangel, stands

up in behalf of the people of Daniel. There is a time of trouble, such as never has been nor will be. Nevertheless the people shall be delivered, that is to say, those who are written in the book (the remnant belonging to God). Jeremiah has already spoken to us of this period, and of the deliverance (chap. 30:7). The Lord speaks of it also in Matthew 24, drawing the attention of His disciples to the abomination of desolation here mentioned, shewing clearly that He speaks of Jerusalem, the Jews, and the last days, when the Jews shall be delivered. He also points out the way in which the faithful are to escape, while the tribulation continues. Taking these passages together makes it easy to understand them both. The second verse extends beyond the land of Israel, which had been the scene of the prophecy until this. But their condition is stated in a way not to own the countries of their dispersion. Many of the race of Israel arise from their long abasement, some to everlasting life, but others to everlasting shame. They that understand shall shine as the firmament. They who have instructed the many in righteousness shall shine as the stars (compare the host of heaven and stars, chap. 8). God will clothe with the brightness of His favour those who will have been faithful during this period of rebellion and distress.

After this one of God’s messengers inquires of the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, how long it should be to the end of the wonders (that is, of the tribulation) by the intervention of God in deliverance for Israel. The answer is, three years and a half, or 1260 days; and that, when God should have put an end to the dispersion of the holy people, all these things should be finished. Daniel asks for a fuller

revelation with respect to the end; but the oracle is sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be tried and purified and made white, but the wicked shall do wickedly. Alas! this must be expected. None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand —these “maschilim,” whom the Spirit of God has mentioned.

Now, from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days. But the accomplishment of 1335144 days has still to be waited for; there shall be full blessing to him that waits and arrives at their fulfilment. Daniel himself shall have his part in this time of glory.

It is to be observed, that Daniel never describes the period that succeeds to the times of the Gentiles. He gives the history of those monarchies, the oppressors and seducers of the Jews in the latter days, and the deliverance of the people; but there he stops. He is the prophet of the times of the Gentiles until the deliverance.

One thing may here occur to the reader as desirable for the understanding of the whole, that is, to combine the agency of those instruments, which the prophecy of Daniel presents as acting in the land of Israel during the latter days, and to identify them—if it may be done— with those that are mentioned in other prophets. But this would be to make a system of prophecy, and not to explain Daniel. The Spirit of God has not done so in this prophet, which is our present subject. I will, therefore, only allude to some striking points. {Da 7}

Chapter 7 gives the character of the Roman empire, especially under its last head. It is the close of the history of the Gentile power. Chapter 8 (although I have often thought that the king, who is described there, might be the instrument in Israel of the western empire) gives to the horn it speaks of a different character—as it appears to me, in carefully weighing the passage—from that which constitutes the western power,145 whether as a little horn, or exercised in some local instrument. It is an eastern power arising out of one of the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was broken up. His power, however, is derived from another; it is a separate power acting in Syria. In chapter 9 we find the one who acts among the Jews in Jerusalem itself, in connection with the Roman empire, be the instrument employed who he may. It may be "the king "of chapter 11 who finds himself between the kings of the south and of the north. But it is very possible that the little horn of chapter 7 acts itself. Still there is another power dependent upon it, who acts at least religiously upon the Jews, and leads them into apostasy—one who comes in his own name, and does not regard the God of his fathers.

"The king" of chapter 11 is a king in Judea, despising the religion of his fathers, and acting in that country in a way morally unbridled, re-establishing idolatry, and dividing the territory among those in favour. The kings of the south and north are Egypt and Assyria in the latter days, who attack the king who has established himself in the Holy Land.

I suppose that "the king "answers to the second beast of Revelation, though in another aspect, as the first does to the little horn of chapter 7.

124 David’s throne had been characterised by power in obedience, the king having to write out a copy of the law and observe it; Nebuchadnezzar’s throne is one of absolute power, man supreme in the exercise of his own will—the twofold way of testing man in the place of authority.

125 The seed of David will not be in captivity at Babylon when God takes His place as the God of the earth.

126 This translation is almost universally considered to be correct.

127 There are four names of relationship which God has taken with men: Almighty (Gen. 17) with the patriarchs; Jehovah with Israel (Ex. 6); Father, with Christians (John 17); and Most High, in the millennium (Gen. 14) and here in Daniel. Compare Psalm 90. The name of Father makes a difference in the whole position, associating us with Christ, the Son in whom He is revealed. John’s Gospel specially brings out this.

128 Brought about by the rejection of the Messiah.

129 This appears to me to be the case, because events that took place under the successors of Seleucus, the first king of the north, have served as a type, or partial and anticipative fulfilment, of that which will happen in the last days. In chapter 11 and here, there is a description of, or a strong allusion to, that which Antiochus Epiphanes did. The eleventh chapter relates it, I think, historically. The object of God in the prophecy is found in the events of the last days; and this is all that is given in the interpretation.

It is well to observe, that no interpretation of a parable or obscure prophecy, either in the Old or New

Testament, is simply an interpretation. It adds that which reveals by the result the meaning of the ways of God, or facts described in what is obscure, either by outward judgments which justify the spiritual judgment of His people when faith only would discern God's mind, or by some new features that give the true import of the events for the saints. Actual judgment makes openly plain what spiritual judgment alone discerned before, and thus is an interpretation. But other circumstances may be added in order to show the mind of God in the matter. In a word, it is God who communicates to His people that which gives its true value to that which precedes, or who directs them in their thoughts as to what has been said, by the revelation of His judgments. It is this which practically confirms them in His thoughts.

130 I have questioned a little whether the host of heaven may not mean the powers of the earth (the Jews only taking their place in it because they ought to be under the government of God, and are so to the spirit of prophecy). I do not reject this idea; but it appears certain that the Spirit has the Jews especially in view (see v. 13). Verse 24 might lead us to believe that He destroys others beside the Jews. Christ, exalted to the right hand of God, is the head of all power. But He is especially the head of the Jews. If any would even apply the title "Prince of princes "to this supremacy, the analogy of the word would justify the application. The connection between the host and the sanctuary in verse 13, appears to me to shew, that the Spirit had those Jews especially in view who surround the place of the throne of Jehovah.

131 There is no doubt that the text says, that the sacrifice is taken away from the Prince of the host. The question still remains, by whom? The Keri (which is generally, I believe, the best authority when there are variations in the Hebrew) reads, “was taken from him,” without saying by whom; the Ketib, “he took away from him,” which ascribes it to the little horn.

132 In the Hebrew there is a difference of gender. He who magnifies himself (v. 11) is masculine; while at the end of verse 12, the word, “it cast down,” is feminine, agreeing with horn, which in Hebrew is a feminine noun.

133 The vision speaks particularly of the Seleucidæ?, or Asiatic successors of Alexander; and their acts, I doubt not, particularly those of Antiochus Epiphanes, are referred to in the vision, though verse 11 and the first half of 12, as noticed, are distinct. Thus the 2300 evenings and mornings are not necessarily applicable to anything beyond the acts of the Seleucidæ, and verse 26 confirms this. The interpretation (v. 23-25) applies only to the latter days. The sanctuary is not spoken of, but the destroying the “people of the saints “(the Jews), and standing up against the Prince of princes, In verse 26 read, “and thou, shut up the vision,” not “wherefore.”

134 Chapter 7 gives the power or horn of the west; chapter 8 that of the east; chapter 9 gives the state of Jerusalem under the power of the west; chapter 10, 11 the state under the powers of the east, including the wilful king.

135 The first half of the twelfth, closing with the word, “transgression,” forms indeed part of this parenthesis. The 2300 days refer thus to the historical times. All we have of them, in the interpretation which unfolds what is

yet to come, is that the vision is true. The parenthesis is from “Yea “(v. 11) to “transgression “in verse 12, connected with “he,” not with “it.”

136 The word “many “has an article prefixed to it in the Hebrew. The same thing is the case in other parts of Daniel, to which we shall draw the reader’s attention, and which clearly prove that the mass of the people are in question—”the many.” The same form of phrase is found in Greek. 2 Cor. 2:6; 9:2.

137 We may observe that the Lord only speaks expressly of the last half-week, of the time of tribulation which follows the setting up of the idol that maketh desolate in the holy place. Some have thought that there would be only this half-week to come, Christ having been cut off in the midst of the week. Others have thought that the seventieth week had entirely elapsed before the Lord’s death, but that it is not reckoned, Jesus having been rejected, and that this week is found again at the time of the Jews’ connection with the wicked one. What the passage tells us is this: first, the prince, the head that is of the Roman empire, in the latter days makes a covenant referring to one whole week; on the other hand, the Lord speaks of the last half of the week as being to take place immediately before His coming, as the time of unequalled tribulation that precedes it. If this were all, the foregoing history of the prince to come, who makes a covenant, would fall into the general history of the state of things. The question whether one or two half-weeks remain to be fulfilled, and in what way, during the manifestation of the power of evil, I reserve (as to its full development) for the book of Revelation; remarking only that Messiah is cut off after the end of 69 weeks. We know from the New Testament

that His ministry lasted just half the week. Of this clearly the prince or Jews, with whom he makes alliance, would make no account. The interpretation of this passage is clear; the covenant for a week with the prince to come, as if 69 weeks alone were run out, Messiah and His cutting off being ignored, and a half-week of utter oppression because of idols, till the consummation decreed.

138 This is an expression constantly used for the last judgments that shall fall upon the Jews (see Isaiah 10:22; 28:22). The second verse of this last chapter compares the desolator to a flood, as in verse 26 of the chapter we are considering. The attentive reader will observe that these passages refer also to the events of the last days. Remark also the covenant in Isaiah 28:15. Some doubts might be thrown upon the translation “the desolate “; some render it “the desolator,” and “until the destruction that is decreed there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolator,” or rather, “until the destruction decreed shall be poured upon the desolator.” To any one that is not very familiar with the word, this seems to end the sentence better; but it appears to me that those who are conversant with the whole contents of the Bible and with its phraseology will allow that the reading I have given is its truer meaning. The import of the prophecy is the same in either case. The one translation says that the desolation shall continue until the end of judgment, fore-ordained by God; the other, that it shall not cease until the destruction of the desolator, which comes to the same thing. The translation I have given appears to me more exact, more in accordance with the word. Our English translation reads “desolate,” giving “desolator “in the margin. But

the word has not the same form as that which is translated “desolator” in other places where the meaning is certain. The previous clause I have rendered “on account of the protection of idols.” The word is literally “wing”—upon, or on the account of, the wing of abominations. And we know that the word wing is habitually employed for protection.

139 The power of the Gentiles existing at the same time. We know from scripture that the restoration of Jerusalem took place under the reign of the Gentiles, as well as the whole course of the sixty-nine weeks which have assuredly passed away. The seventy have all the same character in this respect. It is only at the end of the seventy that pardon is granted. Whoever may be the instrument of establishing the covenant, the fourth beast will be at that time the ruling power of the Gentiles, to whom God has committed authority. It is very important, if we would understand the seventy weeks, to remark this state of things— the Jews restored, the city rebuilt, but the Gentiles still occupying the throne of the world. The seventy weeks have their course only under these conditions. It must be well understood that it is the people of Daniel who are meant, and his city, which are to be re-established in their former favour with God. The longsuffering of God still now waits. The Gentile power has already failed in faithfulness; Babylon has been overthrown; by means of intercession, the Jews provisionally restored, and the temple rebuilt. The seventy weeks had very nearly elapsed when Christ came. If the Jews, and Jerusalem in that her day, had repented, all was ready for her re-establishment in glory. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could have been raised up, as Lazarus had been. But she knew not the day of her

visitation, and the fulfilling of the seventy weeks, as well as the blessing that should follow, had necessarily to be postponed. Through grace we know that God had yet more excellent thoughts and purposes, and that man's state was such that this could not have been, as the event proved. Accordingly all is here announced beforehand. (Compare Isaiah 49:4-6.)

140 It may be remarked that in both cases the revelation given to Daniel, as to his people, is in reply to his exercises of heart in intercession or fasting; the revelations in chapters 7, 8 as to the western or eastern destroying powers are not. They are given when God pleases. These were in the time of Belshazzar; the two former, after Babylon was taken. The Jews were then really in a new position till Christ was rejected, and then the great forsaking came, when time does not count till they are in their own land, and God begins to deal with them again. Then, after the display of their unbelief in receiving the power of evil and in idolatry, the last grand tribulation comes, and then judgment in the Person of the Lord from heaven.

141 The intervention of these in favour of the young king of Egypt, whom Antiochus Epiphanes had conquered, led to his going back and raging against the Jews, profaning the temple, and forbidding Jewish worship.

142 Compare Isaiah 30:33 (reading "for the king also ") and 57:9. He has the title of "the king "in the eyes of the Jews—a title which of right belongs only to Jesus, the true Messiah and King of Israel.

143 This is the regular meaning of the Hebrew.

144 I have thought it possible that this computation may arise from this. An intercalary month to the 1260 days, or three years and a half, and then 45 days, if the years were ecclesiastical years, would bring up to the feast of tabernacles: but I offer no judgment on it. At any rate, the statement is clear that then the sanctuary of God will be cleansed in Jerusalem.

145 We may compare Psalms 74 and 83, which confirm the idea that there will be a destruction in Jerusalem, as well as the compelled cessation of the daily sacrifice accomplished in a religious way by the prince who is to come, the Roman of chapter 9, who will be among the Jews, and who had professed himself to be their friend.

## The Minor Prophets Introduction

Before entering on the study of the minor prophets, I will avail myself of the opportunity they afford to make a few remarks on the prophetic writings in general, pointing out the subjects of which they treat. We may divide these books into four principal classes according to the subjects on which they speak—subjects often connected with their dates.

1st. Those which speak of the great crisis of the capture of Jerusalem, and its consequences. These are Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel—all the greater prophets excepting Isaiah. I place the book of Daniel in this class, though his chief subject be the consequences under Gentile rule, till the Lord come; because, in fact, that event changed the government of the world, setting aside (in judgment) the elect people; and, while speaking of the Gentiles, he does so in connection with the substitution of the Gentile monarchy for that of God in Israel, and in view of that people's destiny.

2nd. Those which speak of the judgment of the Gentiles as such. These are Jonah, Nahum, Obadiah.

3rd. Those which speak of the entire fall of Israel, and of the destiny that already threatened Judah, such as Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah. They announced a penal judgment on the people, while unfolding with more or less extent the dealings of God in grace at the end. With the exception of Amos, who prophesied in the reign of Uzziah, earlier than the other three, they belong to the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (this last king forming an epoch in these prophecies, the Assyrian

having overthrown the kingdom of Israel during the reign of Hezekiah, and threatened Jerusalem).

Lastly, we have Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who prophesied after the captivity: the first two for the encouragement of the people; the last to bear witness to the failure of the Jews who had returned from captivity, and to announce the testimony and the judgment of the last days, which should separate the remnant from the wicked around them.

I have not spoken of Joel and Habakkuk, because these two prophets have each a peculiar character, not applying to the judgment of the Gentiles, like Nahum and Obadiah, and having no date to indicate a moral import founded on the condition of Israel. They both point out, in an especial manner, the judgments of the last days. Joel speaks of a particular invasion of the land, and of the judgment of the nations, which is fulfilled ‘at the same period, in connection with the blessing of Israel. The Spirit in Habakkuk, whilst availing Himself of the occasion of a particular judgment, brings out the spiritual affections and the exercises of heart produced by the sight of the evil, and of the consequent judgment, and shews the condition of a soul taught of God in view of these things.

We find thus in the prophets (taking a moral view of their subjects), first, the judgment of the people in general, the house of David being spared for a time, God raising up Hezekiah; and on this occasion the true Son of David is announced. This is contained in Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah. Secondly the judgment of Jerusalem, and the substitution of the Gentile monarchy, the people of God being entirely set aside; Jeremiah, Daniel, and

Ezekiel; the last discussing all the great principles of relationship with God, and the destiny of all Israel as a land and nation. Thirdly, the judgment of the world—Jonah, Nahum, and Obadiah. Fourthly, the desolation of the last days, by the northern army, and the judgment of the nations; followed by the temporal blessing of Israel, and, in the Spirit, of all flesh. This is Joel. Fifthly, the chastisement of God's people by the successful violence of the man to whom God allows power for this purpose. The spirit of the prophet, overwhelmed by the evil which he beholds in the people, and yet, still more so when they are oppressed by their haughty enemies, understands that the just shall live by faith; and that this oppression was needed to chastise the evil, and to allow the pride of man to reach that height of iniquity which leads to the judgment that annihilates his pride for ever. This is Habakkuk. The last chapter is the expression of the sentiments produced by this instruction—the desires, the recollections, and the confidence of faith; a faith that rests on God Himself, in the midst of all those exercises of heart to which the history of His people gives birth in the faithful. Precious consolation, when we think of all that invests itself with the name of God! We next find, sixthly, that which appertains to the special circumstances of the Jews, who have been brought back to Jerusalem in view of the coming of Christ, and the consequences of that coming, as well as of the people's own responsibility with respect to the circumstances in which they already stood:—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

There remain still some details to be pointed out. Jonah sets before us, in a very striking manner, the patient goodness of God towards a world of proud and careless

sinners; and that in contrast with the impatience of the man to whom the oracles of God are committed, to see them accomplished for his self-satisfaction, even though it were by the execution of the judgment which grace would set aside on the humiliation of those who were its objects.

Nahum however, shews us, that this judgment must in the end be executed, and that a long suffering—the only result of which is to glorify God—would at length give place to a judgment that should definitely and for ever put an end to all that exalted itself against God.

Obadiah reveals to us, not this general and public pride of the world, but the hatred to God's people which is especially seen in those who were outwardly connected with them, and who, according to the flesh, claimed a right to the inheritance of the firstborn.

The notice which God gives us in these prophets of His relationship with the world, and of the manner in which He looks upon it, is full of interest. Jonah presents the force of that expression in Peter, "a faithful Creator." In Isaiah we may have remarked the rich development of the ways of God in reference to Christ, and with Israel; and the connection of these things, both with each other, and with the judgment of the world. The purposes of God in government are largely opened in that book.

The three other great prophets instruct us in the vast importance of that crisis in the history of the whole world—that critical moment when Jehovah ceased to govern it in the midst of His people, and removed the seat of His power into the midst of the Gentiles, and placed that power in the hands of men.

Amos and Hosea give us some precious light on the moral government of God; they furnish the reader of the Bible with striking pictures of the state of things—the facts, which were the procuring cause of the judgment that God inflicted; not only the facts which resulted from God's dealings, but the conduct that gave rise to those dealings with His people. This exposure of their conduct is full of humbling interest.

Micah (as well as Isaiah), while occupied with these same subjects, enlarges more on the promises in connection with Christ, the effect of which would raise up the people from the condition into which sin, and the judgment of God upon the sin, had cast them. It may have been already remarked, that the commencement of Isaiah, while speaking of the Lord Jesus, is essentially occupied with Judah, Israel, and the nations; the close of the book especially with Christ, and the consequences of His rejection by the people.

It will have been understood, from what I have already said on the three prophets who prophesied after the return from captivity, that they also are occupied with the same two subjects.

The Messiah appears in Haggai, and with still more detail in Zechariah. The condition and the destiny of the people are more seen in Malachi—the whole in connection with the last days.146 146 I desire to add here, in a note, something more detailed and precise to that which I said on the subject of prophecy at the beginning of Isaiah. Prophecy is the intervention of God's sovereign grace in testimony, in order to maintain His relationship with His people when they have failed in their responsibility to God in the position they held, so

that their relationship with God in this position has been broken; and before God has established any new relationship by His own power in grace. The subjects of prophecy are, consequently, the following:—

The dealings of God in government upon the earth, in the midst of Israel; the moral details of the conduct of the people which led to their ruin; God's intervention at the end in grace by the Messiah to establish His people in assured blessing by God's own power, according to His purpose.

Two things are connected with these leading subjects: the judgment of the nations, which was necessary for the establishment of Israel in their own land; and the rejection of Christ by the Jews at His first coming into this world.

Finally, Israel had been the centre and keystone of the system that was established after the judgment upon Noah's descendants for their pride at Babel. In this system the throne and temple of God at Jerusalem were: —the one, the seat of divine authority over all nations; and the other, the place where they should go up to worship Him who dwelt between the cherubim. Israel having failed in that obedience which was the condition of their blessing and the bond of the whole order recognised by God in the earth, another system of human supremacy is set up in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. Prophecy treats, therefore, of this unitary system also, and of its relationship with the people of God on the earth.

Guilty of rebellion against God, and associated with Israel in the rejection of Christ, and at the close rising in

revolt against Him, this power is associated with the Jews in the judgment, as being united with them in evil.

What has been here said evidently applies to Old Testament prophecy with which we are here occupied. But this raises the question of the difference of New Testament prophecy. The assembly is not the scene of the earthly government of God, but sitting in heavenly places: hence prophecy cannot be the direct action of the Spirit on its present state, as it was in Israel. The communications are direct from the Father and from the Lord according to the relationship in which it stands to them, just as prophecy was with the Jews. But the Spirit can look forward in the assembly to the time when the decay of the outward system will prepare the way for the introduction of the direct government of God again in the Person of Christ. This in general we find in the Apocalypse, from the beginning of the assembly's declension until it is rejected, and then in the world. Hence we have also the prophecies which announce the decay and ruin of the assembly after the departure of the apostles, as in i Timothy 4:152 Timothy 3 and 2 Thessalonians 2. The decay itself is spoken of in the Epistles of John, Jude, and 2 Peter. Another subject belongs to this and introduces prophecy into the Lord's mouth, with which James connects itself, but does not concern the assembly properly speaking—the connection of Christ as minister of the circumcision with the Jewish people, as in Matthew 24 and parallel passages in Mark and Luke, and even Matthew 10 from v. 15 to the end, where the portion of the residue in their service in Israel is traced on to the Lord's coming. So that in the moral ruin of the assembly on earth, and the history of the residue, we have the connecting links of

these days and Christ’s mission to Israel, with His coming in the last days.

## Hosea

The prophet Hosea prophesied during the same period of time as Isaiah; but he is more occupied with the existing condition of the people, and especially of Israel, although he often speaks of Judah likewise. His prophecy is more simple in its character than that of Isaiah. His style on the contrary, is extremely energetic, and full of abrupt transitions. The reign of that king of Israel, which is given as a date to the prophecy, was outwardly a moment of prosperity to that portion of the land. The prophecy itself will inform us of its moral condition. The patience of God bore long with the rebellion of His people taking pity on their affliction (see 2 Kings 17), even as long as this patience could be a testimony to the real character of the God who exercised it, and did not deny holiness and righteousness, nor give a sanction to sin, so that it was still possible to bless the people, without sacrificing all true testimony (even in the eyes of the heathen) to what God is—in a word, "until there was no remedy."

Jeroboam reigned during a period which commenced some years before the reigns of Uzziah, etc., kings of Judah. Uzziah began his reign fourteen years before the end of Jeroboam's reign. He reigned fifty-two years; Jotham reigned sixteen years; Ahaz, sixteen years; Hezekiah, twenty-nine years. So that Hosea prophesied over fifty years,147 and perhaps longer; being a witness, during those long years, to Israel's rebellion against Jehovah, his heart grieved and broken by the iniquity of a people whom he loved, and whose happiness, as being the people of Jehovah, he had at heart.

The prophecy of Hosea is divided into two parts: the revelation of God's purposes with respect to Israel; and the remonstrances which the prophet addresses to the people in the name of Jehovah. In this latter part he frequently speaks of Israel as a whole; frequently also he distinguishes between Israel or Ephraim and Judah. But I do not see that he addresses himself directly to Ephraim (that is, to the ten tribes). He speaks of Ephraim, but not to Ephraim. Moreover, this is the general character of his prophecy—a kind of prolonged lamentation, expressing his anguish at the people's condition, while unfolding all the dealings of God towards them, except chapter 14, in which he calls Israel to such a repentance as shall take place in the last days.

The first three chapters compose the first part, or the revelations of God's purposes with respect to Israel. From the outset Israel is treated as being in a state of rebellion against God. The prophet was to unite himself to a corrupt woman (a prophetic type, I doubt not), whose conduct was the expression of that of the people. The son to whom she gives birth is a sign, by means of the name which the prophet is to give him, of the judgment of God on the house of Jehu, and on the kingdom of Israel, which should cease to exist. In fact, after the extinction of Jehu's family, although there were several kings, all was confusion in the kingdom of Israel —the kingdom was lost. It is evident, that, although the zeal of Jehu was energetic in extirpating idolatry, so that in His outward government God could sanction and reward it (and, as testimony, must needs do so), yet the motives that governed him were far from pure. God, therefore, while in His public government blessing Jehu,

shews here, where He reveals His thoughts and His real estimate of the work, that He judges righteously and holily; and that that which man brings in of ambition, of cruelty, and even of that false zeal which is but hypocrisy, concealing the gratification of its own will under the name of zeal for Jehovah—all, in a word, which is of self, is not hidden from His eyes, and meets with its just reward, and so much the more from its being masked under the great name of Jehovah.

Jezreel, formerly a witness of the execution of God's judgment on the house of Ahab, should be so now of the ruin of all Israel.

A daughter is afterwards born to the woman whom the prophet has taken. God commands the prophet to call her Lo-ruhamah (that is, "no more mercy"). Not only was judgment executed upon Israel, but apart from sovereign grace —the exercise of which was reserved for the last days—this judgment was final. There was no longer any room for the long-suffering of God towards the kingdom of Israel. Judah should yet be preserved by the power of God.

A second son is named Lo-ammi (that is, "not my people "), for now Jehovah no more acknowledged the people to be His. Judah, who for a time maintained this position, although the ten tribes were lost, has at length by her unfaithfulness plunged the whole nation under the terrible judgment of being no longer the people of God, and Jehovah being no longer their God.

God, having thus briefly but clearly pronounced the judgment of the people, immediately announces, with equal clearness, His sovereign grace towards them. "Nevertheless," saith He, by the mouth of the prophet,

“the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered.” But this grace opens the door to others besides the Jews. “In the place where it was said, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the sons of the living God.”148 The application of this passage to the Gentiles is stated by the apostle in Romans 9:24-26; where he quotes the end of chapter 2 in our prophet, as expressing grace towards the Jews, and the verse we are now considering towards the Gentiles: while Peter (1 Peter 2:10), who speaks only to converted Jews, quotes the end of chapter 2 only. There is no doubt that the Jews will come in, according to this principle in the last days; but the Holy Ghost expresses Himself here— as He has done in a multitude of passages quoted by the apostle —so as to adapt Himself to the admission of the Gentiles, when the time, foreseen of God, should come. But here He goes farther, and announces the return of the children of Judah and of the ten tribes, reunited, and subject to one head, in the great day of the seed of God.149 It is said, “they shall come up out of the land”; and this has been supposed to mean their return from a foreign land; but I have an idea that it is rather that they all come up as one people in their solemn feasts.

Thus the judgment of a corrupt and faithless people, and grace towards the Gentiles, and afterwards towards Israel as a nation, are very plainly announced, in words which, although but few, embrace the whole series of God’s dealings. {Ho 2}

Chapter 2 introduces some new elements of exceeding interest; and, at the same time, a magnificent revelation of the dealings of God in grace, towards Israel. The opening words of the chapter appear to me to recognise

the principle of a remnant, acknowledged by the heart of God as a people, and an object of mercy, while the nation, as a body, is rejected by the Lord. But the thought of Israel's restoration, announced in the last verse of chapter i, gives the remnant its value and its place, according to the counsels of God: "God has not cast off his people whom he foreknew." Nevertheless, Jehovah says by the Holy Ghost to the prophet, not "I have married thy mother, and I will not put her away," but "Say unto your brethren, Ammi (my people), and to your sisters, Ruhamah (received in mercy)"; that is to say, to those who, acted upon by the Spirit of God, really enter in heart into the mind of the prophet—those who possess the character which made Jesus say, These are my brethren and my sisters. Such a position, in the eyes of the prophet, have the people and the beloved of God. It is thus that Peter applies chapter 2:23 to the remnant, that Paul reasons in Romans 9, and that the Lord Himself can take the name of "the true vine."

The prophet, then (he alone could do it), was to acknowledge his brothers and sisters as in relation with God, according to the whole effect of the promise, although that effect was not yet accomplished. But, in fact, with respect to God's dealings, God had to plead with the mother—with Israel, looked at as a whole. God could not own her as married to Him: He would not be her husband. She must repent, if she would not be punished and made bare before the world. Neither would Jehovah have pity on her children, for they were born while she was going after false gods. Israel ascribed all the blessings that Jehovah had poured upon her to the favour of false gods. Therefore Jehovah had forcibly turned her back in her path. And since she knew

not that it was Jehovah who filled her with this abundance, He would take it from her, and leave her naked and destitute, and visit upon her all the days of Baalim, during which Israel had served them and had forgotten Jehovah. But having brought this unfaithful woman into the wilderness, where she must learn that these false gods could not enrich her, Jehovah Himself, having allured her into it, would speak to her heart in grace. There it should be, when she had understood where her sin had brought her and was alone with Jehovah in the wilderness to which He had allured her, that He would comfort her, and give her entrance through grace into the power of those blessings which He alone could bestow.

The circumstance by which God expresses this return to grace is of touching interest. The valley of Achor should be her door of hope. There, where the judgment of God began to fall on the unfaithful people after their entrance into the land, when God acted according to the responsibility of the people—there would He now shew that grace abounded over all their sin. The joy of their first deliverance and redemption should be restored to them. It should be a recommencement of their history in grace, only it should be an assured blessing. The principle of the relationship of Israel with Jehovah should be changed. He would not be as a Master (Baal) to whom she was responsible, but as a Husband who had espoused her. The Baalim should be entirely forgotten. He would take every kind of enemy out of their land, whether wild beast or wicked man, and He would betroth her unto Him in righteousness and in judgment, in lovingkindness, in mercies, and in faithfulness. She should know that it was Jehovah. Israel

being thus betrothed in faithfulness to Jehovah, and such being the assured principles of His relationship with her, the chain of blessing between Jehovah and His people on earth should be secured and uninterrupted. Jehovah should be in connection with the heavens, the heavens with the earth, the earth should yield her blessings, and these should meet all the wants of Israel, the seed of God. And He would sow Israel unto Himself in the earth, and her name should be Ruhamah (that is, received in mercy or grace), Ammi (that is, my people); and Israel should say, “Thou art my God.” In a word, there should be an entire restoration of blessing, but on the ground of grace and of the faithfulness of God. {Ho 3}

Chapter 3 reveals another detail of the people’s history during the time of their rejection, a rejection followed by their return to God. Israel should remain for a long time apart to wait for their God. They should have neither true God nor false god, neither king, nor priest, nor sacrifice; but afterwards they should return, and should seek Jehovah their God, and David their king. That is to say, all Israel should seek the true royalty originally bestowed by God, of which Christ is the fulfilment. They should bow their heart before Jehovah and His goodness in the latter days. {Ho 4}

In chapter 4 we see that the prophet addresses the whole people together. In verse 15 he distinguishes Judah from Israel, warning the former not to follow the apostasy of the latter. He dwells upon the sins (v. 2) of which the people were guilty. Israel is rejected from being a nation of priests unto Jehovah—a glory which had been promised them (Ex. 19). This introduces the judgments of the priests, properly so called, who took

pleasure in the sins of the people, that they might enrich themselves with their sacrifices. The proverb, “Like people, like priest,” was exemplified in them. Whoredom and wine took all sound judgment from the heart; and the people of God asked counsel of their stocks and of their staff, sacrificed in the high places, and committed whoredom there. God would give them up to the fruits of their iniquity.

It is then that God exhorts Judah not to follow this course. Nevertheless, the Spirit of the Lord, in unfolding all the iniquity of Ephraim committed in His sight, shews that Judah also was guilty before Him (v. 10, 13).

Priests, people, king, all are addressed as objects of the judgment; all had given themselves up to violence. Although God had rebuked them, they would not return to Him. Afterwards they should seek Him and not find Him. He would have withdrawn Himself from them. Another sin is imputed to them both. Ephraim had perceived his weakness, the consequence of his sin, and Judah his wound; but they had gone too far from Jehovah to have recourse unto Him; they had sought help from the Assyrian. Could he deliver the sinful people from the judgment of Jehovah? Surely not. God would be to them as a lion that rends its prey; and then He would go and return to His place, until they should acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they would diligently seek Him. {Ho 6}

Chapter 6. This calls forth a touching address from the prophet, in which he entreats the people to return to Jehovah. Faith has always this resource, because it sees the hand of God, its God, in the chastisement, and can appeal to the mercy of a well-known God. In verse 4 the

Spirit expresses the lovingkindness of God towards His rebellious children, and His readiness to meet the smallest movement in their heart towards good. Therefore had God sent unto them the testimony of the prophets—an extraordinary means, as we have seen, for maintaining in grace the relationship of the people with God, and that morally and in reality. In the heart and mind of God it was not a question of outward forms; the moral relationship with God had failed. He had raised up prophets, as a means of relationship with Himself, to bring back the hearts of the people. But, as Adam150 did in the garden of Eden, they had broken the covenant on which the enjoyment of the blessings God had heaped upon them depended. They had acted treacherously towards Him. Jehovah their God was ready to raise them up from their ruin; but if He came in, His presence brought to light that iniquity which formed a moral barrier to this restoration. Thereupon the heart of the prophet overflows anew in lamentation over their iniquity. The prophecy of Hosea is important in this respect, that it furnishes us with the moral picture of the people whom God has judged, the condition of this people which made the judgment inevitable. There is nothing more affecting than this mixture, on God’s part, of reproaches, of lovingkindness, of appeal, of reference to happier moments. But all was in vain. He must needs judge, and have recourse to His sovereign grace, which would bring Israel back to repentance and to Him.

They encouraged the king and the princes in their wickedness. Already the fruit of Israel’s iniquity was seen in the weakness of the people; strangers also devoured them; yet, for all this they did not return to Jehovah. If at times, under the sense of their misery,

they howled upon their beds, they did not cry unto God. What a picture of man under the effect of sin, who will not turn to the Lord! {Ho 8}

In chapter 8 it is especially the daring and continual violation of the law of their God, with which Israel is openly reproached, and which would bring judgment, with eagle swiftness, upon them. Observe here, that the devastation with which Israel is threatened reaches even to the temple of Jehovah. Israel had forsaken the Lord to make altars of their own, and Judah had leant upon an arm of flesh. We may remark here, that the prophecy presents Ephraim, as having entirely forsaken God, and as being plunged in iniquity, and under impending judgment; Judah, as being yet faithful outwardly, although at heart unfaithful too (see chap. 6:11; 8:14; 11:12). Judgment should fall upon them both.

Chapter 9. We have here that touching mixture of affection and judgment which we find again and again in this prophet. Ephraim should not remain in the land which was Jehovah's, for God would not abandon His rights, whatever might be the iniquity of the people. They should go into captivity, and come no more into the house of Jehovah. The prophet and the spiritual man should no longer be a link between them and Jehovah. God would confound them by means of that which should have enlightened and guided them. The prophet should even be a snare to their soul, although formerly a watchman from God. The corruption of Ephraim was as deep as in the days of Gibeah, the history of which is related at the end of the book of Judges; and they should be visited. God had chosen Israel from among the nations to be His delight, and they had gone after Baal-peor, even before they came into the land. If God is

longsuffering, He yet takes knowledge of everything. Ephraim should now be a wanderer among the nations.

At the end of chapter 9 and in chapter 10 the Spirit reproaches Israel with their altars and their golden calves. They should be carried into captivity. Judah should also bear the yoke. The Assyrian should carry away these calves in which Israel had trusted. After all (chap. 11) God still remembers His early love for Jacob; He puts them in mind of all His loving-kindness, His goodness, His care for them. They should not return to their former condition in Egypt; Assyria should be the place of their captivity. But, however great the sin of Israel, the heart of their God cannot forsake His people: He will not destroy them; He is God, and not man; and, finally, He will place the people, trembling now and submissive, once more in their dwellings. {Ho 12}

Chapter 12. The Spirit presents another aspect of the relationship of Israel with God. He would punish Ephraim, and the sins of Judah should be remembered. But He reminds them, that there was a time when Jacob could wrestle with his God, and make supplication to Him, and prevail; that afterwards He found him in Bethel, and there God, even Jehovah, spake to him, and revealed to him His name, which, in fact, He had not done in Peniel. Take notice here of the way in which God enters into all the details of His moral relationship with Israel, in order that the force, the meaning, and the righteousness of the “Lo-ruhamah,” which He pronounces on His people, may be understood. His love for them at first, His tender care, the manner in which He had already been requited at Baal-peor, the horrible iniquity of Gibeah now renewed, their corruption, their idolatry, their refusal to hearken, all is recounted; and

finally, the way in which Jacob had formerly succeeded in turning away wrath, and how God had then revealed Himself to him. Now, the name which He had proclaimed on that occasion was His memorial for ever. Let them then return unto God, and wait on Him continually. But no; all is corruption, and Ephraim will not even confess his sin. He who had brought them up out of Egypt would make them dwell again in tents without a country. God had constantly spoken to them by His prophets, but the iniquity was there. Israel had already been poor—a fugitive and a wanderer. And God had interposed in sovereignty by a messenger of deliverance, when there was no covenant in force on which the people could reckon to deliver them. {Ho 13}

Chapter 13 is the perpetual conflict of the affections and the judgment of God. The thought of their sin calls forth the announcement of the necessary and inevitable judgment. As soon as the judgment is pronounced, the heart of God returns to His own thoughts of grace (see v, 1-4, 7, 9, 12, 14, and the last two of the chapter). Nothing can be finer than this intermingling of the moral necessity for judgment, the just indignation of God at such sin, pleading to induce Israel to forsake their evil ways and seek Jehovah, who would assuredly have compassion; then God’s recurrence to the eternal counsels of His own grace, to secure unto the people whom He loved that of which their iniquity deprived them; and, at the same time, the touching remembrance of former relationship with His beloved people. What condescension, and what grace, on the part of their God! Well had Israel deserved the sentence, “I will no more have mercy,” painful and terrible as it was, in exact proportion to all that God had shewn Himself to be for

Israel. Well can the Lord Jesus say, “How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not.”

The manner also in which God deduces the history of Israel’s iniquity, ever since they came into the wilderness, and presents the means they had enjoyed for returning to Him; the way in which He sets forth His dealings when He had to resist the unfaithful Jacob, yet had blessed him when he wrestled in faith—He who never changes, and who was still the same for Israel; the whole behaviour of Israel being marked by God, borne in mind, and brought forward for the instruction of the people, if by any means it might be possible to spare them— the whole of this picture, in a word, drawn by God Himself, ministers profound instruction to us, teaching us to cleave closely to Him who, however great His patience may be, takes knowledge of all our ways, and has ordained that we should reap that which we have sown.

Nothing also exhibits more fully the prolonged and marvellous patience of the love of God. It is the special object of this prophecy to set forth the moral condition of the people which led to the sentence of Lo-ruhamah, and then to that of Lo-ammi, unfolded in the summary of God’s ways with the people given in chapters 1 to 3—the relationship that exists between the moral dealings of God and His unchangeable counsels—the connection between these counsels and the affections according to which God accomplishes them—the ingratitude of man in his behaviour with respect to these affections—the longsuffering which the love of God causes Him to exercise towards His ungrateful people—at last, that withdrawal on God’s part which left His people a prey to

their own corruption, and to the snares of the enemy. The result is, that the condition of His people obliges God to bring the judgment upon them which their sin called for, when all the warnings of God by His messengers had been unavailing. But this gives place to the accomplishment of the counsels of God, who brings His people to repentance, after having long given them up to the fruits of their own doings, and thus enables them to enjoy the effects of His counsels. {Ho 14}

Chapter 14. It is this last work that we find in chapter 14 of the prophet. Israel, returning to Jehovah, acknowledges his iniquity, and addresses himself to the grace of his God. Thus only could he render Him acceptable worship. His heart, instructed now and cleansed, refuses the help of Asshur, whom he had sought in his unbelief, when he rejected his God who searched his ways; he will no longer lean upon an arm of flesh, nor on carnal strength, and he casts off the false gods to whom he had bowed the knee. His refuge should be with Him in whom the fatherless find mercy. God, therefore, who only waited for the return of His people (a return which He had wrought in their hearts by His grace, when the chastisement, necessary to His moral glory, and to the good of the people, was ended)—God Himself would heal their backsliding; He would love them freely. His anger was turned away from His people. His blessing and grace should be as the dew unto them. Divine fertility and beauty should again be seen in Israel, His people.

Verse 8 I would read thus: “Ephraim [shall say] What have I to do with idols? “Jehovah says, “I have heard him and observed him.” Then Ephraim, “I am like a green fir-tree.” And Jehovah answers, “From me is thy fruit

found.” There is repentance, which Jehovah acknowledges; and the joyful consciousness of blessing, which God causes to be felt, proceeds from Himself, who both secures and augments it. The last verse teaches us that which we have already endeavoured to point out, namely, that this history makes known the ways of God, which the wise—divinely taught in heart—will readily understand. “For the ways of Jehovah are right.” His path of action is straight onwards, however great His mercy may be. The just, sustained and helped by the strength of God, can walk there; but the transgressors, through the very power that is present, shall fall therein.

There is indeed no prophet who gives the dealings of God, as a whole, so completely as Hosea.

147 The reign of Jotham was as to some part, possibly the most of it, coincident with that of Uzziah, who was put aside as a leper.

148 We may observe that it is not said, “they shall be my people “(an expression less suitable to Gentiles), but “the sons of the living God “; which is precisely the privilege bestowed by grace on those who are brought to know the Lord since the resurrection of Christ.

149 This is the meaning of “Jezreel”: or, more exactly, “God will sow. ”

150 It should be read, “But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." Adam, in Hebrew, is a proper name and a generic name; but the latter generally with the article, The Adam, as in Genesis 1:27. It is to this passage Paul refers in Romans 5:14.

# Joel

The import of the book of Joel is sufficiently plain, although a few passages may be obscure.

The Spirit of God takes the opportunity afforded by an unparalleled scarcity, caused by the invasion of innumerable armies of insects, to rouse the attention of the people with respect to the day of Jehovah; that great and terrible day which was to come, and in which His power should be manifested in judgment—in which He, who had shewn long patience, would at length interpose to vindicate the glory of His name, and deliver it from the reproach cast thereon by the sin of His people, and to take vengeance on all that magnified itself against Him. That which is here presented to us as the rod of Jehovah is the northern army—the same that we so often find in the prophets—the Assyrian. But, in the end, it is God Himself who, after having chastised His people by means of this enemy, intervenes for his destruction, and for the judgment of all the nations gathered round Jerusalem.

In examining the prophecy, the reader may observe that it distinguishes between the famine that ushered in the day of Jehovah, and that day itself. We have only to compare chapters 1:15, and 2:1, 11. The state of famine and desolation, interpreted by the Spirit of prophecy, calls on the people to present themselves before Jehovah, because the day of Jehovah was at hand. {Joe 2:1}

Chapter 2:1 sounds the alarm, because the day is near. The day is then described as the invasion of a people, the like of whom had never been seen by Israel or the

land. It was, in fact, the army of Jehovah. His power was with it as His rod. The voice of Jehovah was heard before it; the day of Jehovah announced itself as there (chap. 2:11). We find an instance here of that which is usual in prophetic teaching—some event which should act on the conscience of the people, taken up by the Spirit of prophecy, no doubt, to awaken their conscience at the very time of the event, but far more with the purpose of using it as a picture of some event in the last days of much greater moment. The judgment of God, already deserved by the people, and suspended by His longsuffering over their heads, awaits the hour in which this longsuffering will have no more effect, will become thenceforward useless, and in which the counsels of His wisdom shall have arrived at their development. The Spirit of God warns the people of this judgment: they should have given heed to it at that very time; but He describes for future days the instruments of God's vengeance, when He shall actually execute the judgment. Thus chapter 1 of Joel takes up the ravages of these insects, which, it seems, had caused a frightful scarcity, to act upon the conscience of the people at the time of the prophecy; but from the beginning of chapter 2 the prophecy throws itself into the future, and introduces a people, who, in their turn, will ravage the land of Israel in the last days. Yet, at the commencement of the chapter, it is only the alarm that is sounded; but with the announcement that the day is nigh at hand.

We are reminded here of the ordinance in Numbers 10, in verse 9 of which it is commanded to sound an alarm, or blow loudly with the trumpets, when the enemy should be in the land, and Jehovah would remember the people. In verse 7, if the congregation was to be

gathered together, they were to blow the trumpet, but not to sound an alarm. Thus, in Joel 2:1, an alarm is sounded in Zion. A great and strong people, who devour the earth, are in the land. There is but one thing that gives hope (and that one is in itself the most terrible thing of all)—Jehovah conducts this devouring people. It is His army. Faith takes hope from this. He who has recognised the trumpet of God, he who, awakened by the Spirit of prophecy when it sounded an alarm, and described this terrible evil beforehand (and it is the Spirit alone who does so) in its true colours, as Jehovah's doing—he, who has understood that it is God's judgment, that Jehovah is in it, can come before Jehovah according to His own ways, and plead with Jehovah according to His love for His people. This is the true character of faith in all times. It is the especial position of the remnant in the last days.

The day of Jehovah actually impending, and its true meaning understood, through the intelligence given by the Spirit of prophecy, is a call to repentance at the moment when repentance is necessary, at the moment ordained of God for His immediate intervention on behalf of His people. These are the ways of God. He to whom the moment is known acts outwardly to force His people to take heed; and He acts in testimony to direct their hearts. It was the same thing in the days of Jesus. The testimony of God was there before the terrible judgment which soon fell upon the people. He who had ears to hear profited by it, and enjoyed the effect of God's intervention in a deliverance which He has proffered, yet better, though of another character, than that which Israel shall enjoy in the last days. "The Lord added daily to the assembly such as should be saved."

Verses 12-14 give us the prophet's testimony, calling them to repentance, in view of the chastisements that were hanging over the people. In verse 15 the trumpet is sounded on God's part to gather the people together, according to Numbers 10:7, to plead with Him that He would turn away His wrath, to address themselves to Him, as One whose judgments were necessarily directed by Himself. Oh! how good it is to have to do with God, and to see Him in the judgment, although He is a consuming fire. It was thus David judged when he had numbered the people.

The humiliation, we perceive, was to be universal and complete, for the priests themselves are called to stand outside the sanctuary, to cry with the people unto Jehovah, appealing to His faithfulness, that the heathen might not say, "Where is their God? "as the Jews said to Jesus. Jehovah would hear His people thus humbled. He would fill their land with plenty, and they should no longer be a reproach among the heathen; the northern army, which had devoured the land like locusts, should be driven out by the way of the east, judged on account of their pride, because they magnified themselves to do great things. But it should be Jehovah who would do great things, delivering them thus from all their fears. A full and abundant blessing should be poured upon the land of Israel; the children of Zion should rejoice in Jehovah their God; the people of Jehovah should never again be ashamed. They should receive the abundance of all the years which had failed. They should know assuredly that Jehovah was among them—He, Jehovah, their God, and not another; and they should never be ashamed. The blessing, and He who bestowed the

blessing, should thus secure them from being a reproach among the nations.

But this was not all. This was temporal blessing—the re-establishment of Israel in the blessing of former days, on the ground of grace, which would prevent their losing it. But there was a new thing to be bestowed upon them. God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The young men and the old men of the people should have visions and dreams: even on the servants and the handmaidens should this rain from heaven descend. Verse 30151 resumes the subject in another aspect, and does not follow in direct succession. Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah there should be signs and wonders in the heavens, and on earth the terror of Jehovah should be felt, and whosoever should call on the name of Jehovah should be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem should be deliverance, as Jehovah had said, and in the remnant whom Jehovah should call.

These, then, are the principal events of the last days, briefly but clearly set forth: a powerful enemy coming from the north, as the instrument of Jehovah's judgment, ravaging the whole land; judgment upon the people as an earthly people, according to their former position of temporal blessing in relationship with God; the people being called to repentance, by the Spirit of prophecy, in order that God might turn away this scourge. On their repentance God would restore temporal blessing, and drive away the northern army and destroy it. The reproach that rested on the people because of their sins should cease for ever. A double order of events is then announced, giving a precise statement with regard to the immediate relationship between God and the people; and that in two respects. First, the temporal blessing,

granted to the people now restored to the favour of God, should be accompanied by a gift yet more excellent, and more expressive of His love. The Holy Spirit should be abundantly poured out; the most simple and the most humble should partake of it. But, in the second place, 152 before the coming of the great day of Jehovah He would send marvellous signs, and whosoever should call on His name should be saved. It would be the returning in heart to Jehovah which He would own; for in that dreadful day of the wrath of God there should be deliverance in Zion, and in Jerusalem His chosen city. It is He who intervenes in judgment; He would remember mercy: there should be a remnant called by His grace. The accomplishment of all this is evidently in the last days, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and He will manifest His government in righteousness and in goodness on the earth, though the repentant remnant get the spiritual blessing in a christian way, as in like manner that of the new covenant. The whole tenor of the prophecy, I think, makes it plain that Joel does not speak of the beast and Antichrist, but of the powers of the heathen from outside the apostate system. It will be remembered that it is said in Daniel 9 that because of the protection of idols there will be a desolator. Joel thus speaks, not of him who makes a covenant with Israel, but of this desolator. Hence Jehovah roars out of Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem. The judgment is not from heaven against the beast and his armies, but from Jerusalem against the enemies and desolators of Israel.

But there is still something to be pointed out here. The Spirit of God has taken care entirely to finish His subject. In verse 27 the deliverance from the Northern

army is complete, and temporal blessing is so bestowed that Israel may enjoy it permanently, under grace. Jehovah is there, and His people shall never be ashamed. From verse 28 to 32 is quite apart, and this for every important reasons. On the repentance of the people the Holy Spirit should be bestowed; and, before the execution of the judgment, whosoever called on the name of Jehovah should be saved. Now the rejection of the Messiah necessarily brought in judgment on the Jew (although other counsels of God were to be accomplished with respect to the assembly, outside the Jewish system); their temple has been given up to the power of the enemy, who, as the army of Jehovah was to destroy these murderers, and to burn up their city. The last days therefore are come, the end of the age, with respect to the Jews, although it is all to resume its course for a little season for the definitive judgment, when the counsels of God with regard to the assembly are fulfilled. But if judgment thus hasted, mercy could not delay in coming and anticipating it. The Holy Ghost was given, according to this promise, to the remnant who in those days hearkened to the call of Jehovah, and it was poured out upon all flesh. Deliverance was found in Zion, although the redeemed (those who were to be saved) were translated into the assembly, the time for resuming the government of God not being yet come—the time when He to whom it was given should associate those with Himself who should have learnt to suffer with Him, that they might also be glorified together. Then the final accomplishment of all this mystery should take place—the great and terrible day of Jehovah: Christ should take His great power, and should reign.

What we have been saying will explain the true importance of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the place which that destruction holds in the development of God's dealings; and the connection, with respect to His dealings on earth, between this destruction and that which took place on the day of Pentecost.

There is yet one thing to be remarked here, namely, that in view of the counsels of grace towards the Gentiles, the Spirit of God makes use of language that leaves the door open to them. The Spirit is poured out "on all flesh," and "whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved." The apostle Paul frequently employs this last expression in this sense.

It is interesting to recall here the different occasions on which the expression "all flesh "is used. It implies, as to its full accomplishment, the important fact that will take place at the end of this age, namely, that God will come out of the narrow circle of Jewish ordinances to act with regard to all mankind upon the earth. This is already true morally by means of the gospel. But it will be true as to the government of God at the end. Christ, in coming down to the earth, came into the narrow fold (although His work, as well as His personal presence, had a much wider extent), and He led His sheep out of it; and called other sheep also to form them into one flock, saved, set free, and finding pasture. The gospel afterwards was sent out into the whole world, in connection with Jerusalem or Galilee (I refer to its administration by means of the twelve),153 and in connection with heaven by means of Paul. God will, in fact, deal at length with all flesh in His governmental power.

Isaiah 40:5. “The glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Here the mind of the Spirit goes forward to the last days when Christ shall be revealed. But Jehovah, who was to bless, is come, and the divine testimony in the wilderness has been borne, even as the blood of the new covenant has been shed, although Israel, as yet, has not acknowledged it. Verse 6, 7. “All flesh” —even the people—“is as grass.” Israel has not yet learned this, but the remnant have been blessed.

In Isaiah 66:16, God pleads “by fire and by his sword with all flesh.” It is the judgment that extends to all.

Here, in Joel, it is the Spirit poured out upon all flesh, to manifest the presence of God, and the blessing that rests upon all men, and is no longer confined to the Jews.

We may compare the warning in Zechariah 2:13; the millennial song of Christ, Psalm 145:21: “Let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever”; the judgment of the apostates, Isaiah 66:24: “They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” See also Genesis 6:12. {Joe 3}

In Joel 3 the Spirit develops, with more detail, the circumstances of the last days—those days, in which God would bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem. This epoch precedes the time of peace and blessing, in which the curse shall be entirely taken away. It is the judgment of the nations, a judgment necessary for the vindication of the rights of God, with respect to His oppressed people, and for the manifestation, in the sight of the nations, of that which He is in His government of the earth. The ten tribes are not here in question, nor the general restoration of Israel. Before

the full blessing of His people, God must resume His immediate government of them, in the same place where He had given it up, again taking possession of the seat of that government—a seat which He had chosen Himself. There will He plead in His power with all the nations that dispute His rights, manifesting Himself in the midst of His people, and acting as dwelling with them, maintaining their rights as belonging to Himself. Israel is His inheritance. The word “Jehoshaphat” means “the judgment, or the sceptre, of Jehovah or Jah.” There, in judgment, He pleads with the nations for His people, whom they had scattered; and for His land, which they had parted.

He recounts all the grievances of His people, as done to Himself. By their means the same evils should be recompensed in judgment upon the nations that inflicted them.

The nations are called upon to prepare for war, they are all to assemble, they are to wake up, quitting their peaceful occupations, and come to the valley of Jehoshaphat. There Jehovah will sit to judge all the heathen round about.

And if the Gentiles are to awaken all their mighty men for the day of God, God on His part will cause His mighty ones to come down (v. 11).

But, however great the pride of the men of war, it was, after all, the judgment of God—the sickle of God reaping the earth. His press should be full, His vats should overflow; for the iniquity was great. In the Apocalypse the harvest is distinguished from the vintage, the first being the judgment that separates the good from the wicked and vice versa; the second, the execution of

vengeance. Here it appears to me that the two together present the general idea of the execution of the judgment, although the symbol of the winepress is the more forcible. What multitudes in that day should learn the consequences of their contempt of the word of grace, and of the pride that raised them up in rebellion against Jehovah of hosts! All governmental order, its grandeur and its power, should disappear before the judgment of God.

But Jehovah Himself should resume the reins of government on earth, and cause His voice to be heard from Jerusalem. The heavens and earth should tremble at His intervention. But if this intervention was the judgment of the rebellious, He who intervened, Jehovah, would be the hope of His people— Himself the strength of the children of Israel. And thus should they know Him to be Jehovah their God; dwelling in Zion, His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be holy, strangers should no more pass through it, profaning it as their prey. Nor this alone; but there should be abundant blessing on the land of His people; wine should flow down from their mountains, and milk from their hills. The rivers of Judah should flow with waters, and a fountain should come forth of the house of Jehovah, and water the valley of Shittim (compare Ezek. 47 and Zech. 14:8). Egypt and Edom should be made desolate; but Judah and Jerusalem should dwell in everlasting blessing, for Jehovah should have cleansed them. We perceive that it is effectual and sovereign grace.

It will be remarked also, that this prophecy does not go beyond the blessing of Judah and Jerusalem; that the scene of the judgment of the nations refers to the judgment accomplished in the land of Judea, where their

armies will be assembled—accomplished to put Jehovah in possession of His throne upon earth; or rather, He takes possession of His throne by the execution of this judgment, and afterwards He bestows blessing on the people whom, in grace, He has cleansed. One devastating army is especially pointed out—that which comes from the north. It appears also that the desolation of the land, before the intervention of Jehovah, will be very great, so that the people will be a reproach among the nations; but woe unto those who should despise the people of God!

If this army announces the day of Jehovah, Jehovah Himself will interpose, that it may be in truth His own; and, in interposing, He delivers the people whom He loves.

151 Verses 28, 29 are a short independent prophecy, and so are the verses from 30 to the end of the chapter, and still more so. Verses 28, 29 promise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit consequent on the repentance of the nation, which was also accompanied by temporal blessings. The repentance is the point of departure for both. So the partial fulfilment of Acts 2 was on those who repented, though the temporal blessings could not come on the nation. Thus, though there was that which was analogous in the destruction of Jerusalem already accomplished, signs and wonders will come before the great and notable day of Jehovah yet to come. The blood of the new covenant was shed and all things ready; but the nation would not repent and could not get the blessing. The remnant got the spiritual part of it with all flesh; the Jews will, all, when they say, “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” The Holy Spirit,

who foresaw all this, has ordered accordingly the structure of the prophecy.

152 This is an entirely distinct prophecy, which goes by itself, preceding the day of Jehovah, as indeed is clearly stated, which day ushers in the blessing previously spoken of. The order in the last days will be repentance, deliverance by the day of Jehovah, temporal blessing, the Holy Ghost. Before the day of Jehovah signs will take place. This last stands therefore necessarily apart, as the calling on the name of Jehovah of course precedes the deliverance.

153 As to this mission we have only the general statement of Mark, that they went everywhere (Mark 16:20). In verse 15 they are told to go into all the world. In Matthew 28 they are told in Galilee to disciple all nations—all the Gentiles—but this is another mission. As regards the passage in Mark, the reader will remark that the questioned passage, from verse 9, begins with Jerusalem and the ascension, as in Luke; in verse 7, they are told to go into Galilee, as in Matthew. These are distinct missions. In point of fact, wherever they went, the mission to the Gentiles (Gal. 2) was given up to Paul and Barnabas, who had already been on it. So far, the Matthew commission dropped. Mark's is individual, and a question of salvation; Matthew's is not. Luke's is carried out by the apostles, as the speeches shew throughout the Acts, only the Gentile part was given up to Paul.

## Amos

The prophecy of Amos is one of those that speak of the moral condition of the people, and especially of Israel, who, as we have already seen in the historical books, represents more particularly the people as such; while Judah was but as an appanage of the house of David, although containing always a remnant of the people.

This prophecy, which does not extend so far down in the history of Israel as that of Hosea, is less fervent than the latter; sin is not pursued with that consuming fire of jealousy and of moral revenge, which characterises the burning and broken style of the prophet Hosea. Nothing, doubtless, can be more decided against evil than Amos; but, although very simple, he speaks, as it were, from higher ground. In Hosea we see the anguish of heart produced by the Holy Ghost, in a man who could not endure evil in the people whom he loved as being the people of God; while in Amos there is more of the calmness of God's own judgment. There is much less detail with respect to sin. Certain prominent transgressions of a special character are pointed out, and the most complete and absolute judgment is proclaimed. In the outset Jehovah, proclaiming His own rights from the place of His own throne, roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem. Afterwards, quite at the end, the restoration of the house of David and of Israel likewise is announced. We may remark that, before the judgment of Israel and Judah is declared, that also of the surrounding nations is pronounced; and this, on account of their hostile and cruel behaviour to the people of Israel, and on account of that also which was

essentially cruel in them, and opposed even to the sentiments of humanity; for God takes cognizance of all these things.

Syria is to be carried away captive into Assyria. The means employed for the judgment of the others is not mentioned. Gaza and the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, pass successively in review; and, finally, Judah and Israel. God enters into much more detail with respect to the sins of His people. He had indeed specified that which characterised each nation judged; but with Israel He goes into detail. We may here again remark—that which we have seen elsewhere —that these judgments of Jehovah fall upon the nations that are established on the territory promised to Abraham, and belonging, according to this gift of God, to the people of Israel. God purges His land of that which defiles it, and consequently alas! of Judah and Israel likewise; but at the same time asserting and retaining His own rights, which He will exercise in grace on Israel's behalf in the last days. We see here the folly of the hope entertained by the enemies of the people, in seeking their ruin with the idea of finding their own advantage in it. Doubtless God can chastise His people, for He must make His own character manifest; but the malice of their enemies brings His judgment upon them also.

With respect to Judah, Jehovah especially points out their contempt of the law and disobedience of His commandments.

In Israel the sin specified has a character more independent of the law (the reason of which is easily understood, if we consider the condition of that people),

and connected with that departure from the fear of God, which allows man to give way to the selfishness of his own heart, and to oppress those whom God regards. They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They care not for the sufferings of the poor; but even at the altar—supposed, at least, to be that of Jehovah—they lie down upon garments pledged through poverty, and make merry with the fines inflicted for transgressions. Nevertheless God had brought them up out of Egypt, had destroyed their enemies to put them in possession of their lands, and had given them the tokens of an especial relationship with Himself, whether by persons set apart for Himself, or by those whom He had sent as messengers to them; but they had caused the former to defile themselves, and had commanded the latter not to prophesy in the name of Jehovah. The heart of God was crushed, as it were, by their sins; and His judgment should overtake them. The charge of despising the poor is often repeated in this prophecy (chap. 2:7; 4:1; 5:11; 8:6); and this in special connection with Israel.

After having specified each one of the nations that were found on the territory promised to Abraham, God addresses Judah and Israel together—the whole family whom He had brought up from Egypt. These only had Jehovah known of all the families of the earth; therefore would He punish them for their iniquities: a solemn but very simple principle. If we are in the place of testimony —of testimony to God—it is needful that this testimony should be in accordance with the heart and the principles of God—that it should not falsify His character —that our walk should agree with our position. And the more immediate this testimony is, the more jealous will God be with respect to His glory and our faithfulness.

Judgment begins at His house. If there was evil in the city, it was that Jehovah had interfered in judgment.154 Two cannot walk together except they are agreed. Two important declarations are attached to this principle. On the one hand, if God intervene and make His great and terrible voice to be heard, there is a cause: on the other hand, God would not act without warning His people. He would do nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets. But the lion had roared: should they not tremble? Jehovah had spoken; the prophet could not be silent. This was the condition of Israel. It is this latter kingdom that, for the moment, the Spirit of God particularly addresses. There should be left but a few little fragments of them, even like the morsels of a lamb that might be taken out of the lion's mouth after he had devoured it. Finally, in speaking here of Israel, Jehovah specifies their idolatrous altars, and declares that all the glory of the people shall perish. We may again remark, here, the way in which the kingdom of Israel is taken for the whole people, although Judah is spoken of and judged in its turn (see v. 9, 12-14).

With the exception of the first two chapters, which go together, each chapter in Amos is a distinct prophecy. {Am 4}

Chapter 4 presents the oppression of the poor, and the worship which the children of Israel rendered at will in the places they had chosen. God also would act as He saw fit. He had indeed already done so; nevertheless they had not returned unto Him. He had repeated His chastisements in the most significant manner, but in vain. Therefore He calls on Israel to prepare to meet Himself. {Am 5}

Chapter 5. After having deplored the ruin of Israel, He contrasts the places of their false worship with Jehovah, the Creator, and exhorts them to come unto Him and live. But Israel put off the thought of the evil day. Evil had the upper hand. The wise man kept silence, for it was an evil day. Nevertheless the Spirit calls to repentance. It might be that Jehovah would have compassion on the affliction of Joseph. Yet there were those in the midst of all this iniquity who professed to desire the day of Jehovah. The prophet tells them that it should be a day of terror and of judgment, of darkness and not of light. They should fall from one disaster into another. Jehovah took no pleasure in their offerings and sacrifices; He could not bear with their solemn feasts; He desired judgment and righteousness. But the people had been the same from the beginning: it was not Himself that they worshipped in the wilderness, but their Moloch and their Remphan, which they had made to themselves; and they should be carried away captive, beyond even the land that was now the object of their dread. This last appeal of the prophet involves deeply important instruction. The evil principle which was their ruin had been amongst them from the beginning: the interposition of God’s power had checked it, and had turned aside its effect; but there it was, and with the decline of faith and godliness, when human interests no longer restrained it, the same evil had reappeared. The calves of Dan and Bethel were but a renewal of the calf they made in the wilderness. The people of Israel shewed themselves in their true character, notwithstanding all the longsuffering of God; and the judgment dates from the first act that displayed what they had in their heart. Here again we see all Israel looked at morally as one, when the ten tribes are spoken

of. But this is made evident in a clear and striking manner by the whole prophecy. {Am 6}

Chapter 6 dwells upon the false confidence that deceived the heads of Israel. A similar judgment to that of Calneh and Hamath might fall upon Israel. Their chief men gave themselves up to luxury, as though all were prosperity. They had no sense of the affliction of Joseph. They should be the first to go into captivity. Jehovah would give up Israel to desolation. He would abhor the excellency of Jacob. For they trusted in that which was but vanity—in their golden calf. But He whom they despised would raise up an enemy that should afflict them from Hamath to the borders of Egypt. {Am 7}

Chapter 7. God had long waited patiently. More than once He had been on the point of giving Israel up to judgment. The intercession of the prophet, that is to say, of the Spirit of Christ which wrought in the prophets (an intercession, indeed, that owed its efficacy to His sufferings; see Psalm 18), had arrested the scourge. But now Jehovah would arise to judgment, with the measuring-line in His hand, and nothing should turn Him aside. With the house of Jehu Israel should fall. In fact this is what took place. It may be that the preceding judgments apply to the downfall of the family of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; and to that of the family of Ahab. Israel had been raised up again after each of those events, but not so after the house of Jehu had fallen.

A prophecy like this was out of place in the king’s chapel. A religion, arranged by the policy of man without the fear of God, cannot endure the testimony of truth. Bethel was the house of the kingdom. The priest

reports it all to the king. Let the prophet go away to Judah. There Judah was owned, and the truth might be proclaimed; but this was not the place for such unpalatable truths. The king was the ruler in all religious matters: man was master. But Jehovah does not renounce His own rights. Amos was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. He had not this function from man, nor from the desire of his own heart. Jehovah, in His sovereign will, had appointed him, and his word was the word of Jehovah. The priest, who opposed it, should suffer the consequences of his rashness, and Israel should surely go into captivity. {Am 8}

Chapter 8 renews the declaration, that the end of Israel was come on account of their iniquity. God would no longer pass it over. The prophet announces likewise the distress the people should come into from being deprived of all guidance from Jehovah. They who trusted in the vanities that Israel had set up for themselves should fall, and never rise again. {Am 9}

Chapter 9 presents Jehovah Himself as directing the judgment in such a manner that Israel should in no wise escape it, God treating them as He would the nations that were strangers to Him, as the Philistines or the Syrians, whom, in His providence, He had brought from other lands. Nevertheless God did not forget Israel. He executed the judgment Himself, so that, while Israel should be sifted among all the nations, not one grain should be lost. The wicked who did not believe in the judgment should be overtaken by it.

In that day (that is, in the day of Jehovah’s final judgment) He would not raise up the tabernacle of Jeroboams and of Jehus, although He had given them a

place for a time during His longsuffering government; but (fulfilling His own purposes of grace) He would raise up the tabernacle of David His elect, and rebuild it in its glory. He would raise it entirely from its ruins, that His seed might possess the remnant of Edom and of all the heathen that are brought to know the name of Jehovah. 155 At that time Jehovah would also bring Israel back from their captivity, and re-establish them in full blessing. They should enjoy the fruits of their land. Jehovah would plant His people upon their land, and they should be no more pulled up. It was the land which He Himself had given them.

Thus we find, in the prophet Amos, the judgment of the kingdom of Israel; but this judgment applied to the whole of Israel as a nation, and their assured restoration, in connection with the re-establishment of the house of David in the last days—a re-establishment accomplished by God, which nothing should again overthrow. He would plant them, and none should pluck them up: a testimony which assuredly has never been fulfilled, and as assuredly will be; Israel shall be in their own land and never again removed.

In general, then, this prophet sets before us, not great public events in the government of God, but the ways of God with His people, in view of their moral condition; the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, being looked at as representing all Israel as a responsible nation, the link of their condition at that time with their original position (when, through the grace and power of Jehovah, they had come up out of Egypt), being the golden calves of Sinai and of Bethel.

The prophecy closes, as we have seen, with the re-establishment in blessing of the whole people, under the house of David, according to the sovereign grace of God who changes not. It should be, for the whole nation, the sure mercies of David.

154 Though some take it as moral evil which would lead Jehovah to interfere—then shall Jehovah do nothing.

155 This passage is quoted by the apostle James in Acts 15. Here (in Amos) it is quite clear that it applies to the last days, and it has sometimes been attempted to apply it to the same period in Acts also, laying stress on the words, “After this.” But I am persuaded that those who do so have not rightly apprehended the meaning of the apostle’s argument. He quotes this passage for one expression alone, without dwelling on the remainder; and this is the reason, I doubt not, that he is satisfied with the translation of the Septuagint. This expression is, “All the Gentiles upon whom my name is called.” The question was, whether Gentiles could be received without becoming Jews. After having affirmed this principle, he shews that the prophets agreed with his declaration. He does not speak at all of the fulfilment of the prophecy; he only shews that the prophets sanction the principle, that Gentiles should bear the name of Jehovah—”All the Gentiles upon whom my name is called.” There would then be such. God knew all His works from the beginning of the world, whatever might be the time of their manifestation.

## Obadiah

Edom is frequently spoken of in the prophets. This people, who, as well as Jacob, were descended from Isaac, had an inveterate hatred to the posterity of the younger son who were favoured as the people of Jehovah. Psalm 137 tells of this hatred in the seventh verse. In Psalm 83 Edom forms a part of the last confederacy against Jerusalem, the object of which was to cut off the name of Israel from the earth. Ezekiel 35 dwells upon this perpetual hatred, shewn from the first in the refusal to give them a passage through the land, and upon the desire of Edom to possess the land of Israel. Our prophet enlarges upon the details of the manifestation of this hatred, which burst forth when Jerusalem was taken. It is possible that there was something of this sort when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Edom is united with Babylon in Psalm 137 as the inveterate enemy of Jerusalem.

But it is evident that the prophecy extends to other events. Jerusalem shall again be attacked by these Gentiles, who seek to satiate their hatred to the city of Jehovah, and to gratify their ambitious purposes. Edom plays a sorrowful part on this occasion, and its judgment is proportioned to its sin. The nation is entirely cut off. When the rest of the world rejoice, the desolation of Edom shall be complete. Edom had purposed to take advantage of the attack of the nations upon Jerusalem, to possess itself of the land, and had united with them to take part in the attack, by lying in wait—as was natural to a people whose habits were those of the Arab tribes—to cut off the retreat of the fugitives, laying hands, when

possible, on their substance, and giving them up also to their enemies. The men of Edom knew not that the day of Jehovah was upon all the nations, and that this conduct would but bring down an especial curse on their own heads. Their judgment is thus described: God takes away their wisdom, their pride deceives them, their strength fails them, in order that they may be entirely cut off. We have seen them joining the last confederacy against Jerusalem, and taking part in the destruction of that city. But it appears that their confederates deceive them (v. 7); and Edom, thus ill-treated by former allies, become “small among the heathen “(v. 1, 2). The nations are the first instruments of Jehovah’s vengeance. But another and yet more terrible event is linked with the name of Edom, or Idumea, and is the occasion of Jehovah’s judgment falling upon that people. It is in Edom that the armies of the nations will be assembled in the last days. We have the account of this in Isaiah 34 and 63. See Isaiah 34:5, 6, the rest of the chapter displaying the judgment of desolation in the strongest possible language. Isaiah 63 shews us Jehovah Himself returning from the judgment, having trodden the winepress alone. Of the peoples there were none with Him.

Finally, Israel itself shall be an instrument in the hand of Jehovah for the judgment of Esau (Obad. 18). The destruction in Isaiah relates especially to the armies of the nations, which, in their movements, find themselves assembled in Edom. The part which Israel takes in the judgment is on the people in general; and, I suppose, afterwards, when Christ is at their head as the Messiah (compare v. 17, 18); and Isaiah 11:14 appears to confirm

this view of the passage. At all events it takes place after Israel's blessing.

That none shall be left of Edom is also declared in Obadiah 5, 6, 9, 18; Jeremiah 49:9, 10-22; and it will be observed that there is no restoration of a remnant, as in the case of Elam and others (Jer. 49:39). A part of the latter prophecy establishes the same facts as that of Obadiah, in nearly the same words. The same judgment is pronounced in Ezekiel 35, and in Isaiah 34, already quoted. We see in these chapters, as well as in Isaiah 63, that it is the controversy of Jerusalem, that Jehovah pleads with Edom (Ezek. 35:12; Isaiah 34:8; 63:4). In these passages Jehovah does not forget His thoughts of love towards Zion and His people.

He closes the prophecy of Obadiah with the testimony of the effect of His call to repentance, of His unchangeable faithfulness to His promises and unwearying love. Power and might against those formidable enemies should be given to Israel, who should in peace possess the territory which their enemies had invaded. Deliverance should be on Mount Zion; from thence Mount Esau should be judged, and the kingdom should be Jehovah's.

As corrupt power had been judged in Babylon, so in Edom hatred to the people of God.

# Jonah

The prophet Jonah gives us the opportunity of applying his history to many sentiments that arise in the human heart in all ages. His personal history—the history of a man who was upright in the main, but who had not courage to follow out the will of God boldly—is so intermingled with his prophecy, as to make this individual application easy and natural. Nevertheless the history of Jonah is that of one who bears testimony on the part of God, rather than that of a believer in his ordinary life. It is the history of the human heart, when the testimony of God towards the world has been committed to it, and that of the sovereign and governmental dealings of God in connection with the workings of that heart. It is on this account that we find in the history of Jonah a picture of the history of the Jews in this respect, and even in some respects of that of the Messiah; only that the latter entered into it in grace, and was always perfect in it. I shall point out the leading features which the Spirit of God has been pleased to develop in this narrative, deeply interesting as it is in this aspect.

It is evident that in this prophecy the prophetic events are but the occasion, and, as it were, the frame of the great principles that flow from them; or rather the prophetic event. For the prophecy is confined to the threat of the destruction of Nineveh in forty days: a threat whose accomplishment was averted by the repentance of that city. Jonah’s history forms the chief portion of the book.

Nineveh—which represents the world in its natural greatness, full of pride and iniquity, regardless of God and of His authority—had deserved the righteous judgment of God. This is the occasion of all the development of God's dealings that we find in this book. Jonah is called to announce this judgment. The wretched tendency of the nature of man, to whom the testimony of God is committed, is to invest himself with the importance of the message with which he is charged. That God may so invest him in His grace we see in the history of that grace; that the man who bears the message should do so is but pride and vanity. The result with such is, that they cannot bear with the grace that God exhibits towards others, nor with any communication of His mind or nature through any other means than their own, even although it should be in grace. It is they who must do the thing themselves; it is they who must have the glory of it; and thus all their thoughts of God are limited to their own point of view—to the portion committed to them of God's message. Compare that which we have seen in the case of Moses and of Elijah, those eminent servants of God. The sense of that supremacy in God which can pardon is too much for the heart; it cannot be borne. The self-renunciation that seeks only to do the will of God, be it what it may, leaves God all His glory, and, if He glorifies Himself by shewing grace, can bless Him for it most heartily. Without this we shall like to wield the sword of His vengeance— a thing more in harmony, alas! with our natural hearts, and more adapted to increase our own importance.

"Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, as Elias did?" is the natural expression of the

heart. For vengeance is the manifestation of power. Grace leaves sinful man to enjoy mercy—will not bring in power, but spares those against whom power might have been exercised. On the other hand, it is God alone who can shew grace.

The threat of vengeance is connected in the mind with the man who has received authority to announce it. The message and the messenger are both feared. A pardoned man is at the time more occupied with his own joy, and with Him that pardoned, than with the messenger of pardon. Moreover, when grace is shewn, it connects itself with the alarm inspired by the threatened judgment. And if the messenger be not himself imbued with the spirit of love, he feels himself in the presence of a God who is above his thoughts; and he is afraid of Him, because he does not know Him. He fears also for his own importance, if this God should be more gracious than the narrowness of his heart would desire and the message committed to him expressed.

Such was the case with Jonah, although he feared God.

He flees from the presence of Jehovah, feeling that he cannot reckon upon Him to satisfy the little exigencies of his contracted heart (compare chap. 1:3; 4:2).

God is felt to be above the desires of man’s heart. On the other hand, the truth of God pleases us when we can invest ourselves with it for our own importance. Thus it was with Israel.

Israel were the depositary of God’s testimony in the world, and gloried in it as clothing themselves with honour, and Israel could not bear with the exercise of grace to the Gentiles. It was by their opposition to this that the Jews filled up the measure of their iniquity to

bring the wrath of God upon them (compare Isaiah 43:10; 1 Thess. 2:16).

Two principles, then, on which in fact the testimony of God may be rendered, are unfolded in this prophecy. First of all, man is called to render this testimony as a mark of faithfulness to God, for which he is responsible. This is the position in which we have already seen that Israel was placed. Their whole history is before us in confirmation of this thought. Blessed by God with nearness to Himself, Israel should have been a witness to the whole world of what the only true God was. But, wholly incapable of apprehending His grace towards the Gentiles (although the house of Jehovah was at all times the house of prayer for all nations), Israel failed even in maintaining their own faithfulness, and consequently therefore in that which was the only means of making the world, as such, to understand the true character of God. Instead therefore of being made a blessing to others, they only involved them in the divine judgments that were to fall upon themselves. This is the picture which Jonah sets before us in his own history at his first receiving the message of God. The same thing will take place at the end of the age. Israel, unfaithful to God amid the billows of this world, insensible through their blind unbelief to the judgment which is ready to swallow them up, will drag into the results of their own sin all the other nations; and then the intervention of God will bring the latter also to acknowledge His power and His glory.

Let us here remark, that the principle we are speaking of is always true. If those to whom God in His grace has committed a testimony, do not employ this testimony in behalf of others according to the grace that bestowed it,

they will soon become unfaithful in their own walk before God. If they truly acknowledged God, they would feel bound to make known His name, to impart this blessing to others. If they do not own His glory and His grace, they will assuredly be unable to maintain their own walk before Him. God, who is full of grace, being our only strength, it cannot be otherwise.

The first picture, then, that is set before us is that of a man called to be God's witness in the midst of a proud and corrupt world, which follows its own will, without regarding the authority or the holiness of God. But this man is not sufficiently near to God to enter into the spirit of His holy and loving ways; and therefore, knowing that He is gracious, shrinks from the task of representing such a God before the world. To invest himself with God's name for his own honour, Jonah, the Jew, would not refuse. But to bear the burden necessary to the maintenance of the testimony of such a God, so gracious, so longsuffering, as well as holy, this was too hard a thing for the proud and impatient heart of a man who desired to have his own will carried out in judgment, if the others would not obey it in holiness.

Observe, that although Jonah ought to have lifted up his voice against Nineveh, it is from the presence of Jehovah he fled, not from the carnal opposition of the city. Christ, our blessed Lord, is the only One who accomplished the task of which we speak. He is the faithful witness. We may compare Psalm 40, in which He speaks of the manner in which He undertook and accomplished it—He who dwelt in a glory that placed Him so entirely above such a position, that sovereign grace alone could bring Him down into it—a glory however which alone made Him capable of undertaking and accomplishing it, in

spite of all the difficulties which the enmity of man put in His way. And great as His glory was, He accomplished the undertaken task of service as a duty in the humility of obedience, and that even unto death. See in Psalm 40:1, 2 how far He went, and how—sheltering Himself from nothing— He puts His trust in God. He becomes man to accomplish this task (v. 6-8). He performs it faithfully (v. 9, 10), not concealing the truth and righteousness of Jehovah from the congregation of Israel. In verse 11 and following verses, under the deep pressure of the position He was in from man's iniquity and His taking up the cause of His people, He commits Himself to the tender mercies of Jehovah, praying (after having rendered testimony with a perfect patience) for judgment on His enemies, the enemies of God's testimony. For it is the time, under the Jewish economy, of judgment.

We have seen that the judgments which fall upon the unfaithful witness, being at length acknowledged by himself, are the means through which the name of Jehovah becomes known and worshipped among the Gentiles. Here begins the second picture of the testimony—the complete and entire rejection of the witness considered as the depositary of the first message. He undergoes the judgment of God, and is cast out of His presence into the depths of hades.

This is the just lot of Israel, unfaithful to the testimony of God, and incapable of rendering it. Christ, in His infinite grace, came down into this place, being rejected because He was faithful. We most distinctly see the spirit of the remnant of Israel in Jonah's prayer. Verses 7-9 of chapter 2 prove it most clearly.

In fact the remnant of Israel, although upright by grace, are but flesh; the testimony is committed to them, and they fail. The flesh being without strength, sentence of death must pass on all that is of man. He is but vanity; and if he goes down into death, who can raise him up? Who can make a dead man the witness of God?

But, blessed be God! Christ went down into death; and, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so also the Son of man went down into the heart of the earth for the same period of time. But who could prevent His rising again? It was death here that was without strength, and not man. Death combated with One who had the power of life; and whether we consider the power of God, from whom Christ had merited resurrection, or the Person of the faithful witness Himself, it was not possible that He could be holden in the bands of Sheol. He is not only the faithful witness, but the firstborn from the dead.

And now the second testimony begins. All that Israel could have been, all that belonged to man as responsible in himself, as far as testimony was concerned, has failed for ever. Christ Himself, the faithful One, has been rejected. Israel, consequently as the vessel of God's testimony in the flesh, is set aside. It is the risen One only, who can now bear testimony; and, we may add, bear it even to Israel, who is now become the object of mercy, instead of becoming the vessel of promise and of testimony. But this makes God return, so to speak, into His own character of lovingkindness. If Israel cannot, as a righteous one, be the vessel of the testimony of righteousness (and even, as a sinner, has rejected it), God returns to His own gracious character, as a faithful Creator; from which, moreover, in the depth of His own

being, He never departed, although He put man to the proof, by bringing him into relationship with Himself, under every possible advantage, to see whether he could be a witness of righteousness—of God on the earth. Jonah knew at heart that there was grace in God. Assuredly he and his nation had experienced it. But in this case, unless righteousness were apart from mercy, so that he who stood as witness of this righteousness might be honoured— unless it were vindictive, so that he as its witness might be exalted—he would have nothing to do with it. Thenceforward he became incapable of it. For, in truth, God was gracious; and such a witness of Him as Jonah would have had was impossible—would not have been true.

It is on this account that grace (that is, the revelation of grace) is identified with mercy towards the Gentiles. Is He the God of the Jews only? Nay, verily, but of the Gentiles also. And the casting-off of the Jews, as Jews, becomes the reconciling of the world. The same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him, that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy.156 This is God’s controversy with Jonah at the end. He would refuse God the right of shewing mercy to His helpless creatures, and insist upon His rigorous execution of the sentence upon the Gentile world without even leaving space for repentance. God answers him, not at first by unfolding the counsels of His grace, but by appealing to the rights of His sovereign goodness, to His nature, to His own character. Nineveh has hearkened to God. Now, if God threatens, it is in order that man may turn from his iniquity and be spared. Why else should He warn the sinner? Why not leave him to ripen unwarned for judgment? But these are not the ways of God.

And we may remark here that, in the case of Nineveh, it is not faith in Jehovah, as in the case of the terrified mariners. The effect of the dreadful troubles that will fall upon Israel in the last days, as judgment upon the unfaithful witness of Jehovah, will be to make this God of judgment known, and to cause the great name of Jehovah to be glorified in all the earth (chap, 1:14, 16). With respect to the last days, we have seen that this is the testimony of all the prophets,157 as well as that of the Psalms.158 Here it is simply God. The inhabitants of Nineveh believed God. It is the effect of the word of God on their conscience. They confess, and turn away from their sin. They acknowledge the judgment of God to be just and His word true; and God pardons them and does not execute His judgment. Moreover, this is in accordance with His ways as revealed by Jeremiah.

The God of grace has compassion on the works of His hands, when they humble themselves before Him and tremble at the hearing of His righteous judgments. But Jonah, instead of caring for them, thinks only of his own reputation as a prophet. Wretched heart of man, so unable to rise up to the goodness of God! If Jonah had been nearer to God, he would have known that this was truly the God whom he proclaimed, whom he had learnt to love by knowing Him. He would have been able to say, Now, indeed, the Ninevites know the God whose testimony I gloried in bearing, and they will be happy. But Jonah thought only of himself; and the horrid selfishness of his heart hides from him the God of grace, faithful to His love for His helpless creatures. Chapter 4:2 exhibits the spirit of Jonah in all its deformity. The grace of God is insupportable to the pride of man. His justice is all very well: man can invest himself with it for

his own glory; for man loves vengeance which is allied with the power that executes it. God must proclaim His justice. He does not save in sin. He makes man know his sin, in order to reconcile him to Himself, in order that his restoration may be real—may be that of his heart and of his conscience with God. But it is to make Himself known in pardoning him.

But God is above all the wretched evil of man, and He treats even Jonah with kindness, yet making him feel, at the same time, that He will not renounce His grace, His nature, to satisfy the frowardness of man's heart. He relieves the suffering of Jonah, disappointed at the non-fulfilment of his words; and the selfishness of Jonah's heart delights in this relief. He almost forgets the vengeance he had desired, in his satisfaction at being sheltered from the burning heat of the sun. Having gone out of Nineveh, and seated himself apart that he might see what would become of this city whose repentance vexed his evil heart, he rejoiced, in the midst of his anger, at the gourd which God prepared for him. But what a testimony to the utter iniquity of the flesh. The repentance of the sinner, his return to God, irritates the heart. It is really this; for the city is spared on account of its repentance. Will God smite one who returns to Him in humiliation for his sins? He who does not know the heart of man could not understand the application of such a word as "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity." We see it here in the case of a prophet. There is the same thing —having also the same application, and the same patient grace on God's part—in the case of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son. But if man is content with that which relieves his own distress, and is even angry in his selfishness when that which relieved him is

destroyed, shall not God spare the works of His hand and have compassion on that which, in His goodness, He has created? Assuredly He will not listen to the man who would silence His kindness towards those who need it. Most touching and beautiful is the last verse of this book, in which God displays this force, this supreme necessity, of His love; which (although the threatenings of His justice are heard, and must needs be heard and even executed if man continues in rebellion) abides in the repose of that perfect goodness which nothing can alter, and which seizes the opportunity of displaying itself, whenever man allows Him, so to speak, to bless him—the repose of a perfection that nothing can escape, that observes everything, in order to act according to its own undisturbed nature—the repose of God Himself, essential to His perfection, on which depends all our blessing and all our peace.

It is well to remark here, that the subject of this book is not the judgment of the secrets of all hearts in the great day, but the government of God with respect to men on the earth. This is the case, moreover, with all the prophets. We may observe, also, that God reveals Himself in this book as God the Creator—Elohim. We know that even the creatures still groan under the effects of our sin; and they share also the kindness and the compassions of God. His tender mercies are over them. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. The day will come when the curse shall be removed, and they shall enjoy the liberty of the glory of the children of God, set free from bondage and corruption. If God becomes our Father, He takes also the character of Jehovah, who will judge Israel, and who will accomplish His promises and His purposes with respect to them in

spite of the whole world. He never ceases to be the Creator God. He does not lay aside one of His characters in order to assume another, any more than He confounds them together; for they reveal His nature, and what He is.

It is sweet, after all, to see Jonah's docility in the end to the voice of God, manifested by the existence of this book, in which the Spirit uses him to exhibit what is in the heart of man, as the vessel of God's testimony, and (in contrast with the prophet, who honestly confesses all his faults) the kindness of God, to which Jonah could not elevate himself, and to which he could not submit.

We may remark, that the case of Jonah is used in the New Testament in two ways, which must not be confounded together: as a testimony in the world, by the word of God— a service with which the Lord compares His own: and afterwards as in the belly of the fish—a circumstance used by the Lord as a figure of the time during which He lay in the grave. Jonah, by his preaching, was a sign to the Ninevites, even as the Lord was to the Jews, harder of hearing and of heart than those pagans who were afar from God. Jonah was also (in that which happened to him in consequence of his refusal to bear testimony) a type of that which befell Jesus when He bore the penalty of the people's sin, and when, being raised from the dead, He became the testimony of grace, and at the same time the occasion of judgment to those who had rejected Him. We have seen in his history that Jonah is a remarkable moral figure of Israel—at least of Israel's conduct.

156 Hence, also, we may add, it is connected with resurrection in its accomplishment. This indeed, has a

deeper cause—the state of man by nature; but this was brought out, in dispensation, by the failure of the Jews in connection with Christ after the flesh.

157 See Isaiah 66; Ezekiel 36:36; 37:28; 39:7, 22; Zechariah 2:11; 14; and a multitude of other passages.

158 See Psalm 9:15,16; 83:18; and all the Psalms at the end of the book.

## Micah

The prophecy of Micah is of the same date, and, up to a certain point, has the same character as that of Isaiah. That is to say, it treats especially of the introduction of the Messiah into the scene of the development of God's dealings towards Israel, and even speaks particularly of His presence in connection with the attack of the Assyrian. This prophecy has nevertheless its own peculiar character; it enters, like those of Hosea and Amos, into the moral condition of the people, and connects the judgment of the world at large with the condition of the Jews, as we have had it typically brought before us in Jonah. Samaria also is in part the subject of this prophecy, so that its application extends to all Israel.

The Lord speaks in this book from His temple, and addresses all the peoples—the whole earth. That is to say, He takes His place upon His earthly throne to judge the whole earth, in testimony against all the nations. But He comes from on high, coming forth out of His place to tread upon the high places of the earth. And all that is lifted up shall be molten under Him, and all that is abased shall be as wax before the fire. And wherefore this intervention in judgment? Why does He not leave the nations still to walk in their own ways, afar from Him, in long-sufferance to their folly? It is because His own people, the witness for His name upon the earth, are in transgression against Him—have given themselves up to the service of other gods, or to iniquity. There is no longer any testimony of God in the earth, except indeed it be a false testimony; and God must

therefore render it to Himself. All the sins of the nations then come into remembrance before Him, and spread themselves out before eyes that cannot endure them. He leaves His people to the consequences of their sin, so that they fall under the power of their enemies, whose pride on this account rises to such a height that it brings down the judgment of God, who intervenes to deliver the remnant whom He loves and to take His place of righteous Ruler over all the nations.

We have already seen, more than once, that the Assyrian plays the principal part in these closing scenes of the ways of God upon the earth. We again find him here as the rod of God—a prominent subject in the prophecy of Micah.

Chapter 1:6-8. The iniquity of Samaria, and her graven images are the cause of the terrible scourge, according to the just judgment of God; and the waves of this flood reach even to Judah.

It will be remarked here, that the events which took place in the days of the prophet who speaks, having the same moral character as the definitive judgment of the last days, are used to introduce the grand action of that judgment, while also as a warning to the people for the time then present. We have already seen this, more than once, in the prophets.

Shalmaneser and Sennacherib are doubtless in view here; but they are only the occasion of the prophecy, looked at in its full extent. The Assyrian comes up to the gates of Jerusalem. His progress is described in verses 11-16, as in Isaiah, only that the description is more intermingled with the causes of the judgment upon the different cities that he attacks than it is in Isaiah, who

enumerates them rather as the stages of his march. {Mic 2}

In chapter 2 the prophet points out the moral causes of the judgment of God—violence and shameless oppression. They formed plans of violence to gratify their covetousness, and Jehovah formed also plans of judgment upon them (v. 1-5). They refused the word of testimony. It shall be taken from them accompanied by this terrible judgment, that the spirit of error and drunkenness should be prophecy for them.159 They rose up as an enemy: their wickedness spared neither women nor children (v. 8, 9). Jehovah calls on all who have ears to hear, to arise and separate themselves from all this iniquity. A state of things like this could not be the rest of God's people. How could the saints of Jehovah rest amid pollution? (v. 10, 11). Nevertheless Jehovah in no wise renounced His settled purpose of blessing with respect to Israel. He would gather them all together, the numerous flock of His protection. The breaker, He who would clear the way and overthrow every obstacle, should go before them. They should go forth from the place of their captivity. Their king should pass on before them, and Jehovah at their head (v. 12, 13).

Chapter 3. The prophet again denounces the heads and princes of Jacob. They should cry unto Jehovah. But He would not hear them. No prophet should enlighten them with the light of His word. The seers should be confounded; there should be no answer from God (v. 1-7). It was not thus with the prophet, full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah to declare unto Jacob his transgression and unto Israel his sin (v. 8). This he does by again denouncing the chiefs among the people who judged for reward, and the prophets who divined for

money, while they claimed the privilege of Jehovah's presence, granted indeed exclusively to this people. Nothing can be more offensive to Jehovah than that those who have the name of His people should clothe themselves with the privilege of His presence, and use this pretension to honour self and justify evil, or maintain a divine claim in spite of it. Therefore should Zion be plowed as a field, and the mountains, now ornamented with palaces, should be made like the heights of a forest (v. 9-12). {Mic 4}

Chapter 4. But again the prophet, in the spirit of Isaiah, concludes his denunciations of sin, and his prophecies of judgment and desolation, by announcing the full re-establishment of blessing and glory in Zion. The Spirit repeats (there was no room for change) the declaration of the glory of Zion in the last days, given in Isaiah 2. But, the prophecy being much less developed, it connects this declaration immediately with the events of the last days. Israel should dwell in perfect peace, consequent on God's rebuking the strong nations and judging among the peoples (v. 3, 4); and Jehovah is exalted amongst them. Each nation, say they, will boast of its God: but Jehovah is our God for ever and ever. Jehovah is the glory of His people. In that day Jehovah will accept the remnant of His people; He will assemble the poor, feeble, halting Jacob, and reunite that which He had scattered and afflicted. It should be the remnant of His desire; that which He had cast off should be a strong nation. Jehovah Himself would reign over them in Zion for ever.

Nevertheless, though the prophecy be less developed, the order of the events through which the people had to pass is brought out only so much the clearer by the

shortness of the prophecy, which is thus a key to the more lengthened developments of Isaiah. The prophet announces that “the first dominion,” the kingdom of David and Solomon, shall return to Jerusalem: and with this statement the direct announcement of the millennial state of blessedness closes. But, meanwhile, the royalty with which the glory of Jerusalem was connected had to be set aside (v. 9): a double judgment on Jerusalem connected itself with this. The daughter of Jerusalem must go to Babylon, and there be delivered and redeemed from the hand of her enemies, by the power of God. She was to be their captive, far away from Zion. That is, the captivity of Jerusalem amidst the Gentile monarchies is announced. It was while in this condition deliverance would be granted to her. But another event was to characterise these last days of her history. Many nations should be assembled against her, seeking to profane her and to gaze insultingly upon her (this is the attack made upon Jerusalem when Jehovah was dealing with her in her own place); but they who came up against her knew not the thoughts of Jehovah. He had gathered them together as sheaves into the threshing-floor. The daughter of Zion should trample on them and beat them in pieces, and consecrate their spoils unto Jehovah, who in that day will magnify His name of the God of the whole earth (compare Isaiah 17:12-141 and Zech. 14:2; 12:2, 3; Psalm 83). {Mic 5}

Chapter 5. But there was something more definite still to be declared; the principal enemy of the last days was to be pointed out, and this in special connection with another and fatal sin of Jerusalem and her people. The Messiah and His rejection are introduced. The daughter of troops gathers herself in troops to besiege Jerusalem

—the Assyrian army (see v. 5). But here it is quite a different thing from the attack of Sennacherib. Judah had now plunged much deeper into sin and rebellion. The true Judge of Israel should be smitten with a rod upon the cheek. The Christ should be mocked and beaten.

Verse 2 describes Him in a striking manner. It was on this verse that the scribes and chief priests rested, when they certified Herod that Christ should be born in Bethlehem. It represents Him as being born at Bethlehem, and at the same time as eternal, and as the true Ruler in Israel.

The second verse is in parenthesis. It declares the birthplace, whence He that should rule over Israel for Jehovah should go forth; and, at the same time, it reveals the eternal glory of His Person.

Verse 3 is connected with verse i, and exhibits the consequences of the sin there pointed out. Israel, and more especially Judah, is given up, yet only for a season, the period of which is designated in a remarkable and instructive manner— until she which travaileth hath brought forth. Israel (exercised, travailing, long preferring to stand on the footing of Hagar rather than on that of Sarah) must pass through all the afflictions, the anguish, the judgments, the chastisements of God, necessary to lead her to the acceptance of the punishment of her iniquity; being at length by His grace thoroughly convinced of the need of that grace, and of the mercy of God, and thus brought into a condition fitted to her being the vessel of the manifestation of that Son who should be born unto her —the Naomi brought back by grace, to whom (with respect to His

manifestation in this world) the King is reputed to be born. Compare Isaiah 9, where the idea is developed in connection with Israel, “to us a Son is born “; and Revelation 12, where the historical fact, and its connection with Israel in the last days, are brought together.

Another very important element of this last scene of the present age is pointed out in this verse. Israel is given up to judgment, forsaken of God, in a certain sense, for having rejected the Christ, the Lord. But now she who travaileth has brought forth. Afterwards (and this is the element I refer to) the remnant of the brethren of this first-born Son, instead of being added to the church (Acts 2), return unto the children of Israel. The Christ is not ashamed to call them His brethren; but at this period they no longer become members of His body. Their relation is with Israel. This is the position in which they are placed before God.

He, then, who had been rejected becomes the Shepherd of Israel, and that according to the strength of Jehovah in the majesty of the name of Jehovah His God. Israel dwells in safety, for His King becomes great unto the ends of the earth. By Him the Assyrian should be overthrown, and his land laid waste by that Israel whom he had sought to overthrow.

Israel in that day possesses a double character. The remnant of Jacob is the instrument of refreshing, in the precious grace that comes from God, and waits not for the laboured and varied efforts of man. They shall be as the showers upon the grass, that tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men. But, nevertheless, Israel is also that which rises up among the nations, as a lion among

the beasts of the field, from whom none can deliver. They are the instruments and testimony of the power of God. The blessing and the strength of Jehovah is with them. The prophet declares that all the enemies of Israel shall be cut off and perish. But Jehovah will at the same time destroy out of the midst of Israel all their false human strength, their chariots, their strong cities—all that ministers to the pride of man and leads him to trust in himself. He will destroy all their idols; Israel shall no longer worship the works of their own hands; every trace of idolatry shall be taken away. At the same time vengeance and wrath, such as had not been heard of, shall be executed upon the nations.

This division of the prophecy ends here: the first at the close of chapter 2:chapter 4:9-13 giving, in general, the two evils with which judged Jerusalem had to do—Babylon and the gathering of the nations in the latter day, and her glorious deliverance; and chapter 5 the connection of Messiah both with the judgment and with the deliverance from the latter of these evils and the introduction of the blessing, of which the description had been given in chapter 4:1-8, as being the purpose of Jehovah. In that sense, chapter 4:8 closes the second part; but from thence to the end of chapter 5 are two appendices, so to speak, which unfold the double evil which comes on Jerusalem, and the connection of the people with their deliverers in judgment first, and then deliverance. {Mic 6}

Chapter 6. After having thus declared the counsels of God in grace, the Spirit returns to His pleadings with Israel in respect of their moral condition, calling the whole earth as audience to hear His controversy; for Jehovah had a controversy with His people. In a

touching appeal to their heart and conscience He asks what they could have against Him. He had redeemed them from Egypt, had led them by the hands of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; He had refused to hearken to Balak and Balaam, who had done their utmost to curse Israel. If they would but consider, they would know His faithfulness. After this He lays before them, in detail, the universal wickedness that reigned among them, contrasting their ceremonies with practical righteousness: therefore also the judgment must surely fall upon them (v. 13-16). Still the man of wisdom would know it as the discipline of Jehovah, and see Jehovah's name in it—a deeply important and also precious principle. They bore the reproach of His people.

In chapter 7 the prophet takes the place of intercessor before God, in the name of the people—presenting to Him at once their deep misery and their iniquities160—speaking in their name, and identifying himself with them; or, more exactly, he takes up the reproach of the city (chap. 6:9), beginning with her grief at the state she is in, but passing on, as we see often in Jeremiah, to his own distinct prophetic office, and so marking out the position of the remnant; speaking, but with the divine mind, as in the midst of the people—having their place, but judging their conduct in it—yet with all the interest attached to the love God bore them. He seeks anxiously among the people for something suitable to their title of the people of God; he finds nothing but fraud and deceit, and lying in wait for blood, that they might do evil with both hands earnestly. Still all is said in the way of the city's confession; so that out of this she can look, as bowing to God's hand—to one who will Himself plead her cause and execute judgment for her.

We find here a striking circumstance. The Lord Jesus declares in the Gospel, that that which the prophet describes, as the height of iniquity, should be produced by the preaching of the gospel. Such is the iniquity of the heart which the light brings into activity, stirring up a hatred which is only the more exasperated by the nearness of its object..

The effect on the prophet of that which he sees around him (that which the Spirit of Christ produces, where he acts in view of the all-pervading evil) was that he looked to Jehovah and waited for the God of his salvation. He takes the position pointed out as that which Jehovah could recognise. He accepts the indignation of Jehovah, until He Himself should plead the cause of His servant. In fact Jehovah would bring him forth to the light—would shew him His righteousness. The deliverance should then be complete; and she who said to Jerusalem, "Where is thy God?" (the constant cry of the unbeliever, who rejoices in the chastisement of the people of Christ, as in the sufferings of Christ Himself, mistaking these righteous dealings of a God whom he knows not)—she who rejoiced in the abasement of those whom Jehovah loved, should be trodden down as the mire of the streets (v. 7-10).

From that time they should come from Egypt, from Assyria, from the seas and the mountains, to the rebuilded city; but before this the land should be desolate. Nevertheless Jehovah would lead His people as a shepherd and plant them again in their land as at first; and God would shew forth His marvellous works, as when He brought them up from Egypt; and the nations should be confounded at all the might of Israel and should be afraid before Jehovah their God.

The last three verses of the prophecy express the faith and the sentiments of adoration that fill the prophet's heart at the thought of the goodness of God, who pardoned the iniquities of the people and cast their sins into the depths of the sea; who delighted in mercy, and who would perform His promises to Abraham and that which He had sworn unto the fathers in days of old.

Who was a God like unto Him, who manifested Himself in His ways of grace towards His beloved people, towards the feeble remnant despised of all, but whom Jehovah in His love never forgot, in His faithfulness never forsook, in spite of all their rebellion?

159 Verse 6 is exceedingly obscure. I doubt that the Authorised Version is correct: 'take shame 'is to be ashamed. The Hebrew has hardly this sense. It is literally, Prophesy (Drop) not. They prophesy. They shall not prophesy to them; it shall not depart shame (literally shames). That is, I suppose, Shame shall not depart. Chapter 3:7 explains it perhaps.

160 This character is one of the most touching features of the prophetic office. "If," said Jeremiah, "he be a prophet, let him make intercession to Jehovah, that that which is left may not go to Babylon." "He is a prophet," said God to Abimelech, in speaking of Abraham, "and he will pray for thee." In the Psalms also it is written, "There is no prophet left—none to say, How long? "— that is to say, none who knew how to reckon upon the faithfulness of Jehovah their God, and, knowing that it was only a chastisement, plead with Him for His people (compare Isaiah 6). The Spirit of God declares judgment indeed on God's part, but, because God loved the people, becomes a Spirit of intercession in the prophet

for the people. With us the same thing is developed in a rather different, but more blessed and perfect manner. Intelligence of the will of God enters more into it: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” And all are prophets in this (1 John 5:16).

# Nahum

If we were to examine closely the different characters of the nations who have been connected with the people of God, we should perhaps find in each a specific form of evil pretty clearly delineated. At all events it is so in the principal enemies of that people. Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, are prominently marked by that which they morally represent. Egypt is the world in its natural condition, whence the people have come forth. Babylon is corruption in the activity of power, by which the people are enslaved. Nineveh is the naughty glory of the world, which recognises nothing but its own importance —the world, the open enemy of God's people, simply by its pride. She shall be judged like all the rest, and disappear for ever under the judgment of the Almighty. Jehovah has given a commandment against her, that no more of her name be sown. This judgment is so simple, that the prophecy which declares it requires very little explanation.

It commences with an exhibition of the character of God, in view of that which He has to bear from the pride of man. God is jealous, and Jehovah revengeth. It is a solemn thought that, however great His patience, a day is coming which will prove that He does not bear with evil. Yet it is a comforting thought; for the vengeance of God is the deliverance of the world from the oppression and misery of the yoke of the enemy and of lust, that it may flourish under the peaceful eye of its Deliverer.

No doubt, He has long allowed evil to go on. He is not impatient, as our poor hearts are. He is slow to wrath— a wrath so much the more terrible that it is the justice of

One who is never impatient. He is great in power, and will not at all acquit the guilty.161 Who can stand before His indignation, or abide the fierceness of His anger?

But this is not all: His indignation is not vague and devastating without distinction when He gives it free course. He is good; He is a stronghold in the day of trouble. When the evil and the judgment overflow—the evil which is a judgment, and the judgment before which nothing that it reaches can stand—He is Himself the sure refuge of all that trust in Him: He Himself knows all that do so. As for the glory of the enemy, it shall be destroyed, blotted out, brought to nothing. Reckless in the midst of their pleasures, drunken and suspecting nothing, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. {Na 1:11}

In chapter 1:11 we find the one so often mentioned by the prophets—the Assyrian, who imagines evil against Jehovah, verse 12, although obscure, applies, I think, to Israel. Israel, too, alas! boasting of their security and strength according to the spirit of the world, will undergo the invasion, the overflowing of the great waters, the scourge of God. But when this passes through the land (that is, of Israel), they shall be cut down162 (compare Isaiah 28:18, 19; 14:25). But this scourge completes the judgment of God; and the deliverance of Israel, the prophet says, should now be complete and final (compare Isaiah 10:5, 24, 25). The yoke of the Assyrian should be broken for ever, and the proud and hostile power of the world destroyed, as the anti-christian corruption and rebellion had already been judged. The good tidings of full deliverance should be spread abroad, and Judah should keep her solemn feasts in peace.

I doubt not that the invasion of Sennacherib was the occasion of this prophecy; but most evidently it goes much beyond that event, and the judgment is final. This is another instance of that which we have so frequently observed in the prophets— a partial judgment, serving as a warning or an encouragement to the people of God, while it was only a forerunner of a future judgment, in which all the dealings of God would be summed up and manifested.

The wicked should no more pass through Judah; he should be utterly cut off.

If God permitted the total devastation and ruin of Jacob, it was because the time of judgment was come—a judgment that should not stop there. He began, no doubt, at His own house, but would He stop there? No. What, then, should be the end of the enemies of God's people, if He no longer endured evil in His own people? Let Nineveh, then, now defend herself if she could. But no, that den of lions should be invaded, and the young lions destroyed and unable to defend themselves. See the same argument at the end of Isaiah 2 and the commencement of chapter 3. Jacob was judged; the whole family, as well as Israel, emptied and ruined; and now it was the turn of the world. However great the pride of Nineveh, she was no better than others of whose ruin she was probably herself the instrument (Assyria and Egypt had long been rivals). The strongholds of the Assyrians should be like figs that fall with the first shaking, and their people without strength should be but as women. The ruin should be entire. Fire should devour them. No doubt, this had an historical fulfilment in the fall of Nineveh; but its complete accomplishment will take place when the Assyrian shall

return—I do not say with respect to this city itself, which has been destroyed, but the power that will possess the territory and inherit the pride of the land of Nimrod.

161 This is ever true, and of immense importance. God never holds the guilty for innocent. It is contrary to His nature. It would not be the truth. He may put away sin, and receive the cleansed sinner; but He cannot act as if it did not exist when it does, nor be indifferent to it while He remains Himself. He may for good chastise, and to shew His government (that is, deal with sin in this respect); or He may have it entirely put away and blotted out, according to the exigencies of His own nature and glory, which is salvation for us; and both are true. But He cannot leave it anywhere as not existing or indifferent.

162 If not, the thought is, though the Assyrians be prosperous and safe in full prosperity, yet (as Sennacherib) when they come into Judah they shall be cut down, and then (as in Isaiah 10) Israel’s deliverance should be final.

# Habakkuk

How diverse and perfect is the development of the ways of God in His word! Not only does it contain the great events that establish the fact of His government, and the character of that government—not only the proofs of His fidelity to His people, and His estimate of the evil that led to judgment, but also His answer to every feeling caused by the series of events by which He chastised them, the relief which He affords to the anguish that must be felt by one who is faithful, on account of the affliction of God's beloved people, together with the profitable exercise of his faith. The perfect ways of God are unfolded on the one side, and on the other the heart is formed to the intelligence of those ways, and to the enjoyment of the full effect of the faithfulness of the God of love; while, during the expectation of this effect, confidence in God Himself is established, and the links of the heart with God are abundantly strengthened.

It is of the latter part, the development of faith and of spiritual affections amid the trial, that Habakkuk treats in his prophecy. It speaks of the exercise of the heart of one who, full of the Spirit, is attached to the people of God. Still, it is Israel that is brought before us.

First of all, the prophet complains that the evil which exists among the people is insupportable. This is the natural effect of the working of the Spirit of God in a heart jealous for His glory and detesting evil. The heart of the prophet, formed in the school of the law, speaks perhaps of the evil in the spirit of the law. The Spirit of God does not bring him out of this position, which was properly that of a prophet before God, and he judges the

evil in a holy manner, according to a heart that was faithful to the blessings of Jehovah.

Thereupon Jehovah reveals to him the terrible judgment by which He will chastise the people who thus gave themselves up to evil. He would raise up against them the Chaldeans, those types of pride and energy, who, successful in all their enterprises, sought glory only in the opinion they had of themselves. Their head, forsaking the true God who had given them their strength, would worship a god of his own.163 But all this awakens in the prophet a different sentiment from that which he before experienced. Here was his God denied by the instrument of vengeance, and the beloved people trodden down by one more wicked than themselves. But faith knows that its God, the true God, is the one and only Lord,164 and (already a profound consolation assuring the heart of salvation) that it is Jehovah who has established the wicked in power for the correction of His people. But shall they continue to fill their net with men, as though they were but fish?

There the prophet stops, that God in His time may explain this; watches, like a sentinel, to receive the answer of God to the anxiety of his soul. God, in order to comfort His prophet and all His faithful people, commands him to write the answer so plainly, that he who runs may read it. He bears in mind the affections of His people; He appreciates them, for in truth they are given, according to His own heart, by the Holy Ghost.

He will, even before the deliverance, comfort the heart that is oppressed by the feelings to which faith itself gives birth. If faith produces them, the answer to that faith will not be wanting. Deliverance would not yet

come. The vision was yet for an appointed time, but deliverance on God's part would assuredly come. God, who sets value on faith, would Himself intervene. If deliverance tarried, the faithful should wait for it. It would surely come and would not tarry. To the heart of man it tarried. Patience was to have its perfect work. The patience of God had been long and perfect. The time of deliverance should not tarry one moment after the hour appointed by God in His wisdom.

God had judged the spirit of pride, whose effects had overwhelmed the heart of the prophet. The oppressor was not upright, but the portion of the just was to live by faith, and by faith he should live. A deliverance for the people, which did not, so to say, require this faith, might have been preferred. But God would have the heart thus exercised. The righteous must pass through it and learn to trust in Jehovah, to count on Him in all circumstances, to learn what He is in Himself (come what may).

Nevertheless, although God allowed His people, on account of their sins, to be crushed by injustice and oppression, the conduct of the oppressor cried unto heaven, and brought judgment on his own head. Woe unto him! for, even apart from God's relations with His people, it is He who judges the earth and delivers it from the oppressor and the wicked. His graven image shall not profit him: what can the dumb stone do for the man that set it up? But Jehovah was in His holy place, in His temple. All the earth should keep silence before Him. It should be filled with the knowledge of His glory, as the bed of the sea with the waters that cover it. The people of the world should labour as in the fire for very

vanity, and this from Jehovah; for He will fill the world with the knowledge of Himself.

This answer brings home to the heart of the prophet the solemn presence of God, and leads him to look for a revival of God's working in the midst of the people in grace, and turns him back to God's first favour, and recalls to the prophet all the glory of Jehovah, when He appeared for His people at the beginning, when He came out of His place and overturned every obstacle in order to establish His people in blessing.

At this remembrance of His power, the prophet trembles, but in the consciousness that it is the source of a perfect and assured rest in the day of trouble, when the destroyer should come up and invade the people.

He concludes his prophecy with the blessed result of all these precious lessons, namely, the expression of perfect confidence in Jehovah. He would rejoice and be glad in Him, if all the blessing should fail. Jehovah Himself was his strength, his trust, and his support, and He would set him on the high places of His blessing, giving him, as it were, hinds' feet to ascend there by His favour.

There is nothing finer than this development of the thoughts of the Spirit of God, the sorrows and anxieties produced by Him, the answer of God to give understanding and strengthen faith, in order that the heart may be in full communion with Himself.

It will be remarked here, that it is the idolatrous oppressor who especially appears, although the first invasion is described, for that was the immediate cause of the prophet's anguish. The Chaldeans, therefore, are distinctly named. It is that people, as we know, who reduced the people of God to captivity. In sum, in this

prophet we have (for the comfort of the faithful heart, which loves God's people because they are His, and hence is distressed by the wickedness found among them, and still more by the judgment which falls upon them) the answer of God, explaining His ways to faith, and His sure faithfulness to His promises. He knows the oppressor, but the just must live by faith.

163 Sad effect of pride, which, unknown to itself, is the parent of weakness! Man cannot sustain himself; and the pride which rejects the true God must and does make one for itself, or adopts what its fathers have made, for pride cannot stand in the presence of the supreme God. Man makes a god: this, too, is pride. But he cannot do without one; and after all, the natural heart is the slave of that which it cannot do without.

164 To Habakkuk of course Jehovah; to us the Father is revealed in the Son, and so one Lord, Jesus Christ.

## Zephaniah

Zephaniah sets before us the judgment of the Spirit of God with respect to the condition of the testimony rendered to the name of God in this world, at a moment when there was some outward restoration by means of a king who feared God.

God has granted this favour more than once to His people, even as He has endured with longsuffering their rebellion and revolt; and in both cases He would have us see the true moral condition of that which bore His name—the judgment which a spiritual heart would form, which His Spirit formed, with respect to that condition: a judgment which should be authenticated by that which God would execute upon His people and upon the Gentiles, when longsuffering should no longer be of any avail.

These two subjects constitute the two principal divisions of the prophecy: the announcement of God's purposes with respect to the judgment that He would execute, and the display of that condition which led to the judgment. This, as always, is accompanied by the revelation of His counsels in grace, and of the coming of the Messiah, in order to encourage and sustain the faith of the believing remnant of His people.

Israel having been appointed the witness for God, when the nations had given themselves up to iniquity and idolatry, the general judgment of the world could be delayed, so long as (that testimony being maintained) the true character of God was presented; for God is slow to anger. Accordingly He raised up prophets, beginning with Samuel, to remedy the wanderings and

unfaithfulness of His people, when they themselves had failed. So long as this extraordinary testimony of grace, and the warnings and chastenings that accompanied it, served to maintain some glimmerings of truth and righteousness on the earth, Jehovah withheld His hand ready to destroy that which dishonoured God and oppressed man. We have seen elsewhere, in the transfer of sovereignty to the empire of the Gentiles, the introduction of a new system, as we find in the New Testament the establishment of the assembly. I do not dwell upon it here. As to the government of the world, in view of the testimony rendered to the name of Jehovah, when Israel—who maintained this testimony amid the nations that were apostate and rebellious against God—had so failed that there was no more remedy, then those nations also had to undergo the judgment they had long deserved. They will bring this judgment upon themselves by filling up the measure of their iniquity and rebellion against God, and by manifesting hatred to God's people, in the joy with which they come forward to accomplish the chastisements which that people had deserved: for God is longsuffering unto them also. He even sends the gospel—whether that of full grace, which we enjoy, or the announcement of His coming judgments—in order that all who have ears to hear may escape these judgments. But, in principle, the definitive failure of Israel's testimony left the nations exposed to the judgment their sinful state deserved, this judgment having been suspended, because a true testimony was rendered to God. This is the reason why we have constantly found in the prophets the definitive judgment of Israel. The establishment of the Gentile empire, represented by the image and the beasts, the introduction of Christianity, the apostasy which breaks

out in its bosom, bring in other objects of the judgment of God, but do not alter the judgment to be executed upon the nations apart from these objects.

The judgment of the apostasy and of the Gentile empire comes immediately from heaven, whence flowed the authority of that empire, and the blessing of those who are become apostate; and against which they are in rebellion. The judgment of the nations, as such, has Zion for its starting-point —Zion, now under the judgment, but then delivered through the judgment executed upon the beast that oppressed her (see Psalm no). The events spoken of in Daniel, the New Testament prophecies, and, in part, Zechariah, are omitted by those of the prophets who have for their subject the proper relations of the earthly people with God in Zion; and the judgment of Jerusalem and the Jews is connected in their prophecies with that of the nations—the judgment of the latter being involved in that of the people, who no longer rendered any testimony to Jehovah, but caused His name to be blasphemed. This judgment commenced, in regard to the Jews, with Nebuchadnezzar himself. Afterwards, on the decline (at the end of the age) of the empire which commenced originally with him as golden head, the nations, resuming their strength, use it against Israel, then connected with, and subject to, the apostate empire; a yet more terrible judgment. Thus all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem, and filling up both the judgment of the people and their own iniquity, will occasion the intervention of the God of mercy in favour of His people, according to His promises and purposes of grace—the deliverance of Israel being accomplished in the judgment executed upon those who come up against them, and who, in coming against

them, are against Jehovah and His Christ also. This will be the judgment that shall go forth from Zion, while the beast will have been destroyed by Him who came forth out of heaven.

The dates attached to the books of the prophets are connected with the different characters of this series of events. Isaiah and Micah, as well as Hosea and Amos (although the latter two less directly), are occupied with the revelation of the Son of David, the Deliverer and Defender of His people in Jerusalem. Hezekiah, raised up after the miserable reign of Ahaz gave occasion for these revelations, which taught the faithful (while unveiling the iniquity and the real condition of the people), that they must look forward and rest only in God's thoughts, who had raised up this pious king for the temporary restoration of His people, and who would grant them a complete and eternal deliverance by the true Emmanuel. Isaiah (in the first three, as well as in the last, chapters of his prophecy) dwells on the connection, of which we have spoken, between the judgment of Israel and that of the nations. Josiah did not present in the same manner the coming Redeemer. Spared the sight of the ruin of Jerusalem on account of his piety, he falls himself by the hand of strangers. The glory and peace, the hope of Jerusalem for the time being, disappear with him, and its judgment succeeds.

Zephaniah prophesied under his reign. The prophet takes no notice of the temporary piety of the people, who (see Jer. 3) at heart were not changed. He takes the general ground of Israel's condition and consequent judgment, in connection with its effect on the nations. We have seen that Nebuchadnezzar is the first who

executes this judgment; although both the judgment and the prophecy that speaks of it go much farther.

The prophet begins by declaring that the land should be reduced to complete desolation; afterwards, that Judah, Jerusalem, their false gods, and their priests, should be smitten by the hand of Jehovah. The idolaters, those who mingled the name of Jehovah with that of other gods, those who had turned back from Jehovah, those who had not sought Him, each one is called to hold his peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah was at hand. He had prepared His sacrifice, He had invited His guests; and in the day of His sacrifice, the king, the prince, and the king's children should be visited by His hand. Violence and deceit should receive their just reward.

The day of Jehovah should cause a cry to be heard from the gates of Jerusalem. He would search Jerusalem as with candles, and make manifest the folly of those who denied His intervention either for good or for evil. The prophet then declares, in general but most forcible terms, the terrors of the day of Jehovah. The whole land should be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. We have here the whole land—Jerusalem and Judah—judged in the great day of God. This division of the prophecy ends here. {Zep 2}

Chapter 2, while revealing the character of the nation, addresses itself to her, in order that all those at least who fear Jehovah may be hidden in the day of His anger. They are called to gather themselves together, and to seek Jehovah, before the decree of judgment should have brought forth, and His fierce anger should overtake them. Thus the remnant are distinguished; the meek

who have wrought righteousness are called on to seek meekness and righteousness, in order that they may be hidden, although the testimony is addressed to the whole nation. For, after all, God remembered the counsels of His grace. His dealings in this respect are developed in a remarkable manner in the rest of the prophecy. The judgment should be upon the whole territory of Israel, occupied in many parts by strangers hostile to the people.

The effect of the consequent desolation should be (for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance) to leave the whole land free for the possession of Israel. For Jehovah would visit them, and would bring again His captives; and the remnant of His people should possess it. Jehovah would judge and famish all the gods of the earth; and all men should worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations.

Ethiopia, Nineveh, all the mighty ones of the nations, should fall and be made desolate.

This is the judgment of the nations of which we have spoken, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the first instrument, but which is here introduced in view of the last days, when the power established by God shall be in its last rebellion against Him.

Amid this judgment of the nation Jerusalem holds the chief place. In chapter 3, the Spirit of God, while laying open the iniquity which occasioned it, turns towards the remnant, and exhorts them to wait upon Jehovah, since all hope was gone. He enlightens them with respect to His dealings, and reveals to them in what manner these will result in blessing to Israel.

God had been in the midst of the holy city, now polluted, but she would not draw neat to Him nor obey Him. Her princes were the violent of the earth, her judges were rapacious, her prophets vain and treacherous, her priests polluted the sanctuary. Jehovah was there to shew them their sins and His judgment; but the wicked were shameless in their iniquity. Doubtless Jehovah had cut off the nations and made them desolate; but surely Israel, however chastised, would receive instruction—Jehovah would not be compelled to cut them off. But they had diligently corrupted all their doing. Because they would not hearken to Jehovah, who had shewn them such lovingkindness, who had been so near unto them, Israel, unnamed, sinks to the level of the nations, who are the objects of the just judgment of God, and the remnant is called (v. 8) to wait upon Jehovah alone^ who is about to execute this judgment, to await the moment (since nothing touched the hardened hearts of the people) when Jehovah should rise up to the prey. Until that moment nothing could be done. Israel would not hearken. Judgment did not belong to the remnant. And this judgment alone could put an end to their distress. God would assemble all the nations to pour His fierce anger upon them—the solemn and universal testimony of the prophets. But then would He turn to them165 a pure language, that they should call upon the name of Jehovah to serve Him with one consent. He would also gather together all the dispersed of Israel from the most distant lands.

Jerusalem should no longer remember her shame; her transgressions should be entirely: blotted out. The proud should be taken away from among her: a humble and despised people should be in the midst of her, whose

refuge should be Jehovah alone; the little remnant should do no iniquity, neither should they speak lies. They should feed and lie down in safety; none should make them afraid. Verses 14-17 contain a song of praise, which the Spirit indites and teaches to Zion whom He calls on to sing it with thanksgivings to Jehovah—who has put away her condemnation for ever—who is in the midst of her— who rejoices in His love towards her. All those who had grieved for the reproach of Zion, and who had sighed for her solemn assemblies, should be gathered together; her enemies should be destroyed, and her children should have praise and fame in every place where they had been despised and reproached. Israel should be a subject of praise among all the nations of the earth.

It will be observed that the prophecy of Zephaniah relates to the nations, and not to the Gentile empire (of which it says nothing at all); and that the relations of Israel, of which it speaks, are with Jehovah: their conduct towards the Messiah is not in view. It is Israel, Jerusalem, and Jehovah. Christ is only seen in this character. The special ways of God in the Gentile empire, in the mission of His Son, and in the state of the Jews, consequent upon His rejection, are quite left out, in order to dwell only on the judgment of Israel on account of her relationship with Jehovah her God. Christ appears only in a very general manner, and as Jehovah the king (chap. 3:15).

The judgment of all the nations and its moral effect, the absolute necessity of this judgment, since Israel among whom God dwelt would not hearken, are most plainly declared; and their object and their practical effect are pointed out with more precision than perhaps in any

other prophecy, with the clear and distinct statement that it is when God executes judgment upon the gathered nations that they will learn the pure language and call on Him. The address to the remnant, and their character, and Jehovah’s delight in them, are stated with exquisite beauty.

165 This is a very clear testimony, when it is that the nations of the earth learn righteousness.

## Zechariah

Zechariah is more occupied than either of the other two post-captivity prophets with the Gentile kingdoms under whose yoke the Jews were placed, and with the establishment in its perfection of the glorious system that was to accompany the presence of the Messiah; and, on the other hand, with the rejection of that Messiah by the remnant who had returned from captivity; with the state of misery and unbelief in which the people would be left, and by which they would at length be openly characterised; and, finally, with the last attacks of the enemies of Jehovah upon Israel, and especially those directed against Jerusalem. He announces the destruction of these enemies by the judgment of God, and the glory and holiness of the people after their deliverance by the arm of Jehovah, who should thenceforth reign and be glorified in all the earth. It is the complete history of Israel, and of the Gentiles in relationship with Israel, from the captivity to the end, as far as connected with Jerusalem, the restoration of which especially occupies the prophet. For if the house was the primary object in Haggai, Jerusalem is the central point in Zechariah; although in the course of the prophecy the temple, and still more the Messiah, have the most prominent place in the scene.

The date of Zechariah's prophecy is nearly the same as that of the prophecies of Haggai. There are two in Zechariah, besides that of the introduction; in Haggai, four. The first date in Zechariah is only a month or two before the last two in Haggai, which were given on the same day. At the date of the second prophecy in

Zechariah (chap. 7) the temple was not finished as a whole, but sufficiently so to serve as a place of worship, although the dedication had not yet been celebrated. {Zec 1}

Chapter 1. The Spirit of God begins with an exhortation, founded on the proofs that the history of the people supplied of the manner in which the word of the prophets had taken hold of them. Jehovah's displeasure, of which these prophets had not failed to warn the people, had borne its fruit; but God was now taking knowledge of the conduct of the Gentiles, to whom He had committed the place of power, and who, being at ease themselves, did not care for the misery and ruin of God's people.

But Jehovah cares for it. He is sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, and very jealous for Jerusalem. He is returned to Jerusalem with mercies; and prosperity and abundance shall be the portion of His people. We may remark here, that the judgment of Babylon, already accomplished, was in principle the judgment executed on the oppressor among the Gentiles, the head of the empire—of the image; and that the promise of blessing extends to that which shall be the portion of Jerusalem, when the oppressor shall be finally judged.

Three empires were existing in the eye of the Spirit. And the world was at peace under the authority of the second of the four, the first of these three. A horse is the symbol of divine energy of government in the earth, and here, in the empires succeeding Nebuchadnezzar. There are here three, besides the one that stands among the myrtle trees. But they have the character of the

providentially administering spirits of the empires rather than of the empires themselves. The first of the three horses is of the same colour as that of the man who stood among the myrtles (perhaps because Cyrus and the Persians had delivered and favoured the people of God, as the Lord Jesus Himself will do in the greatness of His power).

Such, then, is the import of the first part of this prophecy: the judgment already accomplished displaying the virtue of Jehovah's word; God returning to Jerusalem with mercies and consolation, moved with jealousy for her, and sorely displeased with the nations that were at ease while she was in ruins.

The vision controlled the whole action of the empires of the nations, and shewed that everything was subject to the providential government of God, who inquired into all for His people's sake; and who, looking on to the end of these times of the Gentiles, announced that He was occupied with the prosperity and blessing of His chosen city. Meanwhile, remark, Judah had been restored provisionally to the privileges of its own worship, and to a position in which it might be ready to receive the Messiah for the accomplishment of the purposes of God.

The vision at the end of the chapter embraces all the empires who shall have been in relation with Judah and Jerusalem, and have oppressed them, until their final deliverance. The horns appear to symbolise powers; and the carpenters, the instruments employed by God to break them to pieces. We observe that Israel is included in verse 19, as a part of the whole it appears to me, without entering into detail. Nineveh having come under

the yoke of Babylon, and Israel being subject, as it was, to the empire, all is put together.

From chapter 2 to the end of chapter 6, the Spirit presents the circumstances, the principles, and the result of the reestablishment of Jerusalem and of the house; and also the judgment of that which was wicked and corrupt. Each chapter has a distinct subject—a vision detached from the others, while forming a portion of the whole. The present responsibility, on which the blessing depended, and the sovereign grace that would assuredly accomplish all, are both set before us, each in its place.

The restoration of Jerusalem is described in chapter 2 in a very remarkable manner, which throws much light on the connection, already spoken of, between the return from the Babylonish captivity wrought by Cyrus, the servant, the righteous man from the east, and the deliverance to be granted by the manifestation of the Messiah. First of all, the full and entire restoration of Jerusalem is announced, Jehovah Himself being her safeguard, and securing prosperity and peace to her inhabitants, Himself, her glory, dwelling in the midst of her. We can easily understand what an encouragement such a promise, and such an interest on the part of Jehovah in Jerusalem, would be to them in their then state, even if the accomplishment were not then brought about.

Jehovah calls to the people, and bids them come forth from the land of the north, an expression used for Chaldea, for they had been scattered to the four winds. The Babylonish captivity was the real sentence of Lo-ammi, as the return thence (Babylon being judged) was

the earnest of a better deliverance from that which, in the last days, will represent Babylon. Zion is delivered from her captivity in Babylon. But if, up to a certain point, this took place by means of Cyrus, it was by no means the full accomplishment of God's purposes. They were continuously, and yet are, subject to the heathen image and superscription. And, in a more special manner, the Jews will again be in subjection to that which bears the character of Babylon, and will be delivered from it; but it will be in those days when Jehovah shall manifest Himself in a glory that will admit of no resistance to His will. After the glory He will send to the nations that have spoiled Israel. The glory of Jehovah shall appear, and the enemies of His people shall be judged; for he who touches Israel, the beloved of Jehovah, shall bring judgment upon himself in that which is most dear and precious to him. The judgment of the nations shall justify the word of God to His people Israel.

The daughter of Zion should sing with joy, for Jehovah would dwell in the midst of her. Many nations should come and join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and should be His people; and He would dwell in the midst of Israel. And then the word of prophecy (the accomplishment of which had been so long suspended that it appeared like a dream of the night) should be justified to Israel by its entire fulfilment. Jehovah should inherit Judah as His portion in the holy land, and should again choose Jerusalem. Solemn period! Let all flesh then be silent; for Jehovah has risen up from His holy habitation to accomplish all the good pleasure of His will.

We see, that, however great might be the encouragement for the Jews in that day, the mind of the Spirit goes on to the end of the age, and to the manifestation of the glory of Jehovah, and the blessing of Jerusalem and of the whole earth. The return from Babylon, already accomplished historically, was still future as the true deliverance of Zion. All flesh should acknowledge the coming of Jehovah. These were judgments which should take place after the glory.

But in order that Jerusalem (the centre of God's dealings in Israel) should be thus re-established in blessing, something more than the mere exercise of God's power was necessary. The people were guilty and polluted. How could they be brought into the presence of God, and clothed with glory, in such a condition? Nevertheless they must be there in order to be blessed. Moreover this is the history of every sinner. It is this question, so important, so essential, that is solved in chapter 3. Joshua, the high priest, who represents the people (it is not a question here of interceding, but of answering for them), stands before the presence of Jehovah—before "the angel of his presence," that is to say, before God as He manifested Himself in Israel since the departure from Horeb. Satan, the adversary to the blessing of God's people, stands there to resist him. How is this to be answered? Joshua could not do it. He was clothed in filthy garments. It is Jehovah Himself who, unknown to them, undertakes the cause of His people (as He did in the case of Balaam), and employs divine authority against their adversary. Jehovah had chosen Jerusalem—had plucked the people as a brand out of the fire; and Satan desired to cast them into it again. The will of Jehovah was to save them, all guilty and polluted

as they were. Nevertheless the defilement existed and was unbearable to God. But God was acting in grace; and thus acting, since He must needs remove the sin from before His eyes (for this very reason, that it is unbearable to Him), He puts away the sin and not the sinner. He makes sin to cease from before Him. He takes it away, and, clothing Joshua with new garments wrought of God, and according to His perfection, makes Him a priest before Him. This will be the position of Israel in righteousness, and in service before God—a nation of priests, clothed in the righteousness which their God has given them. We anticipate them in this in a higher and heavenly way.

Verse 7 puts Joshua, as the representative of the people, under responsibility for the time being. If faithful, he should have a place in the presence of Jehovah of hosts. Verse 8 treats him as a type of Christ, having the nation of priests associated with Himself in the blessing that shall be accomplished in the last days. The foundation-stone that was laid before the eyes of Joshua was but a feeble image of that true stone, the immovable foundation of all the blessing of Israel, of all the government of God in the earth. Jehovah Himself stamps it with its true character. It should represent the thoughts of Jehovah Himself in His government. It should have, or rather it should be, the signet of God; and the iniquity of the earth should be definitively taken away by the absolute, efficacious, and positive act of God. In this stone shall be seen also the perfect intelligency of God. The seven eyes shall be there.

I would add a few words on this expression. In 2 Chronicles 16 we find the eyes of Jehovah represented as running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to

shew Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. This is the faithfulness of God in taking cognisance of all things in His ways of government. In Zechariah, the eyes are found upon the stone that is laid in Zion. It is there that the seat of that government is placed which sees everything and everywhere. In verse 10 of the next chapter these eyes, which behold all things, which run through the whole earth, are said to rejoice when they see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel, that is to say, the house of Jehovah's habitation entirely finished. In this case they are not presented as established in the seat of government upon earth, but in their character of universal and active oversight, and in this providential activity, never resting until Jehovah's counsels of grace towards Jerusalem are accomplished; and then they shall rejoice. The active intelligence of providence finds its full delight there in the accomplishment of the unchangeable purpose of the will of God. Finally these eyes are again seen in Revelation 5, in the Lamb exalted to the right hand of God, who is about to take possession of His inheritance of the earth. Here it is the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth; for the government is in the hands of the Lamb, although He has not yet exercised it in the earth, of which He is about to be put in possession.

I return to our chapter. When the seat of Jehovah's perfect government shall be set up in Jerusalem, and the iniquity of the land of Israel shall be taken away, then peace shall be fully established, and each one shall rejoice in the peace of his neighbour, and each one be neighbour in heart to all. It is the Prince of Peace who reigns there.

All this hangs upon the introduction of Christ the Branch. Here He is not presented as king. It is His Person which is introduced, and the effect of His intervention. Observe that the word does not say that iniquity is taken away, until the effect of the work of Christ is applied by faith in Him, a faith which, with respect to Israel, depends on sight. Their hearts will have been previously drawn to Jehovah, as were the remnant by the preaching of John the Baptist; but the peace that flows from iniquity being taken away, and the joy of complete deliverance, comes after. They will then sing, “Unto us a son is born.”

After this Zechariah is, as it were, awakened by God to see all the perfect order of that which He was going to establish. Here also the present grace furnishes the occasion for the revelation of the ulterior purposes of God. The prophet sees the vessel of the light of God on earth ordained in all its perfection. The candlestick was one, but it had seven branches. It was unity in the perfection of spiritual co-ordination—perfect unity, perfect development in that unity. Each thing was in its place as a means, and the two sources of spiritual grace which fed the light, were placed one on each side to sustain the light that shone before Jehovah. These are, as it appears to me, the royalty and the priesthood of Christ, which maintain, by power and spiritual grace, the perfect light of divine order among the Jews. The work was divine, the pipes were of gold. The thing ministered was the grace of the Spirit, the oil which fed the testimony, maintained in this perfect order. But the Spirit first places Israel, at the moment of the prophecy, in a very definite position. It was not yet the time for the exercise of outward power, or for Jehovah to put forth

His might, and establish His glory and His worship among His people. It was His Spirit acting in the remnant of Israel, if they would hearken, to bring them into relationship with God morally, and in a worship that He would accept, if—imperfect as it must needs be, since the nation was not re-established by the power of God, but remained still in bondage—this worship was rendered to God in Spirit and in truth, according to that which He bestowed on the people. And at the same time, outward providence was exercised to accomplish all that was necessary for the maintenance of the relationship with God, and that God's grace had established for Israel, after their fall and their deliverance from Babylon by the providential interposition of God. The seven eyes which ran to and fro throughout the earth should see with joy the house in which the restored remnant would be in relationship with God, completed by the hands of Zerubbabel.

This clearly defines the position of the people, and the two orders of things set before us in this prophecy. The present condition was that of relationship with God, established in sovereignty by His Spirit, through which He could accept their worship, His Spirit being in the midst of the restored remnant, and providential power being in exercise to secure blessing, but no immediate government on God's part. Government was left in the hands of the Gentiles.

That which was prophetically in view, was the perfect order established in Jerusalem as the vessel of divine light on earth, maintained by the ministry of the two sons of oil—the royalty and the priesthood—which stood before the Lord* of the whole earth. The God of Israel had had His throne at Jerusalem. The God of heaven had

bestowed the dominion of the whole earth on the head of the Gentiles. Now the Lord170 of the whole earth would establish earthly order, according to His will, at Jerusalem; and would there maintain divine light by a royal priesthood in His presence. {Zec 5}

Chapter 5 shews us the other side of the picture, that is to say, the judgment of the wicked in Israel in the last days. The prophet sees an immense roll filled with a curse for the wicked, for those that sin against their neighbour and against the name of Jehovah, to cut off both them and their houses.

The people, as a whole also, are then put in their true position. That which called itself Jerusalem and Israel and the people of God, belonged in fact to Babylon. God, by His mighty providence, takes them up and sets them on their true base; and their house is built in the land of Shinar. Its Babylonish character is fully evidenced by its position. {Zec 6}

In chapter 6 we are shewn the government of God in the four monarchies, but neither as immediate government on God’s part nor merely that of human government. We have seen power committed to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, and that he had failed therein. But it was not the will of God immediately to resume the reins of government in the earth, neither to leave the earth to the wickedness and the will of man without any providential bridle, without any government. He controls them, not by acting directly, so as to maintain the testimony of His character and His ways, but by means of instruments whom He employs, the result of whose activity is according to His will. The only wise God can do this, for He knows all things and directs all things to

the accomplishment of His purposes. This is the reason that we see all sorts of things morally in disagreement with His ways in government, which yet succeed: a chaos as to the present, but the issue of which will furnish a clue, that will make manifest a wisdom even more profound and admirable than that which was displayed in His own immediate government in Israel, perfect as this was in its place. It is that universal providence, which, in its results, satisfies the moral exigencies of the nature of God; while in the intermediate course of things free scope is left to the active energies of man's will.

This mediate power, exercised by means of instruments proceeding from the presence of the Most High God, is employed in connection with His rights over the whole earth. This is the character of God in the prophecy of Zechariah. It is the character also of His government for the time being, that is, during the four empires. When Christ shall reign, the government will again be immediate in His Person, and Jerusalem be its centre.

I think that the judgment executed upon Babylon answers to that which is said in verse 8. We know that Chaldea was always the north country to Israel. The spirits employed by God have accomplished the will of God there. The seventh verse appears to indicate the Roman empire, comprising everything from its first establishment to the present time, and its historical character at all times. The white horses would be the representatives of that which God has done by means of the Greek empire. The grisled and bay appear to indicate a mixture of Greek and Roman power—at least, these horses have a double character, which becomes afterwards two distinct classes (the last only having the

character of universality, which goes to and fro throughout all the earth). I doubt not that all these proud instruments of His government will be found again as spheres of judgment in the last days, when God begins to assert His rights as the God of the whole earth, unless Babylon geographically may be an exception in virtue of what is said in verse 8.

The full result is given in verses 9-15 in which the Branch is looked at as born and growing up in the place of His earthly glory, building the temple of Jehovah, bearing the glory, ruling upon His throne, a priest upon His throne, the true Melchisedec, maintaining for the earth the enjoyment of perfect peace—the "counsel of peace "with Jehovah. This counsel of peace is maintained between Jehovah and the Branch (compare Psalms 85 and 87). Therefore should they come from far to build in the temple of Jehovah; and the testimony of prophecy should be made good by its fulfilment.

Again we see the two elements which link the events and the dealings of God in the prophet's day, with the glorious circumstances of the last days. First, the overthrow of Babylon has already executed the judgment on the first oppressors of Jerusalem who led her captive. The whole system is thus judged in principle; as in the New Testament it is said of the adversary, "Now is the prince of this world judged." And then, the fulfilment of the promise is attached to the obedience of the remnant (v. 15). This continues with respect to Israel unto the end (see Acts 3, and even Heb. 3 and 4). But meantime the fulness of the Gentiles must come in independently of this on other grounds. At the end Israel, obedient (that is in fact, the remnant)—no longer united to the order of the assembly, but

connected with the promises to Israel in the earth—will enjoy the fulfilment of these promises.

We may remark that in Zechariah (Babylon being already judged) we have neither man invested with the government, nor the moral character of the empires presented under the form of an image or that of beasts; but the government of God hidden, providential, but real, in connection with these empires. This is an element of much importance, if we would understand the whole system existing from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and the return from captivity, until the end, when Christ shall reign in righteousness. The first part of the prophecy closes with the end of chapter 6.

The prophecy, from chapter 7 to the end of the book, has for its special object the introduction of the Messiah in Israel, with the consequences of His rejection. The same principles of responsibility and blessing, which we have already seen established with respect to the remnant on their return from Babylon, are found again here. The prophecy begins by calling to mind the insincerity of their lamentations and humiliation during the seventy years' captivity, and the example set them by the hardness of the people's heart, before that sorrowful period, which led to their dispersion among all the nations, the pleasant land being made desolate. But now Jehovah's love for Zion, His chosen city, excited His jealousy and His wrath against those who oppressed her. He was returned unto Zion, and she should be blessed as a city of truth, and the mountain of Jehovah should be His holy mountain. Jerusalem should be abundantly blessed, her streets full of inhabitants, and her old men full of days. God would bring back His people from all the countries in which they had been scattered and

captive. From the day in which His people had turned to Him and laid the foundation of the temple, blessing should flow as a river, even as misery and judgment had done before. The Jews who had returned from Babylon were placed under conditions of truth and uprightness for the enjoyment of these blessings (v. 16, 17).

Besides this, Jehovah declares, unconditionally, that their fast days should be joyful feasts, and that men should come from all nations to worship Jehovah at Jerusalem, and should take hold of the skirt of a Jew, knowing that God was with that people. Here are, then, the moral consequences of disobedience, already accomplished—insincerity and hardness of heart pointed out; present blessing introduced by grace, and bestowed on the people under the condition of a godly walk, such fulness of blessing as the presence of Jehovah in their midst would involve; and, finally, the purposes of God in grace, which, depending on Himself, should be never-failing.

But this last thought introduces many consequences and important events. The first two consequences are, that Israel should be put in possession of the whole territory which God had given them. Enemies from without would come, but Jehovah Himself would defend His house; and the result of this direct intervention would be, that no oppressor should pass through them any more. Jehovah Himself had already looked into this matter.

It was a day in which the eyes of all mankind should be turned towards Jehovah, as well as those of the tribes of Israel. Compare this part of chapter 9 with Isaiah 17.

Now this immediate intervention of Jehovah, who encamps about His house (it is the defence of the city

against the last attack of the Assyrians, which we have found more than once in the prophets), necessarily introduces the Messiah, in view of the events of the last days. Verse 9 speaks of this. It presents the Messiah in His personal character as King Messiah, but in a twofold aspect. And this is the reason why, in the New Testament, that portion only is quoted which relates to Jehovah's first coming. The King of Zion comes unto her. He is just, and brings in Himself power and salvation. This is the general idea, that which Zion needed, and which shall be accomplished in the last days. The Holy Ghost adds to this the personal character of the Lord, the spirit in which He presented Himself to Israel—lowly and riding upon an ass. We all know the fulfilment of this at His first coming.

The Messiah Himself having been thus presented, the definitive effect of His presence is announced in that which follows, as the continuation of verse 8, remembering who has been introduced. He will put an end to war in Israel, will establish peace among the nations, and His dominion shall be unto the ends of the earth (the land of Israel being the centre of His power). Jehovah, having delivered the people—that is, the believing remnant, who shall become the nation—by the blood of the covenant, will restore them double for all their affliction, and use them to establish His power over the isles of the Gentiles. The might of Jehovah should accompany and save them, as the flock f His people. He would pour out blessing upon the land at the prayer of the remnant of His people, who had been wandering like a flock without a shepherd, and had sought help in vain from their idols. But Jehovah had now visited His flock, the house of Judah, and out of them strength should go

forth. Judah should be as His goodly horse in the battle. He would strengthen Judah and save Ephraim. Jehovah would gather them in such numbers that there would be no place for them. He would dry up the sea and the river to make a way for them, and the pride of their enemies should be brought down. They should be strong in Jehovah their God, and walk up and down in His name.

To the end of chapter 10 it is the general proclamation of the blessing that should crown Judah and Ephraim, when, by the favour of Jehovah, they were restored to their land. {Zec 11}

Chapter 11. In connection with the judgments that should attend it, the Spirit enters into more detail with respect to the rejection of the Messiah, and the particular circumstances of the last days, in consequence of this rejection. It is the history of Israel in connection with Christ.

I think that the beginning of chapter 11 speaks of the invasion of Israel by the Gentiles. The first three verses give a picture of the general condition of the land. In verse 4 Jehovah takes up the case of His devastated flock. Their Gentile possessors only made a spoil of them. Their own shepherds pitied them not. Jehovah, while giving up the nation to the fruit of their iniquity, was moved with compassion for the poor of the flock, and cares for the oppressed. It is the spirit of the life of Christ in Israel.

The two staves represent His authority, as uniting all the nations under Him, and binding Judah and Israel together— the double effect of the presence of Christ. But the shepherds of Israel are cut off; and Christ, grieved with the wicked and corrupt people, Himself

abhorred by them, leaves them to themselves and to the consequences of their behaviour. As the result of this, He renounces for that time the inheritance of the nations, since it is in Israel that He is to take possession of it. But the poor of the flock have recognised in His ways the fulfilment of the word of prophecy: they have not waited for the manifestation of the Messiah's public glory in Israel, but have attached themselves to Him personally, in consequence of the proofs He gave of His mission from God. It appears to me that this comprises the apostolic work in Israel, as well as the life of Christ. The prophecy only speaks of the fact itself. Verses 12 and 13 relate the price at which the nation estimated their King and their Saviour. The fulfilment of this is known to all. The prophet here performs the thing prophetically, marking that so it was to be according to the counsels of God. We see also that Christ appears here as Jehovah Himself. The connection between verses 6 and 9 brings out the same truth. The thoughts of Jehovah with respect to that which He will do find their accomplishment in the Person of Jesus. The union between Judah and Israel, of which Christ should be the bond, is also deferred. In verses 15-17 the prophet is seen assuming the features of the Antichrist, to represent him in type (as previously, the actions of Judas), in order to announce that foolish shepherd who should be raised up in judgment from God, and who should himself suffer the judgment he deserved. Christ came in the name of the Father—He was not received. Another should come in his own name, and him the people would receive.

The introduction of Antichrist, a shepherd171 in Israel, brings in also the events that crowd around Jerusalem in

the last days. All the nations should be gathered round Jerusalem, but only to find it a burdensome stone that should crush them. God would judge the power of man, but would raise up His people in sovereign grace. He would destroy the nations that had come up against Jerusalem. The deliverance of the people by the power of Jehovah comes first. This is sovereign grace to the chief of sinners—the feeble but beloved Judah, who had added to all her rebellion against God, the despisal and rejection of her King and Saviour.

The grace of God takes the lead over all the resources of man. The audacity of the enemies of God's people stirs up His affection, which never diminishes; and thus, by compelling God to act, this very audacity becomes the means of proving the faithfulness of His love. Judah, guilty yet beloved Judah, is delivered—that is to say, the remnant, to whom the affliction of Israel had been a burden; but the question of her conduct towards her God still remained. Nevertheless the grace shewn in her deliverance had wrought upon her heart. The law we know was written in it, but much more. To be loved by a God against whom one has so deeply revolted melts the heart. Grace then goes farther, and presents to the people the Messiah whom they had pierced. The Rejected One is the Jehovah that delivers them. It is now no longer merely the cry of distress, that has no refuge but Jehovah. Israel, more strictly Judah, no longer a prey to the terrible anxiety which her distress occasioned, is entirely occupied with her sin felt in the presence of a crucified Saviour. It is no longer a common grief, that of a nation crushed and trodden down in its most cherished sentiments. It is now hearts melted by the sense of what they had been towards One who had given Himself up

for them. Each family, isolated by its personal convictions, confesses apart the depth of its sin; while no fear of judgment or punishment comes in to impair the character and the truth of their sorrow. Their souls are restored according to the efficacy of the work of Christ. It is this which definitively brings the people into relationship with God. We have seen the same moral order in the typical history of David—first, the ark on Mount Zion, and then the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. {Zec 13}

In chapter 13 all is cleansed. The fountain is open to the house of David, whose sin had ruined the people, without abrogating the rights or weakening the grace of God; and also to the people of Jerusalem, who were more than partners in the sins of their rulers. Here it is practical cleansing with water. Faith in Him whom they had pierced was already in their hearts. The idols and the false prophets, the two chief sources of the misery of the Jews, should be entirely taken away. No one, not even the very parents of the guilty, would tolerate these abominations and deceits. Christ is the pattern, and all shall be judged of by it. Everything takes its moral character according to the relationship of the redeemed with Him. This gives occasion to a full historical development of that which has happened to Him. How He has been pierced, and its consequences, are detailed with respect to Jerusalem, Israel, and the world.

In verse 5 read, “I am no prophet, but a husbandman; for man [Adam] has acquired me as a slave from my youth.” That is to say, Christ takes the humble position of One devoted to the service of man, in the circumstances into which Adam was brought by sin (that is, with respect to His position as a man living in this

world). Verse 6 directs our attention to that which befell Him among the Jews, where He was wounded and treated as a malefactor. The true character of His Person and of His sufferings is then revealed in verse 7. It is the sword of Jehovah, which awakes against the man who is His companion, His equal. This verse requires no comment. It is most interesting to see that, when Christ is looked at in His humiliation as man, He is treated by the Spirit as the equal of Jehovah in His rights; and when (Psalm 45:7) He is seen upon His throne of divine glory, and addressed as God, those that are His are acknowledged as His companions in glory, sharing His position.

The result of this rejection of Christ, the centre of the history of eternity, of man's connection with God, and the revelation of both—for this event is here considered in connection with the history of Israel—is the scattering of the sheep who had been gathered around the true Shepherd. Nevertheless God stretches out His hand over the little ones. The result for Judah, when the current of their history shall be resumed in the last days, is that two-thirds shall be cut off in all the land (compare Ezek. 20:34-38 with respect to Israel); and the third that is left shall pass through the fire, shall call upon the name of Jehovah, and shall be heard. Jehovah will abolish the name of Lo-ammi—not My people—by saying, It is My people; and they shall say, Jehovah is my God. This is the definite result of His dealings with His people; and here especially with Judah, of whom He had said Lo-ammi, and the remnant of whom He acknowledges as His people.

Chapter 14 announces the final events that shall bring in this result, as chapter 13 had especially detailed that

which regarded Christ. The two subjects of chapter 12 are thus resumed in detail.

We may remark here, that the effect of the staff being broken, which united Judah and Israel, is here realised. The prophet speaks only of Judah, of the people who in the land were guilty of rejecting the Messiah, and who will suffer the consequence of so doing in the land during the last days, the mass of them at that time joining themselves to Antichrist. Jerusalem, as we have said, forms the centre of the prophecy. No prophet could perish outside her borders. What a terrible thing to be outwardly near God when one is not so inwardly, and when the heart invests itself with the name of God as with a cloak of pride—as a buckler, so that His arrows no longer reach the conscience!

Nevertheless, in spite of her pride and her confederacy with evil, Jerusalem shall be taken in the last days. We have seen, when studying the other prophets, that this will be the case; and then afterwards, when again beseiged, Jehovah will intervene for the destruction of these enemies. This is very distinctly announced here. The nations shall be assembled by Jehovah; the city shall be taken and the houses rifled, and half the people led captive. Jehovah will then come forth against those nations, as we read in chapter 12 (compare Isaiah 66 and Micah 4). He comes in the Person of Christ to the Mount of Olives, whence He ascended. The Mount of Olives cleaves in the midst, forming a great valley, spreading terror among the people who are there. But if Jehovah identifies Himself thus, so to speak, with the meek and lowly Jesus formerly on the earth, in order that the identity of the Saviour and Jehovah should be clearly acknowledged, it is not the less true that He will

come from heaven in all His glory (as He Himself predicted, as well as the prophets beginning with Enoch). The heavenly saints will accompany Him in His public manifestation to the eyes of an astonished world. Marvellous glory for those that are His, with whom He will manifest Himself before all the wicked! For here it is Jehovah's public coming to the earth, as the righteous Judge, making war upon all that rebel against Him.

I do not see that the last-mentioned event follows that which precedes it in the chapter. There is a division in the middle of verse 5. "And Jehovah my God shall come" begins a fresh subject, introducing a grand distinct event, which affects the whole earth in a manner that characterises its future existence. The presence of Jehovah upon the Mount of Olives renews, we may say, His visible relationship with Judah. This part of the subject closes with the words, "Uzziah, king of Judah." That which follows is intimately connected with the return of Christ to the Jews, in the very spot from which He left this earth; but it looks at it from a higher point of view, and takes up the subject of the relationship of Jehovah with the whole earth, when He comes from heaven with the saints. This is another part of the subject and a very important one.

The meaning of the rather difficult passage that follows has, I think, been given, as to its general sense, by Martin in his French translation. The Hebrew is acknowledged to be obscure. It may be, perhaps, translated, "there shall not be a precious light [which] shall be withdrawn." It is "a light of preciousness and denseness"; the last word may be taken for "shall be withdrawn." It shall not be a day of mingled light and darkness, but a day appointed by Jehovah, a day

characterised by His intervention and His mighty presence, and that could not be characterised by the ordinary vicissitudes of night and day; but, at the moment when the total darkness of night might be expected, there should be light. Living waters should flow from Jerusalem towards the east and towards the west, into the Dead Sea and into the Great Sea. The heat of summer should not dry up their source.

Jehovah shall be God over all the earth; there shall be but one Jehovah, and His name one. It shall be truly one universal religion, the dominion of the one Jehovah, the God of the Jews, over all the earth. The land round Jerusalem shall be entirely peopled, and Jerusalem lifted up and securely inhabited in her place. There shall be no more any destruction of the city which Jehovah has chosen. A deadly plague shall smite all those that have fought against her. They shall mutually destroy each other. Judah shall also fight against them, and their riches shall be her prey. The remnant that are spared among the nations shall come up to Jerusalem, to the feast in which the entrance of God's people into their rest is celebrated. And all shall be holiness; everything in Jerusalem shall be consecrated to Jehovah.

170 'Adon.' Chap. 4:14; 6:5.

171 The worthless shepherd (v. 17), I suppose, is the same. He deserts the Jews, and identifies himself with the Gentile power when the Jewish worship is put down. He is "a thing of nought," as Jer. 14:14.

## Haggai

The last three prophets prophesied after the Babylonish captivity. God, as we have seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, brought back a small remnant of His people, who were re-established in Jerusalem and in the land; but the throne of God was not again set up there, neither was the royalty of the house of David reinstated in its original authority. The empire of the Gentile head had been in a certain sense judged as not having fulfilled its duty to God, who had given it its authority. But another empire, raised up among the Gentiles, had taken the place of the first; and, while under the overruling hand of God (who disposes of the hearts of all) favourable to the Jews, still held the people of God in subjection to its yoke—the yoke of those who were not in covenant with God, but still aliens to His promises. God recognised the power of the empire which He had established. Israel was therefore dependent on the favour of those who ruled over them because of their sins, and had to wait upon God to render them favourable, worshipping Him according to His merciful appointments, until the Messiah should come, who would be their Redeemer and Deliverer.

Deprived of almost everything, Israel were not deprived of the lovingkindness of their God, on which they should have reckoned, and of which they had received a striking testimony, in the return of the remnant from the lands in which they had been captive. If all else were lost, the fear of God and His law in their hearts remained to them; and godliness might now be

exercised in the manner which He had prescribed (compare Deut. 30).

The three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, set before us the encouragements which God gave the people, that they might be faithful in their new position; and the testimony against their unfaithfulness, called for by the decay of their piety, and the total want of reverence for Jehovah into which the people had fallen. The temple was necessarily the centre of this imperfect and intermediate state of the people. It was there, if God allowed the re-establishment of their worship, that the hearts of the people should centre. That was the outward form in which their piety as a people should be expressed. It was thus that the return of their heart to God should be manifested. Whatever deficiencies there might be in the restored Levitical service, still, it was the house of God, to which was attached all that could be re-established, and was the centre of its exercise.

But the faith of the Jews was quickly enfeebled, and they ceased to build. There were difficulties, no doubt. It was not now as in the days of Solomon, when everything was at the disposal of the king whose power extended over all the neighbouring countries. But God had shewn His goodness towards His people by inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favour them; and Israel should have had confidence in the kindness of God, and have expected its fruits; but, full of unbelief, they were speedily discouraged.

God chastised His people, but He did so at the fitting time. He employs the means which His sovereign grace so often used in the history we have been considering. He raises up a prophet, and even two, to revive their

courage and stimulate them to the work. In the dealings of God, two things aid in deciding the right time for His intervention, namely, moral considerations and God's arrangement of events. In this case God had sufficiently chastised His people, to make manifest His governmental dealings in the relations of grace, which He now established with them by means of the prophets; and He had raised up a prince who was disposed—if the people acted in faith—to acknowledge the will of God and the decrees of Cyrus.

Having thus prepared all both morally and providentially (for He makes everything work together for our good), He sends His prophets to animate their courage and their faith, so as to lead them to accomplish that which had always been their duty.

They should always have leaned directly upon God, and have gone on with the work, unless hindered by force. 166 Now, also, they are called to proceed with it, resting on God, without knowing the king's mind. Their confidence must be in God Himself. Moreover, without this, there would have been neither piety nor faith in their labours. The king's support had been prepared by God for the moment in which their faith should have been manifested. In fact, the difficulty did not fail to arise; but, faith being in exercise, they continued to build in spite of their enemies, being directed in their reply to these enemies by the wisdom of God, and the king gives it his sanction. A difficulty may be a real one, but it is only for the unbelief of hearts that it is an obstacle, if on the path of God's will; for faith reckons upon God, and performs that which He wills, and difficulties are as nothing before Him. Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too that are apparently

well founded: they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

The subject of Haggai is the temple. God having brought back the captives, they immediately seek their own ease without seeking to rebuild the house of Jehovah. Was it then a time to rebuild their own? There was tranquillity enough for the latter—it required no faith—the world made no opposition. The prophet exhibits the practical effect of this, the sensible chastisements of God even as to their temporal interests. And why these chastisements? They neglected God in neglecting His house. In truth, if they had thought of God, His house would have been their first object.

The people, moved by the fear of Jehovah, hearkened to the words of His servant the prophet. But another difficulty stands in the way of faith; the painful inferiority of all that can be accomplished by the remnant of His people, when God brings them back from captivity. They can do nothing in comparison with the former manifestation of His glory in the midst of His people. The effect of the people's fall and of the captivity they had suffered is felt in everything. God cannot identify His glory with an authority different from His own, exercised over His people (and which must needs be so) as the result of His righteous judgment, of His government on earth. He may lift them up—may restore them, because He loves them; but it is no longer the same thing. He cannot re-establish that direct connection which brings with it the manifestation of His power and glory. That relationship had ended in the judgment. The consciousness of this inferiority tends to weaken faith.

The grace of God meets this difficulty by the testimony of he prophet. It is a very sorrowful thing to see the ruin of that which God established in blessing, and the weakness and imperfection of that which is raised upon those ruins, although even this is the fruit of His precious grace.

The prophet, without troubling himself as to the king's intentions, encourages the people by turning their thoughts to Jehovah Himself, and shewing them that, after all, Jehovah reigned, cared for them, and would have them act in view of what He was for them, and seek His glory. For, weak as they were, He would thus be in relationship with them.

But the testimony of God graciously takes into account also, the natural effects of the mean appearance of that which they could do for Him, for God thinks of everything that concerns His people. He was as faithfully their God now as at the best period of their history. The proof of it was indeed stronger. He was with them. The word that went forth from His mouth when He brought them up from Egypt He would maintain. His Spirit should remain among them. They were not to fear. But, while sustaining the faith of this feeble remnant by His tender mercy, He goes much farther. If He could not manifest Himself among them, on account of their fall and of the establishment of another order of things, the time would come for His own intervention by His own power. He would shake all things, because the creature could not sustain the weight of His glory, and would establish this glory by His power, and would fill His earthly dwelling-place with His glory.

Not only should the earth be shaken—this had often happened; but the enemy who exercised the power of darkness had always led men to corrupt everything afresh, and to degrade all that God had established in blessing. But now, the heavens and the earth, the sea—authority on high, and all that was organised below, all established order, and all that floated unorganised in the world—and all the nations, should be shaken; and the object of desire to all nations should come; and the house which they were now rebuilding with so much trouble, which was so contemptible in comparison with its former glory, should be filled with glory by the Lord.

The expression which I have rendered by “the object of desire shall come “is very difficult to translate. It appears to me that, looking at the context, I have given the sense,167 and that the Spirit of God designedly expressed Himself in vague terms, which, when the mind apprehended the true glory of the house, would embrace the Messiah. The object of the passage is to certify that the house shall be filled with glory.168 Meanwhile outward glory should be granted it. The silver and the gold were Jehovah’s. But the nations, overthrown, oppressed, and oppressing one another, not knowing where to look for happiness, strength, and peace, shall find in that One who alone should establish the glory of Jehovah and bestow true peace—in a word, shall find in Christ alone blessing and deliverance; and He shall be the glory of the house which the poor remnant were building.

The latter glory of the house should be even greater than the former. It is not “the glory of the latter house”; the house is always considered as the same house. God will fill it with more glory at the end than at the

beginning, and the peace of Jehovah Himself shall have its seat there. This shall be accomplished in the last days. He who shall fill it with glory has indeed come; but, even while making eternal peace for our souls, the world was in such a state that He was obliged to say to the people, “Think not that I am come to bring peace, but a sword.” Having shaken all nations, He will, coming in His glory, set peace in the earth.169 Two other prophecies close the Book of Haggai, relating, like the rest of its contents, to the house. The people, who neglected Jehovah, had become, as it were, profane. That which is holy cannot sanctify profane things; but an unclean thing defiles that which is holy; for holiness is exclusive with respect to evil. The presence of evil destroys holiness by the very fact of its presence, unless the holiness be of that nature which, by its own existence, excludes all that is contrary to it— such as the nature of God. But when God is admitted and acknowledged, He can bless by the power of His presence. Thus, from the day that the people even sought to recognise and to realise that presence among them, blessing proceeded from it.

The second prophecy returns to the shaking of all things. In that day, the governor of Judah, the heir of David, should be as a signet on the hand of Him by whom all things were shaken. While encouraging the people at the time of the prophecy—a time when they so greatly needed it—this prophecy, in naming Zerubbabel, has Him in view who, when God will shake the heavens and the earth, shall be the true seed of David and the heir of his crown according to God— the Christ of God, the Elect from among the people.

The judgment mentioned in verse 22 appears to me, not the judgment of the throne of the beast, but that of the nations who, at that day, will come up against Jerusalem. All that sets itself up against the rights of Jehovah established according to His counsels at Jerusalem (rights that were identified with the house they were building) should be overthrown. No doubt this is true, in general, of the kingdom of the beast: but the conditions of its existence are quite different. God had put Jerusalem under the power of the head of this empire. The crimes that draw down judgment upon him, are yet more audacious and intolerable than those of which the nations are guilty.

In sum, the object of this prophecy is to connect blessing on the earth with the house; and to shew that, mean as it might be, its latter glory should be greater than the former. God, in establishing all in glory according to the counsels of His grace, would introduce something much more excellent than that which had been committed to man, and established by his means. This is connected with the shaking of all things by His mighty hand, and with the establishment of David's heir as the object of God's love, and the vessel of His power.

It will be observed that the Spirit of God, although He is present to bless His people, to encourage them, and to connect them with God in the worship that was to be offered Him in His house, yet acknowledges the authority of the Gentile empire. These prophecies are dated according to the years of the reign of the Gentile king. It is His will that the things of God be rendered to God, and the things of Caesar to him who then held the place of Caesar. It was God who had placed him there. We shall thus understand the perfect wisdom of the Lord

in His reply (Mark 12:17), and the way in which the word is its expression.

Malachi neither places nor establishes anything as Haggai does, and Zechariah. He only pronounces judgment upon the result in Israel of that which God had done in grace, by reestablishing the remnant; shewing how little the worship, by which He had connected Israel with Himself, had been maintained in such a manner as to glorify Him.

166 This actually happened (see Ezra 4:24): but it is evident that, in consequence of the spirit of unbelief working in them, its effect was to discourage them entirely, so that they made no effort to recommence their work, saying, “The time is not come that Jehovah’s house should be built.” It was only the testimony of the Spirit by the prophet that aroused them from their moral torpor.

167 Diodati’s Italian version, which is considered very accurate, agrees with the English. De Wette renders it, “The precious things.” But it is not what is very generally used for mere costly things, though the same root. This is Chemdath, that Chamudoth. The difficulty is that “shall come “is in the plural. Perhaps this is De Wette’s motive for saying “things,” taking Chemdath, as “vahu “comes first, as a description of the things that come. The Italian has la scelta verra, the chosen object (the choice one) of the nations shall come.

168 If not, and the sense is to be governed by the following verse, it would refer to the desirable things of the Gentiles, which would glorify the house; but I prefer what is in the text.

169 It is remarkable that in Luke, when Christ rides into Jerusalem, it is said: “Peace in heaven “(Luke 19:38). For it is indeed, when Satan is cast down thence after the final war with the heavenly powers, that blessing upon earth can be really established. Up to then it has been always corrupted and spoiled by the power of evil, or spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Then that will be for ever over. Satan may come up on earth if permitted, as an adversary, but his heavenly power as spiritual wickedness is for ever over. The prince of the power of the air is gone, his place was found no more in heaven.

# Malachi

The prophecy of Malachi deals with the people brought back from the captivity of Babylon, and is most important as shewing the moral condition of the people consequent upon their return. Its last verses evidently close the testimony of Jehovah to the people, till the coming of him who should prepare the way of Jehovah, in a word, till John the Baptist. The law and the prophets were until John, and Malachi is professedly, and from the nature of his testimony, the last.

The great moral principle unfolded in the book, is the insensibility of the people to that which Jehovah was for them, and to their own iniquity with respect to Jehovah —their want of reverence for God, their despisal of Jehovah. Alas! this insensibility had reached such a point that, when the very actions that proved their contempt were laid before their consciences, they saw no harm in them. Nevertheless this did not alter the purposes and counsels of God, although it brought judgment on those who were guilty of it (see chap, 1:2, 6; 2:14; 3:7, 13).

Malachi also distinguishes the remnant and that which characterised them, while proclaiming the punishment of the wicked, and the call of God to those who had ears to hear to bring them back to repentance—a ministry which would restore moral order in the hearts of parents and children—that relationship, from the maintenance and exercise of which, all earthly peaceful order according to God flows; and that order is what God is considering here.

At the commencement of the prophecy Jehovah sets forth His love to Israel, slighted alas! by an ungrateful

people, yet proved by their election from the beginning. Even while exhibiting the sad ingratitude of the people, Jehovah adheres to His own thoughts toward them. He will bless Israel, and He will judge Edom, in spite of the pride of the latter.

The sin of Israel, and their offensive indifference in the service of their God, is shewn (v. 6-10). This gives occasion to another expression of grace—the revelation of the name of Jehovah among all nations. Thus, the election of Israel, and mercy towards the Gentiles, are established amidst, and even on occasion of, the sin of the restored people. Verses 12-14 also display their offences against Jehovah and their contempt of His majesty. Chapter 2:1-9 proclaims the fallen condition of the priests, who ought to have been the faithful depositaries of the mind and ways of God; verses 10-12, their misconduct towards their brethren, and their intimate relationship with idolaters, are pointed out; verses 13-16, the lightness with which they were in the habit of divorcing at their pleasure. But Jehovah was coming.

Here again we find the Lord’s172 first coming connected with the full result of the second. John the Baptist is announced as His messenger to prepare the way before Him; and then, the Angel of the covenant, whom they so earnestly desired, should come; but it would be in judgment, to purge the people and take away all their dross. Then should their offering in Jerusalem be acceptable to Jehovah, an offering in righteousness. But all the evil-doers should be judged; for God was unchangeable, both in righteousness and grace. It was this which, after all, secured the existence of Israel, happen what might. Let Israel then return unto

Jehovah, and Jehovah would return unto them. But the pride of Israel is excited by this, and they say, “Wherein shall we return?” Their sins with respect to the offerings and the ordinances are then shewn. But grace again displays itself in prospect of the people’s return from their practical alienation from God. They had but to return and prove the goodness of God.

In the midst of the pride of the wicked in their apparent success, the remnant are distinguished as being drawn together by their common spiritual wants and feelings, founded on the fear of Jehovah which governed them all. In their affliction they spake often one to another of these things;173 and Jehovah hearkened and heard and wrote it down in His book. And they shall be His in the day when He maketh up His jewels. After this they should discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that served God and those that served Him not. For the day was coming which should burn as an oven, and the proud and the wicked should be as stubble. But to those that feared the name of Jehovah, the Sun of Righteousness should rise. It should be no longer the sorrowful night of darkness and affliction and of the enemy’s dominion, but a day which God would cause to shine by the presence of His Son, by the reign of His Beloved One on the earth. The righteous would have dominion over them in the morning, for the time is a time of judgment, and the wicked would be as ashes under the soles of their feet.

It will be remarked here, that all is in connection with the authority of Jehovah and His dispensations towards Israel, and with the conduct of Israel, as a nation, towards their God. That which belongs to the first coming of Christ, and its consequences to Israel, is not

brought in here. John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner of Jehovah, who without doubt is Christ Himself, but who here comes as the Angel of the covenant, coming suddenly to His temple, and trying everything in Israel by fire and by His judgment, in order that the offering of Judah may be pleasant to Jehovah as in the days of old. The transgressions here spoken of are those of the people brought back from Babylon against Jehovah. The Gentiles, and their empire, are not seen here. All takes place between Israel only and Jehovah, the God of their fathers, as in former days between the people loved of God and Jehovah who loved them. A strange god is that which Jehovah will not endure. It is Levi, with whom His covenant had been; it was the priests, whose lips should have kept the true knowledge of Jehovah.

There is even no king here spoken of; except that Jehovah, whose name is terrible among the heathen, is their king. Finally the people (Israel) are commanded to return to the law of Moses given at Horeb for all Israel.

Thus we have here Jehovah's unchangeable love for the people whom He gathered to Himself at Horeb, His controversy with them on account of their sins, the marking out of a faithful remnant, and the sending of a messenger before the execution of the judgment. Israel is looked at nationally, in their own relationship with Jehovah, as returned from captivity and awaiting the judgment of their God, who sends His messenger to forewarn them.

All was prepared to put the people morally to the proof, with respect to the accomplishment of this, at the time

when John the Baptist was sent; but Israel had not ears to hear, and all was lost.

The perfect and entire fulfilment will take place at the end, after that other glorious work of God with regard to the assembly shall have been accomplished.

The longsuffering of God towards Israel had been great; for, when they had rejected His Son, He sent them— through the intercession of that same well-beloved Saviour on the cross— the message by the mouth of Peter, that, if they repented, the Christ whom they had slain would return. But their leaders were more than deaf to this grace on the part of God, and their house still remains empty and desolate.

At the time of the end, Elias—whose mission was to call back an apostate Israel who had forsaken Jehovah to own Him in truth, and that, by the sovereign grace of God, although in connection with the law, and that Mount Horeb, whither he went to lay down the burden of his prophetic office, when rendered useless by the unbelief of the people—Elias shall effectually accomplish his mission before the great and terrible day of Jehovah; in order that the curse of God may not fall upon the land of His delight in that day when He will definitively execute His judgments. It is on this account that John the Baptist is spoken of as being Elias, if Israel could receive it; for he answered to verse 1of chapter 3, whilst, at the same time, he said he was not Elias; for in fact he did not at all fulfil verses 5, 6 of chapter 4 (compare Luke 1:17, 76).

The prophecy speaks to the conscience of those who lived at the time it was delivered (chap. 3:10); and passes on— shewing that at the end of those times Israel

would be put on trial by the mission of grace—to the last days, in which God would display His unchangeable love for His people, and His righteous judgment against evil, by separating a remnant unto Himself for blessing, and by executing judgment on the rebellious.

The Gentiles are not mentioned, nor even the connection of His people with Christ, coming down as man to the earth.

We have thus in these three post-captivity prophets, three distinct subjects, but which make a whole of the three. In Haggai it is grace toward the returned remnant, God's Spirit still among them, and in connection with the house and worship of Jehovah, the temple. Its latter glory should be greater than its former. The kingdoms of the heathen should be cast down, and Zerubbabel (Christ) as a signet on Jehovah's hand. Peace would be given in Jerusalem.

Zechariah takes up two points: first the empires of the heathen and God's providential ways with Israel—the times of the Gentiles—Jerusalem is owned, but judged of God and stamped as Babylonish in its true character; but at the end the Branch, the Lord Jesus, sets crowns instead of fasting for the faithful—Babylon being already judged—and strangers should come and build in the temple of the Lord. {Mal 7}

From chapter 7 to the end, it is the relation of Israel with Christ, and His rejection and its consequences in the last judgment of Jerusalem; but for all that Jehovah, as we have often seen, would judge definitively all the nations assembled against her. The remnant would be brought to repentance, and Jerusalem be holiness to the Lord, nor should strangers defile it.

Finally we have Malachi shewing us, the state the Jews soon got into, slighting all that was agreeable to God, and indifferent and insensible to their violating every righteous feeling; the practical separation of those that feared the Lord, and the coming of the Lord in judgment and deliverance: meanwhile their recall to the authority of the law, and the coming of Elias before the great and terrible day of the Lord, to turn their hearts in grace into the way of peace.

172 It is, note distinctly, Jehovah's,

173 See the lovely picture of this in the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, before he begins the general subject of it. Only then the Saviour was rejected, and the remnant passed into the assembly, the deliverance of Israel being deferred to the coming of the Lord in power. Here it is looked at as the remnant in Israel connected with that deliverance.