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A Letter Concerning the Lord's Supper

My Dear Brother:

I have had it on my heart to share with you a few thoughts in connection with the Lord's Supper -- that solemn and precious remembrance of Christ. First of all, there is great importance in seeing clearly the object and character of the great central meeting which gives its character to all other meetings. It is described for us in a simple manner in The Acts, and there we see the primary object of that meeting: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (20:7). As the Passover had changed for Israel the order of the months, and the year must begin with the sign of accomplished redemption, so, for Christians, each week must begin with the joyful celebration of the love that has visited them.

The verse in Acts does not say as we sometimes hear, "The disciples came together for a worship meeting." There is no doubt that they would worship; but that was not what was uppermost in their minds. It was their Lord who was before them - Him of whom the bread spoke.

The purpose of coming together should be distinctly before our minds. We must be simple in it. In two opposite ways this simplicity may be destroyed, and the character of the meeting may be lowered and souls suffer. Let us spend a little time in the consideration of this.

First, when we come together, after six days of warfare in the world (would that were always spiritual warfare,

and that we realised the world as an enemy's country simply), we are apt to come full of our spiritual needs to be refreshed and strengthened. We may not use the term, but still the idea in the Lord's Supper to us thus will be that it is a "means of grace." We bring jaded spirits and unstrung energies to a meeting where we trust the weariness will be dispelled and the lassitude recovered from. We come to be ministered to and helped. We require the character of it to be soothing and comforting, speaking much of grace and quieting our overdone nerves for another week before us. And we know too surely that we shall go through the same course exactly, and come back next Lord's day as weary as before, with the same need and thought of refreshment. We come with the same self, in fact, as an object, and scarcely Christ at all, or Christ very much as a means to an end, and not Himself the end.

This is the evil of this state of things: Christ is not in any due sense before our soul, but rather it is our need which He is to be the means of supplying. No doubt there is a measure of truth in this view of the Lord's Supper. Can we ever come to Him without finding refreshment from the coming? Does He not, blessed Lord, delight to serve us? Do not the bread and wine speak of refreshment ministered -- "Wine that makes glad the heart of man. and bread which strengthens man's heart" (Psa.104:15)?

Surely all this is true. But true as it is, it is not this that gathers us. Does not "to show the Lord's death" have a deeper meaning? His own words, "Do this," are not for the regrouping of our own strength, but "in remembrance of Me." Thus this sacramental use of Christ, as I may term it (common as it really is, alas,

among those who think they have outgrown sacraments) essentially lowers the whole thought of the Lord's Supper. The remembrance of Christ is something more and other than what I get by the remembrance; something more than the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ.

I do not mean to deny that Christ is gracious and meets our needs often times in unexpected ways. He is sovereign, and gracious beyond expression. But if we make ourselves the object, will that lead to blessing for us? What honour has Christ in all this? And what must be the character of meetings to which languish and way worn souls come, seeking stimulating cordial to return to what seems only too sadly indicated to be the main business of their lives?

Let us look now at the other way in which our souls may be tempted from the simplicity of the remembrance of Christ.

When we look at the worship of heaven, in that attractive picture in Revelation 5, it is the simple presence of the Lamb slain that calls out the adoration of those 24 elders who are our representatives. Worship with them was no arranged, premeditated thing, but the pouring out of hearts that could not be restrained in the presence of Him who had redeemed them to God by His blood. And here is the mistake on our parts when we think we can make worship a matter of pre-arrangement, while it is, in fact, a thing dependent upon the true remembrance of the Lord.

There will be blessing on the one hand and worship on the other in proportion as our eyes are taken off ourselves and fixed upon the object which both ministers

the one and calls forth the other. There surely will be blessing, for how can the sight of Him do otherwise than bless? And there will be worship, for this is the true and spontaneous response of the heart to the sight of One who, being the Son of God, yet loved us and gave Himself for us. Therefore, the great point pressed in Scripture is remembrance: "This do in remembrance of Me." "You do show the Lord's death."

Of course, we are not to forget that while our eyes look back upon the Lamb slain, it is from the after-side of His resurrection that we contemplate this. "The first day of the week" speaks of resurrection out of death, and gives Him back to us in all the reality of a living person. While we remember His death, we do it in the glad knowledge of His resurrection, and with the Lord Himself in our midst. Who could celebrate the Lord's death but for this? Who could sound a note of praise did He not Himself first raise it? He says, "In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb.2:12; see also Psa.22:22). Death, but death passed, do we celebrate; death which, thus seen, is only the depths of a living love which we carry with us, un-exhausted, inexhaustible, unfathomed, and unfathomable.

"A Lamb as it had been slain" is the object of the elders' worship (Rev.5:6). The Living One carries with Him forever the memorials of His blessed death. The cross is not only atonement effected for us, but the bright and blessed display of God manifest in Christ, and for us, in every attribute displayed.

(From: Letters on Some Practical Points Connected with the Assembly.)

But One Thing is Needful

"BUT ONE THING NEEDFUL."

A Lecture, at Plainfield, N. Y, on Monday evening,
August 4, 1884.

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, 'Lord dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me.' And Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'" (Luke 38-42.)

AS you know, beloved friends, there was genuine faith in both these women. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." Martha had not only received the Lord into her house, but she had received Him into her heart; there is no kind of doubt about that. The very character here in which we find her was not merely her natural character. She was busy about One that she loved. She was busy about One whose glory she recognized, at least in measure. She was busy in serving Him; and there were very few, beloved friends, in that land and time, that cared to serve Him. He was One who had not where to lay His head,- one who was despised and rejected of men - the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; men hid, as it were, their faces from Him; He was despised, and they esteemed Him not.

Martha had faith - genuine faith, as Mary had,- faith that thought of Him truly, as at least One who had come far to serve her, One whom she owned as the Christ of God come into the world. Martha was busy in her care for such an One; and that is the solemn lesson. With all this love in her heart, and with all this real faith in His person,- that faith which made her one of the very few in Israel that recognized Him at all,- that with all that, she could be so far wrong as we see her wrong,- that with all that, she could be put in disparaging contrast with Mary her sister,- Mary who did nothing,-Mary who simply sat at His feet to hear His word. The Lord takes her up to signify His entire approbation as to where she was and what she was. He has a reproof for Martha's service, but has only approbation for Mary's simply sitting at His feet.

His words are very striking; "Thou art careful," He says to Martha;-" Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." Beloved friends, if you are busy about many things, you will not only be busy, but troubled. Martha, we read, "was cumbered with much serving;" and she was not only "encumbered," but "troubled;" -it weighed upon her. It was very busy service; but it weighed upon her,- weighed her down. Beloved, if you have service that weighs you down, look to it-see well why it is. Plainly, that very character would put you along with Martha here. She was cumbered with much serving. She goes to the Lord with her complaint. Mary might help her; Mary has left her to serve alone. She wants Him to use His authority with Mary. She says, "Dost not Thou care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her, therefore, that she help me." She began with seeking to help the Lord, as it were, and she ends

with complaining that she cannot get help herself. She wants to serve the Lord, but she turns round at last and wants to get Mary to serve her. The Lord's words are what we are to think about to-night: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

"But one thing is needful"- only one thing." To what a little point would that diminish all care if we realized it: only "one thing"! How many distractions would our hearts be free from it we only recognized and bowed to the truth of the Lord's words. Only "one thing"! Do you honestly think it, beloved friends? There are a great many needs in this busy world: there are a great many duties that you have, and that Christians think they have to society, to their neighbors, and what not. The Lord here would bring our hearts from every thing simply to one and that one, to sit at His feet and hear His word! Don't you feel as if that would leave service out altogether? How is it possible that only one thing is needful, and Mary had chosen that very part, when there are so many things to do? Are we to leave out service to the Lord ?- what does it mean? Beloved, this: That the thing which is to be our care is that we receive from Christ; and if we receive,-if we are receiving, beloved friends, service, and every thing else, may take care for itself. Mark, I do not mean that you won't serve. You will - you will. But I say this: that if your care is not for service, but to be receiving from Him, you will find that that "one thing" which the Lord speaks of embraces all the rest.

What God wants from us is receptiveness,- He wants in us capacity to receive. You remember what He says

Himself in the seventh chapter of John, when men were busy with their feast of tabernacles before the time,- busy with their empty show of something which after all left the heart just where it was, or, rather, emptier than ever. The Lord stands up just upon that great day of the feast: the great day of the feast is when the hollowness comes out the most. And in that "great day of the feast," when men have shown how little they can do to secure the happiness they have been seeking, the Lord stands up and says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John vii. 37, 38.) Beloved, there is not any thing there, you see - there is not any thing about these busy Martha-cares - this busy Martha-service; there is not a bit about it - not a bit about it. "You take care," the Lord says, "to receive of Me. Come and drink; and he that believeth on Me, soul,-"he that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Well, now, can it be so simple? Have we not got a great deal more to do than believe on Christ? Why, how many of us, beloved friends, are believing on Christ? Thank God, a good many here, And how many could say - how many could realize at all that out of their bellies are flowing rivers of living water? Mark what a beautiful thing,- that out of the innermost of man's nature - the part that craves - the part that is the natural man's god in his fallen condition, the fullness flows. "Their god is their belly," says the apostle in Corinthians: that is to say, that man having fallen from God - fallen from the apprehension of a love that satisfies, and got to be a mere questioner of it, has got into self-care - into labour - into lust. God did not put him into such a place as that. God did not put him into a place where he must care; God put him into a garden;

did not think that even the very world which He had created was good enough for the man of His choice, but took up one special part of it, planted it with trees of the choicest kind, made every thing that should gratify his eyes - his heart, and put him there in the midst of that garden, beloved friends; to enjoy the favour of God, and receive from His hands. And that is all.

Well, you say, was there nothing else? had he nothing to do? No; he had to refrain from doing, - he had not to take of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There was no labour that God required of him. He was the favourite of Heaven - the last, newest creature; he was put there in a marked way as a dependent one, the most dependent, I believe, of all God's creatures. He was put there into a paradise watched by and cared for by God Himself, all his necessities made but the means of God's care for him being manifested. He was essentially a dependent creature. The angels had fallen before this, as we know, and God had made man a creature like the angels - an immortal spirit,- one who was, as it were, His child - His offspring by creation. I say, God put this spirit which He had made into a body, with which it was to be linked, and upon which it was in a certain respect to be even dependent. You know how dependent we are upon our bodies. I don't mean that Adam was in the same way that we are. He was not. I don't mean to say that there could be in Adam any tendency to death, or any thing of that sort - the condition which we are in as fallen. Surely not. But he had necessities, he had to subsist by food, he was dependent upon the senses for his communication with the world, in which he was to subsist, not independently, but maintained by food. The angels fell by pride. God, by

all this, was hiding pride from man. He was teaching him dependence; caring for him, at the same time, in a way that made that dependence no trouble to him. If He made him a needy creature, He made all these things avenues by which he could be filled with satisfaction and de-light. How blessed and wonderful that! God has joined those two things together from the very beginning; making man dependent upon Himself, and making that dependence no trouble - no distress, but a means of realizing the loving care of his Maker and Preserver every day and hour.

And, beloved, you know how man fell. A beast seduced him. God would not allow him to be tempted by a higher being,- one in that character. Of course, we know it was Satan who seduced him. But God would not allow him to come in any angel-shape - as one higher than man. And that makes very significant what you find in the second of Genesis, that God made Adam look at all the beasts which He had made, and give them names. He made him give them names as having knowledge of them. And looking them through and through, Adam knew that there was not one that could be found that could be a help for him. He was the master of the beast; they were all put under his hand, and he was the lord of them. Then God made woman, and gave her to be the help for him that he needed. But, beloved, it was by a beast man fell. God would not suffer him to be tempted but by a beast. He should have no excuse. He should not be able to say really that he was beguiled by one whom he could suppose had superior knowledge. He gave place to one who was below him, lost his superiority over the beasts themselves, and the blessed realization of what God was having vanished from him, he was sent out of paradise

into the world outside, now to prove for himself what his own hands could do for him.

"God hath made man upright," says the preacher, "but he has sought out many inventions;" and men are proud of it,- they are proud of their inventions. I have often said, How is it, beloved friends, that man has to have these inventions? Men say that "necessity is the mother of invention." It is required to invent to meet men's necessities now. But, beloved, how did man need those inventions? They are the sign of the fall. Outside of paradise, and fallen away from God, he lusts. His belly is his god,- he craves. He is a creature made for eternity; he has, as the preacher says again, "eternity in his heart." That expression in Ecclesiastes "the world in his heart"- should be "eternity." With eternity in his heart, man tries to satisfy himself with the poor things of time. What is it that baffles all his wisdom? He has no possible invention that can enable him to do away with death, or to meet judgment. He is a creature, formed for eternity, trying to satisfy himself with a world that passes from him, and ignorant of God. The first knowledge that we find after the fall is of his nakedness, and the first invention an apron to cover his nakedness. And so he has gone on. Now Christ comes into the scene after this fallen and wretched creature,- comes into the midst of men such as you and I are. And he says, with the fullest knowledge of man's condition, "Whosoever is athirst, let him come unto Me, and drink; he that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The place of want, beloved friends, is the belly - the very thing that compels man to toil for satisfaction. The Lord says that he shall be so full - so satisfied, that out of that craving heart of man - out

of his belly, no longer craving, but satisfied - shall flow "rivers of living water." Do you believe it, beloved friends?-do you believe it? If rivers of living water flow out of you, this means both testimony and service, surely. It implies real ministry to others, and that God is to get His own from you in the world. Surely it does. But if this is to be true of you, what are the means by which it is to be accomplished? You are to come and drink; you are to come and receive from Him as Mary did, and you shall find that in this one thing needful all other things are contained. Even amid a ruined world paradise is returned again for him who takes this place at Jesus' feet,-this place of happy dependence to which there is no lack, eternally secured to one that finds it. "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." How sweet and wonderful is that! Do you believe it? I am sure most Christians do not believe it at all. I am afraid, beloved friends, that there are scarcely any of us that in our hearts do fully believe it. If you say you do, where then are these "rivers of living water"? Why don't they flow? What is wanting? Ah! faith in it is wanting. There is so little of it. You see, the fullness is His, it is not ours. People have the idea that grace in a man is a sort of thing that God puts as it were a seed into the soul, and it is to grow and grow and grow, and develop there into more, so that he has consciously more and more. That is not it at all. Surely I do not mean to say that a man is not born of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, and that as so born he does not grow. Surely he does; but that is another thing. From the very beginning of growth this ought to be true of us. Beloved, the blessedness we speak of is to be found in that which God has already given to us, if we are Christians,- that which the apostle

witnesses in the second chapter of the epistle to the Colossians-in that verse of which we have often been speaking together as the key of the epistle. "In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are filled up in Him." Now, if that is really so, you see your competence at once. God has given you your place, your part, in Him already; and think, beloved friends, that in One in whom is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily in Him we are filled up! Faith has got to have to recognize it to find the proper truth of it. Let us remember, too, that the Voice that spoke in the feast of tabernacles did not address itself to any inner circle of privilege. It was in the world He spoke. In it still, therefore, He is speaking to every weary, unsatisfied heart.

Now, I appeal to you, if there are any of you who have such. The Lord invites you, beloved friends. You say, perhaps, Well, I am afraid I don't realize my sin enough. Come to Him, then; for He is exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins. Come to Him. He invites men convicted of sin; but He invites them also in another character,- as thirsty and weary ones. Like Martha here - occupied with their own efforts in one kind or another - He invites them to come to Him. Whatever they are and whoever they are - not a soul but is welcome, thoroughly welcome, to Him. Alas! we are all Marthas, (not, of course, in faith,) but apt to be busy with much serving; and the last thing which we naturally think of is to come to the Lord, to find satisfaction in Him alone. Ah! is not that true of some person here? You think, If He is such a glorious Person, He must be served. If He is such a glorious Person, would He come down from heaven to earth to be served by you? Was it

not more adequate faith in Mary, saying, as it were, "If He had wanted service, He would not ask for it from such poor incompetent hands as mine." "The less is blessed of the better." It is not more blessed to receive, but "it is more blessed to give than to receive." And are you trying, beloved friends, to serve Christ? Take care you are not trying to be "the better," and to make Him "the less." Are you trying to serve Him, when He had to come down from heaven to earth to serve you? Mary says, "If He has come to serve me, I will let Him do it." She is down at His feet: He says she has chosen that good part. Do you choose the "good part," and you shall have it forever.

What is the secret, beloved friends, of all the dishonor done to Him (alas!) by His people? I'll tell you,- the one thing, the secret of it is, that they are not where Mary was,- they are not in the place of real occupation with Himself. That is what the Lord wants. He has come all this weary way to attract our hearts to Himself. He wants us to receive out of His fullness,- He wants us simply to receive. Not to get us to say, after a little while, "I must be doing something now." He wants us to receive - to receive-to RECEIVE. If it is only receiving from Christ, every other responsibility will be met easily,- not by effort, but met of necessity. This will come after your own soul is fully satisfied; for the vessel must be filled itself before it can properly flow over. It is not from a vessel that is partly full that you expect an overflow. You must sit at His feet until you are filled yourself,- that is the first thing. And when filled yourself, don't think that you require effort then. Beloved, as surely as you are filled yourself, out of your belly shall flow "rivers of living water."

Alas! alas! pride is so natural to us. Man has followed Satan in that way. He would be as God. Man would still take that place, and make God his debtor. How can God be gracious? How can God give, and give, for nothing in return? - how can that possibly be? And, beloved, if there are those who recognize this; faith has got to make it all practical, - not to make the thing true. It is true; but we those here who have these weary, restless, sinful, unsatisfied hearts, how hard it is for you to learn that He would make over to you, positively and definitely, His fullness! That is what He does. You have only to receive; only to take the place at His feet: He will pour out His grace. I would press this as from first to last the blessed truth. It is He who applies - who appropriates to the soul all the fullness of His grace, all the value of His work.

You remember, in the third chapter of Zechariah, how Joshua the high priest is represented there, the very picture of a sinner clothed with his sins before the angel, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. There is not a word spoken by Joshua, nor a question asked of him. There is none to ask. Convicted sinner as he is, the only question is, what has God for a convicted sinner? People get into the presence of God in their sins. Many think, indeed, that they have to put away their sins and then get into the presence of God. No; nobody gets into the presence of God except in his sins, and then he is as dumb as Joshua is. The angel of the Lord says to Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And what does He say then? He says to those that stand by, "Take away his filthy garments from him;" and then He turns to the poor

sinner himself, and, to make it plain to him and to us, He leaves the language of type and shadow, and to him He says, not "I have caused thy filthy garments to pass from thee," but "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." It looks like a New Testament revelation; so clear, so full is the grace announced. Poor souls that trouble themselves about their acceptance, how glad they would be to have such a voice! And yet it is for them,- written for them, - the unchanging word of the unchangeable God. Does the angel tell Joshua to appropriate this grace? No; He says, "Take away the filthy garments - take them from him," and He says to him, not even "Can you believe that your iniquity is gone?" or that "My grace is great enough?" but, in His own free and royal way, "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." He who speaks without repentance, and never withdraws His words, says, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." That is how Christ ministers to one that comes to Him. Is there a soul here that needs that? Christ definitely assures you of the forgiveness of your sins. He does not say, Now, appropriate this; but He says, I appropriate it to you, and it is yours. "If we confess our sins," says the apostle,- what then? Joshua stands with those sins confessed upon him;- those sins covered him in the presence of God, and what is the result? He found God Himself acting in his behalf. It is God that appropriates the value of Christ's work to the soul. It is God that says, by the Spirit, to men, not You must do so and so, but, if you confess your sins - if you simply take that place,- I am faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. (i Jno. i. 9.)

Beloved, it is an immense thing to be clear as to that,- it is an immense thing to be able to give souls such assurance. Like the spies to Rahab- "Our life for yours." Those are grand words, She, as it were, says, "What can you tell me from God? Give me a true token." "Our life for yours." Oh to be able to comfort souls in that way,- to give them the positive assurance from God - those souls that would gladly accept salvation, but are busy with their acceptance of it! Oh to be able to give them a "true token" that Christ has so died for sinners,- that when you take that place as sinners before God, that blood is the true token of salvation yours, yours, YOURS!

And as we begin, so we go on. Would that we did! but I mean in God's thought. As we begin, so we go on. We get out of His gracious hand-out of His fullness, first, our acceptance with God, - that which satisfied our souls' peace and rest in His presence. But oh, beloved, is it there we stop? Are we to acquire holiness in a different way from that in which we get righteousness and peace? No, surely; just as we find Christ for righteousness, so surely we do for sanctification and all else.

We have got to receive it at His feet, to look into His blessed face, to learn of His love to rejoice in Himself; and that is true sanctification. if that is so, Christ sanctifies. Occupation with Christ is what makes our lives what they should be,- transforms our lives - transforms our very faces. Occupied with Him, looking into His face, we are changed into His image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. It is in company with Himself we find "that good part" which Mary had chosen, in "part with Him."

And as with sanctification, so with service. Oh that we may have that kind of service which will not separate us from Him-the service that flows freely, almost unconsciously, from the joy of His presence, and of the service which He renders us! Beloved, we are continually exalting ourselves, and He has to abase us. How strange and sad it is that so much of our lives we cause Him to fight against us instead of for us! Because He would have us in the place of blessing, He has to put us down, down, DOWN,- our efforts at holiness, our attempts at service, in order that He may put us in the place He has for us. How slow are we to receive in its full reality the grace that requires not, but gives,- that delights to give,- that only seeks to have objects for it; the grace that, simply as we receive it, we find, not only fullness for ourselves, but that which makes our lives full also for others. May we all learn it more simply, the power and value, not of our efforts, but of Christ Himself.

It is the "one thing" I want to say to you tonight. Don't you think it is enough? If Christ says, "But one thing is needful," what is more needful than simply to learn that "one thing"? He came not to be served - to be ministered unto, but to minister to others, yea, to give His life a ransom for many. Let Him serve, in the greatness of his love; and we shall find, not only practical fullness for daily need, but all that He is told out to us.

Whoever you are, there is no one to ask the question, when you come to Him, whether you are fit for His presence. He has no guard to His presence-chamber to ask whether you have got a right to be there. He does not want you to be kept off. Sin is no barrier even, because in the cross of Christ grace has triumphed, aye,

over the "worst sin that man could possibly commit"; as the hymn says,- "The very spear that pierced His side Drew forth the blood to save." Beloved, wherever you are, whatever you are, no soul so far from Him but I invite you to Christ to-night. There is not merely no guard to His presence-chamber to keep you out, there is the public proclamation that you are welcome there. The King's door stands open, His table is for you, beloved friends. And His presence, Lord of all, come down in grace, that His fullness may be available for us, that we may find in Him, out of His fullness, "grace upon grace." Now, I don't want to say any thing else tonight; but "one thing is needful," and we may shut up our books. That "one thing needful" is occupation with Christ - to sit at His feet and learn of Him. So then, if we want to serve Him, the only possible way is to receive from Him first till our hearts are so full that we cannot hold it any longer. When the vessel is once filled, all the power of the spring pours over. The overflow is not measured by the capacity of the vessel, but by the power of the spring. Think of that, beloved friends. Think of our testimony in the world being the testimony of the divine fullness,- not the measure of what we are, but the measure, so to speak, of what He is. The one thing needful for us is that our whole souls should be satisfied with Himself; and to be occupied is to be satisfied. God give us more practically, every one, to know and prove it in His grace.

Crystallized Carbon

"Immediately I became in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was like in appearance to a jasper and a sardine stone;..."

Revelation

4:3

"A throne, then, is set in heaven, and One sits upon the throne; with a certain necessary mystery as to Him, for here is One dwelling in the light unapproachable, who in His innermost glory no man hath seen or can see. Yet there are images which convey to us what we may realize as to Him; and to us it is perfectly natural that these images should speak of Him as redemption has declared Him. This is what seems to be the thought of the jasper and the sardine stone. Gems, as we have seen in the high priest's breastplate long since, are pictures to us of God in His various attributes, so far as He can be displayed to us; and the names written upon these stones, the names of His people, show in what connection He has manifested Himself. The jewels are the lights of Him who is the Father of lights, in the perfect ray of light itself too bright for us, but tempered in a way which brings out glories that would otherwise be hidden; the many-hued manifestation of the light--the light spread before us in its component rays. As it is to man the revelation is, so that this may be perfect as possible, it is in man that the revelation is, and Christ is therefore the blessed revealer. It is of this revelation of God in Christ, as it would seem, that the jasper and the sardine speak; for the jasper does not seem to be what

we ordinarily call this. Its light is not as it is spoken of here (chap. 21:11), "clear as crystal," which scarcely suits its banded appearance. Ebrard has therefore suggested the diamond, which seems to have escaped notice and yet it gives us, as it were, the very heart of the matter. The diamond, as is well known, is crystalized carbon, which we find, in the pure form, as graphite, the black lead of our pencils.

Carbon exists in these opposite conditions. In one form the symbol of divine glory, it might in the other be naturally the symbol of sin and evil. These two things, moreover, God's grace has shown us to be in strange and intimate connection with one another; for how could God's grace display itself other than in connection with sin and evil? And it is striking to find here also that carbon is an element characteristic of all organic products, so that organic chemistry has been called "the chemistry of the carbon compounds." It is thus in beautiful connection with living forms as we see them around us, even as God has brought for us life out of death, and wrought in the transformation of our ruined humanity that which is the brightest display of divine glory. Christ is Man, the highest possible type of manhood; and while in Him the thought of evil is absolutely excluded, yet is He "the Seed of the woman;" and God has in this done what was possible to Him alone, and brought "a clean thing out of an unclean."

But more than this, for here is one who has emptied Himself of that which was properly His, "the form of God," to assume the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of men. He too has been in the darkness of death, and come up out of it to be thus the glorious Light of redeemed men forever--the display also of God,

in the love which brought Him down, and which has prepared for Him also a body, the sign of that perpetual service to us which He has taken up. Of the depths to which He has descended the sardine stone reminds us by the ruddy hue; and thus, in the combination of the jasper, or diamond, and the sardine stone, we have, indeed, God manifest as nowhere else we could find Him: for if this seem for a moment to be Christ rather than God, or, let us say, the Father, yet, as we know, it is not Christ's own love simply that has been displayed to us, but the Father's love who sent Him, "Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." This, one might even say, the jasper and the sardine stone must needs be intended to convey to us; for what other manifestation have we of God than that which we have seen in Christ? He is "the Image of the invisible God," who is at the same time "the First-born of all creation," the One in whom appears the true creation of God, never more to be marred by sin or failure, but abiding in Him who is the centre and glory of it, who is "all and in all."

Fruit or Root? - Some Thoughts upon Job's "Ditch"

We have in the verses before us, no doubt, a typical case of how the Lord makes sin to serve Him. God has His hand upon all, and God makes all things serve Him. "He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains" (Ps. 76:10). He does not permit one particle of the wrath of man anywhere which He cannot make to praise Him. That is, He makes sin serve Him. It does not, in the least, alter the nature of sin - it does not make it less hateful; but it makes God what He surely is - the perfect Master of everything, and it gives us the only comfort that we can possibly get as we look at evil, as we realize its terrible prevalence in human history. What comfort would there be for us, if we were not able to look at it and say, God can get glory out of all this? In a true sense, therefore, God has ordained it to His glory.

Here, in Peter, you get an instance of this - a sample of the principle of which I have been speaking. Here is a sin on Peter's part that the Lord foretells to him: he is going to deny Him thrice. Satan has asked to have this disciple of His, as the trier of God's wheat. He has asked to have him in his sieve that he may sift him; and the Lord has not prayed that he might not be sifted. That was necessary in a certain sense. Satan claims to be the trier of God's wheat, and the words express that, much more than appears in our version. It is not exactly, "Satan has desired to have you." It is much more than that. It is, "Satan has demanded to have you," - "Satan has demanded to have you, that he may sift you as

wheat." But how can that be? What does it mean? Why, it means that Satan is the one who is the accuser of the brethren and who, if he accuse them day and night before God, must of necessity accuse them on the only possible plea which could avail him there - the plea of righteousness.

Thus, when he accuses Job, even when God puts him before him and says, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth?", he says, "Does Job serve God for naught? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him?" And he gets Job into his hands upon the plea that Job is professedly God's wheat; so let it be tried if he is really this. He does not believe that Job is just all that he seems to be. Job is in very good circumstances. Everything goes fair with him, and how can he be tested in fair weather like that? Very easy for a man to be good when all circumstances are in his favour! In opposite circumstances, let us see, he says, what sort of a man Job will appear. It is all right, take Job into your hand and do so and so, is the divine answer.

What we have here in Luke is only a sample of the way in which Satan is busy. And I believe we all of us have personal interest in it; for I believe there is not one of us that Satan has not accused, and is not accusing, before God, and I tell you what, beloved, we give him plenty of opportunity to say of us, "These people are not all they profess to be." The moment you take your place as wheat with God, you take your place, as it were, in Satan's sieve for him to sift, according as God may permit it, and see if you are what you profess to be.

What is the effect of it for Peter? He is terribly bruised in the sieve. The Lord has prayed, not that he may not be sifted, but that his faith might not fail. He does not pray that he may not break down, or that he may not sin; He predicts the sin. He says, "Peter, you are going to deny Me thrice."

What does He say in connection with that? "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." What does that mean? Of course, conversion here does not mean that which we generally call by that name: that is, the great primary turning to God from sin, from the world. It speaks of the turning of a saint, the "conversion" if you like, of a saint, and not the conversion of a sinner. That is plain; but then, how is he converted? Converted from his sins? No, we might imagine that. He has to be converted by his sin, and from his self-righteousness. The Lord has ordained the breaking down of a self-righteous man.

Peter answers, "Nay, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death." That is the point: that is the very thing he needed to realize he was not ready to do. That is the very thing he needed to be converted out of - the self-confidence which is the ruin of man wherever they have it.

Therefore it is that the very sin into which the Lord allows Peter to fall is to be the means of ruining that self-confidence in him and so of turning him to another mind. We make great mistakes in regard to those things. We are apt to look upon some outward evil, some sin that a man has committed, perhaps a gross one, as if it were the whole matter, or at any rate the great thing; that which is only the fruit of the tree we look at as if it

were the tree itself, and we say, why did God permit it, when that really means why did God permit the tree to show its fruit? Well, why did God permit the tree to show its fruit? Because the fruit makes manifest the tree, and men need, beloved, to be made manifest in that way. They need to realize what they are.

If a man does not realize what he is, he may be going on apparently just as Peter was, full of love to the Lord, right in conduct and all that, and you think of the man as going on well. Suddenly he falls, and you look at that as the departure, when the fall is only the fruit of the departure which has been going on long before; and then the fall is the very thing which may be used to make the man conscious of his weakness and.

nothingness - therefore to bring him back; to make him humble that he may now really be strong, that he may find his strength in Another, and that he may perhaps be even the means of strengthening his brethren.

God must break down before He can build up; in order that He may deliver us from sin, He must deliver us first from righteousness, and that is a great principle in God's ways. It is a sample of how He uses sin. Sin, of course, is the abominable thing He hates, but while it is that, there is not an atom of it God permits on the face of the earth but that He can make it serve His purpose and glorify Him; otherwise, He would not permit it.

What a comfort it is to realize that God's strong hand is upon things and upon people after that manner. What a comfort it is that we can look into the most awful pit of darkness that can anywhere be, and see there the glory of God! What a blessed thing to know that there is not a corner of God's earth that is out of God's reach; and, beloved, He makes the thing He hates to serve Him, but

that does not show that He loves it, or that He is indifferent about it. We make our criminals serve in jail, and God makes His criminals as all else, serve Him, whether good or bad.

I would like to apply that now a little. If we look at man away as he is from God, we see not in him how sin began. In him, the stream is far on its course; before men fell, there was a host of beings above them that had fallen. Satan, the devil, was in existence then. We know that, of course, because he was the tempter of man at the beginning. What a question it is, and how naturally we ask it: how ever did sin come in? For man, of course, it came in through Satan: man listened to Satan. But to whom or what did Satan listen? Who tempted Satan? Who made Satan Satan? Why, there was no one at all to do it outside of himself; and how could he have made himself that? How could an angel become a devil?

Scripture tells us in that remarkable way in which we have many other of the most important truths brought in, quite incidentally, as it might seem, that Satan fell through pride. You have, I don't doubt, the description of him in the king of Tyrus in the 28th chapter of Ezekiel, and there you find it in detail. The picture can hardly be mistaken: "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty: thou hast been in Eden the garden of God . . . thou art the anointed cherub that covereth . . . thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee . . . thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness;" - thus we see the very process of such a perversion as has taken place in the fallen angel - Satan becoming the awful creature that he is now. And how? By self-occupation, self-

admiration - pride. The text we have in Timothy, where in his direction in regard to bishops, the apostle tells him that a bishop must not be a novice, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil;" that is, fall into that for which the devil was condemned.

That is how all the sin in the world came in. "Being lifted up with pride" - that was Satan's snare, the only possible thing, we may well think, by which a being created in perfect uprightness and apart from any temptation, or from any circumstances of evil, could become evil; at least, it was the original departure from truth and uprightness. There was no evil around to solicit him. There was no evil self in him for him to be taken up with, but there was a good self; and the being taken up with that good self made him the horrible creature that he is! I wish I could ring out that lesson far and wide among men. I wish one could make the people of God learn that lesson by heart. For I tell you what - it is one of the most necessary lessons to learn that possibly can be.

When God creates man and puts him upon the earth after this fall of Satan, you can see that it is constantly in His mind: He alters His methods in order to avoid, if possible, so great a collapse. Satan had been, just as the angels are, one that excelled in strength. Measurably, he was a being so far complete in himself, and independent of others. He was thus a being who could look at himself with admiration, for beauty and strength; and now the problem is (if from our human side we may call it so), how could God make another creature who should be free from the snare of self, and yet be a good and a reasonable creature?

God could not make anything but a good being; He must make him reasonable, worthy to be a creature of His hand. He must be tested also; at least, he is to be. All this meets in Adam in a way which should have deepest interest for us, and which shows the divine care and love, in a way to call out our answering adoration.

First of all, He does not make him a creature to excel in strength. He puts him upon the earth in the midst of numerous creatures stronger than himself, a naked defenceless being. He puts him upon earth in such a condition as to mark his dependence very strongly. His life is to be continued by his eating of the tree of life. Life is not in himself; life is in the tree of life for him; he is warned in the most distinct way of his dependence and put straitly under condition. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is placed in the garden, and that which we are accustomed to think of as the very thing which helped his fall, is that which in fact should have helped him to remain upright, for it was the constant warning of the danger of forgetting his dependence. Yet, it was a very small thing to be forbidden. What was it for one who had all the trees in the garden to eat of besides, to refrain from just one tree?

Again, if he looked at himself, he found himself, as to his body, linked with the animal creation; in a certain sense, I may say, less perfect as far as strength goes than many others. He finds himself thus in every direction encompassed with the witness of his infirmity as a creature. God would "hide pride from man." The angel's snare he must, as far as possible, be shielded from. Beautiful it is to see the tenderness of God in this respect.

You would think He had fenced him around so that it was impossible for him to be touched. Not only so, but when temptation comes to him, God ordains that it shall only come to him from below, not from above. He shall not be tempted by a being manifestly above himself. Temptation shall not come in the form of an angel of light, but in the form of a beast of the field, one of those that Adam had looked at and seen that there was not amongst them all a help meet for him. How carefully God had provided for the creature of His love!

With it all, what you find is that the devil tried upon man the very method by which he had been ensnared himself. He turns his heart away from God by putting his very dependence and deficiency before him, instead of the strength he has not; yet still to lift him up with pride in the insinuation of what he may be - of the capacity he has. That it is a deficiency that he has not the knowledge of good and evil. If he eats of this forbidden tree, he shall be as God, knowing good and evil. Alas, Satan had aspired to be as God, and he knew well what had come of that.

Awful it is to see him practicing the devilish art, which he had learned in that way, upon another. "Ye shall be as God," he says, "knowing good and evil." Thus, man falls; but how carefully God had guarded him so that he should not!

After the fall, he is still more compassed about with the witness of what he is. Men are continued upon the earth by means of the woman. Eve becomes "the mother of all living." But how are men brought into the world? In the utmost feebleness indeed. An adult man is a feeble creature after all. Put him outside among the beasts

without any of the things which he has slowly accumulated about him, out among the beasts of the field; and see how he will fare. But feeble as he may be in his full-grown strength, how feeble is he as he comes into the world, dandled in his mother's arms, slowly and painfully acquiring the wisdom of which he is so proud, learning through years of feebleness to submit himself to the will and care of others. Debtor to the love of others for all that he is, he could not possibly live, if he were put out to live as others, not so far from kin. How God has borne witness to him of his nothingness; how God would abase him in his own eyes, and hide pride from him!

Yet, after all, man's constant snare is still himself. When a man turns to God, what do we find? He has to be brought down from this, down into the dust, down to learn not only that he is a sinner, but that he is an impotent sinner too, a sinner and without strength. How do men find that out?

Constantly by struggling to deny it; constantly by fighting with it, as hard as ever they can; fighting until they have to surrender. How does God help us to this end? By allowing sin in man, just when he wants to be very righteous and very good; just when he wants to come to God, and say, "God, I thank Thee I am not as other men," God has to humble him and smite him into the dust (Job's history over again); and when he comes up again, and washes himself and thinks he is ever so clean, God plunges him - so Job has it - into the ditch again, and his very clothes abhor him. God is using sin against sin, using sin to defeat itself. If in the devil it might seem as if goodness was its own snare, God says, now sin shall be its own destruction. He lets the man

sin. He tumbles him into the ditch; and when he finds at last that he is without strength, then he finds, blessed be God, that "when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." What a long while it took for that due time to come! What a long history of man in the Old Testament, and what comfort do we get from it? Not much I fear; and in truth, the comfort comes out of discomfort; what carefulness there is through all God's history of man to show the poor creature what at best he is! God's righteous men are still sinners; none of them without some flaw, in which they become warnings, and not for imitation. It seems as if a painter were at work to make a beautiful painting and then some other hand had splashed the colour over it. Scripture biographies are unlike all mere human ones; but they are written in divine wisdom - to prevent man from glorifying man, to prevent man's goodness ministering to man's besetting sin.

God seems often afraid of man's goodness, as He is not of his sin. For man's sin Christ died, and not for his goodness. In God's wonderful grace, man can come to God and say, "O God, I am a sinner and Christ died for sinners," and find his resting place there upon the solid, immovable rock. Thus, the same method prevails - God is using sin itself against sin, in His grace to man.

The lesson is thus learned as to righteousness: it is found in Another - in Christ. And he who has learned it says, "Thank God, I know my righteousness to be in Christ; God has taught me wisdom." All well, and so it is indeed. But the same man starts now on a fresh quest; and here his old lessons seem to avail him nothing. He is now after holiness; and if righteousness is in Another, holiness at least must be in himself; true, but not all the

truth. But with that word, up comes afresh a busy, earnest self, attractive in its search for holiness - alas, too attractive - once more the good self, fatal to an angel once. Holiness is to be realized in a self-conscious way; and in this self-consciousness lies the evil and the snare. He wants to be able to look at himself, and realize himself to be just the thing for God. God's grace ought to be fruitful in him; he ought to find power in it against evil and for good; all true, surely, but with so much true, he cannot see the deception that yet lurks in it - the potent Pharisaic spell under which he is.

So, the old remedy is ordained for him - the stain upon all human glory. Job's ditch is ordained to save him from the greater precipice; and once again, God makes the sin He hates to serve Him. The law of sin is in his nature. Nor can he in this way find deliverance from it. When he would do good, evil is present with him; and how to perform that which is good he finds not (Romans 7).

There is no hope in this direction. The cry can only be, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" And now, in the infinite grace of God, he finds, not deliverance merely, but a Deliverer. Sanctification is, after all, in Christ; if the holiness resultant is yet to be in us - just as surely as the sunshine is in the sun, by which we are brightened. So the soul is turned from the impracticable self of experience, to find for faith the true self in which we abide before God. Here is the satisfaction for our hearts as for the heart of God. Here is communion with Him fully attained. Here is a heavenly Object to draw off the heart from the world and from the snare of self together. Here holiness is found, found in self forgetfulness; or, if self be revealed

in connection with it, it is for the Spirit of God to show us by contrast with the true Man for God, our own mere unlikeness and evil. We learn to "rejoice in Christ Jesus" and to "have no confidence in the flesh."

There is not a truer sign of a man walking with God than this utter self-forgetfulness. God has provided for it in His grace, when man turns in upon himself again, and sees this horrible thing within him. How can God go on with that? But, says the Word of God again, God has not gone on with that. He has put that away by the cross of His own Son. God has put away sin altogether from before Him, root and fruit, in the cross of His own Son; and now then you are in Christ before Him. Look up there. You can never see yourself aright except as you look out of yourself; and if you do that, you shall find the most attractive self you could possibly have. You shall find a self that you can glory in. So says the apostle, "I knew a man in Christ, of such an one I will glory." Yet it is himself, it is the man in Christ. It is himself in Another, in the Christ before God for him; and finding himself there, he can fall in love with himself as much as ever he likes; but the self he falls in love with is that OTHER self who draws him out of himself.

How perfect is God's wisdom! How beautiful it is to see that He has ordained by the very evil in man to antagonize the evil in man. No wonder we ask, how is it possible? A great many Christians think it is not possible. Why should it be that it is impossible for me to get rid of this sin within me? How is it, I have got a nature that I cannot get rid of, like a dead carcass strapped to me, a "body of sin"? If it be really so, there must be some way of justifying it. There must be some good in it after all. The very evil must be good in some

way. God could not allow it, unless it was good for us; good to carry about with us the thing we hate; good that we should get exercised about it, have to look at it, and see what a horrible thing it is. Thank God, as I have said, in this way we learn to turn from ourselves because whenever we don't turn from ourselves, we find it there. It confronts us; it frightens us from ourselves.

I have often said that a man taken up with the kind of self-cultivation so natural to us is just like a man who is cultivating his garden in the crater of a volcano; and it may be very productive soil for awhile, so long as the mountain will keep quiet. But when the mountain will not keep quiet, a little shake, a rumble of the mountain - the evil hidden within bursts out, and the garden is spoiled. That which seems but evil is God's way; it is God's own remedy; it is God's own way of victory over evil; just because it is God's own way of turning the creature away from himself forever, and giving us lessons which shall last through all eternity. It is a lesson which we learn here upon earth and which we could not learn anywhere else, which we learn as sinners - learn from the very sin itself - and which lesson we will carry with us through eternity to His praise and for our own sake.

God is not working merely for time, and it is not merely a question of how He will keep us clean for the few years we are here. I do not want to make light of that, not at all; but yet there are worse things than even the outward sins which soil our lives, alas so much. He who can make light of sin makes doubtful the truth of his own conversion; for the man in the experience of the 7th of Romans, though he has not power over it, hates the sin he does. He may be sin's slave, but not its free man.

He who serves it freely will get its wages. And "the wages of sin is death."

But yet a worse thing than the outward sin is that pride of heart which by making us something puts us in the way of repeating the awful history of the first sinner, Satan.

That is something worse, and in a Christian is what necessitates the other. The spirit which was in Peter here could only be got out of Peter by that awful fall in the High Priest's palace; the awful sin of denying his own Lord with curses - that was to teach him what Peter the SAINT was; what Peter who loved his Lord was, and in spite of his true love for Him. It was to destroy in him his self-confidence and self-righteousness; it was to manifest his weakness, but to reveal to him His strength; to make him utterly weak, and then to lift him up in the arms of Eternal Might and enable him to go forth to strengthen others.

Blessed be God, if we are losing confidence in ourselves altogether!

Well we may; we have had superabundant proof of what we are. Had we thoroughly learned to "have no confidence in the flesh," we should be learning indeed the corresponding joy of "worshipping God in spirit" and "exulting in Christ Jesus" and should take a new start in divine things. God grant that we may do so! As man counts for much, God counts for little. As man descends in the scale of our estimation, God proportionately acquires the glory that is His own.

In the knowledge of the new man, as we find it in Colossians, "Christ is all;" and the sum of wisdom is to maintain this. That "God shall be all in all" is the

expression of the glory of the eternal state, and of its stability as well. The creature can no more come into competition with Him - the necessary end of which is the darkness of hell, as the opposite pole is the glory of heaven.

In Christ Jesus

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are In Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

"In

Christ Jesus" is the definition of all Christians, and it defines them as a people identified with the One who as a man has entered into the presence of God; "for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:10).

"In Christ" is the language of complete identification. Crucified with Him on the Cross, His resurrection was the divine declaration of our acceptance with Him in His work and place. Henceforth the eye of God sees us ever in Him alone. We are reckoned, and are to reckon ourselves, as with Him dead, buried, quickened, risen, and in Him seated in the heavenly places before the Father. His delight in us is His unchangeable delight in His Beloved Son; therefore the Lord Jesus says to us, "because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

How could there be a doubt about the believer's perfect security if this were realized? It would be impossible. Can He change? Or will His Father say to Him, I cannot any longer accept You as standing for this people? Or, once again, if standing for them, is He on probation yet? Is His work completely done, or still to do? It is finished, blessed be God: He sits in the glory of God. His heart is at rest, and ours may be. Had He not entitled our hearts to rest, His own heart would not allow Him to be seated there.

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are In Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). "In Christ" - can God's own eye find fault with Him? "In Christ" is there any flesh - any body of death, any thing for men to improve or alter? And in Christ we are! There our chains drop off. Much more, but still that. We are delivered: we are free! Let us understand well. This is not walk yet; it is the principle, the position - the key, and, when applied by the Holy Spirit, the power for it. We are to "walk as Christ walked"; we are to walk "in Christ"; and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death."

Thus the responsibility of a right walk is still ever ours. It is not that Christ's walk is substituted for ours, or His holiness imputed to us, or anything of the kind. It is not yet the question of how to walk, but of what I am; but a question which, when settled in God's way, stops necessarily the effort to be what no effort of mine can make me, and what, thank God, His infinite grace has already made me: complete in Him. "As Christ is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Could effort of ours make us "as Christ is"? It would be clearly impossible; and yet nothing but this would reach up to the standard God has given us. Nothing short of this would be perfection, and nothing short of perfection could we rightly rest in. If imperfection God cannot accept, and perfection I cannot bring Him, what then? Then I must accept a perfection of my Father's providing, and find in the Lord Jesus a new self that needs no mending and cannot be improved, where no body of death disturbs or oppresses, and occupation with which is not legalism, nor Pharisaism.

I am privileged to turn away from what I find in myself as a man down here, then, because in the death of the Cross, the death wherein I died with Him, "sin in the flesh" has been fully dealt with. The condemnation of it by God has already found its full expression on the Cross. For faith, not for experience, I too have died, and that "to sin", because "he died unto sin once." I reckon myself (not feel or find myself) to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11).

Joseph

Numerical Significance:

1 Exclusion of difference, sufficiency, power, omnipotence, independence, perpetual, eternal, identity, concord, peace, congruity, harmony, sovereignty, election, promise, grace, birth 2 Difference, division, addition, growth, increase, competent testimony, seconding, salvation, relationship, service, dependence, contradiction, seed, separation, death 3 Cubic measure, solidity, fullness, trinity, actuality, manifestation, sanctification, spirit, resurrection 4 Weakness, testing, trial, failure, experience, number of the creature 5 God in Government, responsibility, 6 Manifestation of evil, or of the enemy's work, work day week 7 Perfection, rest, completes the series, 8 New beginning, 7 The Christ life developed in full "image" (37:2-50:26)

1 God's council and man's rebellion. (37:2-36)

1 Visions of supremacy.(37:2-11)

2 Separated from his brethren.(37:12-36)

2 Judah's separation from his brethren and humiliation. (38:1-30)

1 Tamar's widowhood,(38:1-11)

2 Tamar's deception.(38:12-23)

3 The manifestation.

(38:24-30)

3 Zanhath-paaneah, "the Revealer of

Secrets.(39:1-41:52)

- 1 Unchanging integrity.(39:1-23)
- 1 Ruler in his master's house.(39:1-6)
- 2 The assault of sin and the accusation.(39:7-12)
- 3 His exaltation in prison.(39:13-23)
- 2 Joseph in prison the interpreter of life and death.
(40:1-23)
- 3 A man in whom the spirit of life is.(41:1-52)
- 1 The king's dream.(41:1-7)
- 2 The
Interpretation.(41:8-36)
- 3 Raised from the dungeon to the throne.(41:37-52)
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(From the Numerical Bible by F. W. Grant)

Leviticus 11 - Clean or Unclean

The Numerical Bible

Volume I, Genesis -

Deuteronomy, Pages 315-320

Leviticus 11

What we eat we are.

SUBDIVISION 2.

(Chapter xi-xv)

Putting a difference.

WE come now to look at the other side of our associations. We have seen how God has in grace associated us with His dear Son. Thus belonging to the priestly family, and brought near to God, fellowship with Him must mean dissociation from all that is contrary to His mind and will. Linked with God upon the one side, we cannot upon the other link Him with what would dishonour Him. Our associations become in this way a matter of the most vital importance to our highest interests here. Innocence is gone from us; the knowledge of evil is that from which we can no longer escape; and God in His wondrous way has turned this into a means of holiness, and of fellowship with Himself: "the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil;" and we are of those "who by reason of use" are to "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. v. 14).

Even when born again, and our hearts turned to God, it has not pleased Him to deliver us at once from that

indwelling sin, which if any man saith he hath not, he deceiveth himself (1 Jno. i. 8). Nay, it is then we are brought face to face with it, not surely to fulfill its lusts, but to realize it in its abominable character, and to learn in the light with Him His own hatred of it.

In the world around too we find it in ten thousand shapes, many gross, many alluring, and in beings like ourselves connected with us in various ways, and exercising various influences upon us. From these we cannot withdraw ourselves: the prayer of our High Priest was, "not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst deliver them from the evil" (Jno. xvii. 15.) We have thus to conquer, not to flee,- to conquer where we stand; separated from that in the midst of which we are, "in the world, not of it," and to carry out this separation while alive to all the infinite claims upon us of those who are with ourselves of Adam's fallen race,- yea, in sympathy with the tears of Him who wept over His rejectors.

Here on every side is evil ready to defile us, and in those in whom we have to distinguish its various workings, for their sakes and our own learning to "make a difference:" of some having compassion; others saving with fear (Jude 22, 23); others only able to withdraw from utterly with horror. Such things we come to look at now in the fruitful types in which God once taught to a people just emerged from association with the heathen around, His holiness. Of this man, fallen from his place, had in himself so little knowledge, that God must take up the beast below him, to teach it to him. In truth, nature is one great parable, and God, in drawing out such lessons from it, but uses it for what it is.

Section 1. (xi.) What we eat we are.

1. First, then, we have to learn here as to food, what is clean and what is unclean. The German materialist's bald sophism we are taught to realize in another sense as a most important truth, "man ist was er iszt," - "what we eat we are." Spiritually, our food declares our character, as it also forms it. He that eateth Christ shall not only live by Him, but His life will be practically assimilated to His also. Thus, in what is here permitted to be the food of the people of God, we find depicted the spiritual life of the people of God. That wholesomeness as diet should go with this would not be wonderful in view of this very symbolism which is in all things round us. That which is fullest in meaning is also truest in fact, as there need be no doubt. Nevertheless, the matter of health is never brought forward: it is not of what is wholesome or unwholesome, but of what is clean or unclean that the law treats.

Subsection 1. (vs. 1-8) Harmony of faith and conduct.

AND Jehovah spake to Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the animals that ye shall eat of all the beasts that are upon the face of the earth. Whatever divideth the hoof, even completely cleaving the hoof, and bringeth up the cud among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

Nevertheless of these shall ye not eat, of those that bring up the cud and of those that divide the hoof: the camel, because he bringeth up the cud but divideth not the hoof, he is unclean to you; and the hyrax, because it bringeth up the cud but divideth not the hoof, it is unclean to you; and the hare, because it bringeth up the cud but divideth not the hoof, it is unclean to you; and

the swine, because it divideth the hoof, completely cleaving the hoof, but bringeth not up the cud, it is unclean to you. Ye shall not eat of thier flesh, nor touch their carcasses: they are unclean to you.

(1.) Of clean beasts - mammals, as they are best distinguished - there is but one class, those that ruminate, or chew the cud; but among these also those are excluded who have not a hoof entirely divided. There must be the union of these two characters, the power of rumination and the divided hoof, to constitute the animal clean for the Israelite. It is not hard to realize the spiritual meaning of rumination: we are well accustomed to the use of it for "meditation," quiet reflection: and it would seem almost needless to insist upon the necessity of this for proper apprehension of the truth. The cloven foot, besides its suitability for a light, firm tread, and so for speed, prevents miring in soft ground. These opposed hoofs, uniting to give stability in this way, may perhaps intimate to us how the truths of the Word that seem most opposed to one another, in fact only give balance and firm tread to him that rests on them, while they certainly prevent being mired in the very place of pasture. The speed for which the foot is, above all, made surely reminds us that where spiritual digestion is found in the believer, faith that looks at what is unseen makes the Christian course a race. Altogether the type here is a bright and suggestive one: may it speak to our souls with all the power the Spirit of God can give it!

But now look at the exceptions: of the really ruminating animals only one - the camel. It is plain he is no racer: two and a half to three miles is his pace, and he travels it with a burden. Made for the desert, not for the pasture-lands, ungainly, irritable, not like the rest of his

class, - may he not remind us of how many Christians, while ever learning, as one would think, the things of God, go yet heavily burdened through the world, as if the desert was their all? The camel-Christian may be indeed a real one, as his representative is a ruminant, and yet what a poor bungled copy does he seem! Cares of this world burden him. He is earthly-heavenly: according to the Word of God "unclean."

The other animals named here are not ruminants at all, and many have wondered that the hare and the coney - the hyrax - should be put among them. But it has been well urged, that these are practical directions for simple people, and not studies in natural history; and to people ordinarily the hare and the coney, though merely grinding their teeth, appear to be ruminating. They are professors of rumination without reality, taken here as God takes men according to their profession: but it cannot make them clean.

The last animal here is a very different one from the rest, and the very type of uncleanness. In the swine there was no pretense of rumination, but there was the cloven foot; if one looked only at that, the swine would seem clean. Surely they are the type of such as, openly slighting faith and the Word of God, plead their good conduct. "He can't be wrong whose life is in the right." In fact, the life is not right: loving the mire, and rooting up the ground, the swine is a typical destroyer. God judgeth not as man judgeth, but His judgment alone is true.

Subsection 2. (vs. 9-12.) Armed for conflict.

These shall ye eat, of all that are in the waters: whatever hath fins and scales in the waters - in seas and in rivers -

these shall ye eat; but of all that have not fins and scales, in seas and in rivers, of all that swarm in the waters, even of every living soul that is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you, even they shall be an abomination unto you: yea, their flesh ye shall not eat and their carcasses shall be an abomination unto you; whatever in the waters hath not fins and scales shall be an abomination unto you.

(ii.)

We now come to the inhabitants of the water, and here that which was clean had fins and scales, means of movement and defence; but the opposition of a denser element than before - the water - seems to make movement itself here a conflict in which the "fin" is the offensive, and the "scale" is the defensive weapon. So we are reminded there that the life of faith is a warfare also, and one from which we cannot be excused: we cannot be non-combatants and clean; to be unarmed is to be overcome; every step of progress must be a victory.

Subsection 3. (vs. 13-19.) The unclean bird.

And these shall ye have in abomination among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they shall be an abomination: the griffon, and the ossifrage, and the osprey, and the buzzard, and the kite after its kind, every crow after its kind, and the ostrich, and the barn owl, and the gull, and the hawk after its kind, and the little owl, and the cormorant, and the eagle owl, and the gallinule, and the pelican, and the vulture, and the stork, the heron after its kind, and the hoopoe, and the bat.

(iii.) The birds speak to us of that heavenly character which as Christians surely belongs to us; yet here also in

what assumes to be that, there may come in that which is unclean, and then we have proportionatly what is worse. In the parables of Matt. xiii. the birds of the heavens carry off the good seed, and are devils.

Here there is no rule given for distinguishing the clean, in general to belong to this class was to be so: individual exceptions are named, without any specified characters to distinguish those either. Certainly each one of them has meaning, and the name alone is given, probably the name is enough, as in Bunyan's allegories, but I can attempt nothing as to this. It has been remarked that the list consists almost exclusively of birds which feed on flesh in whole or in part; under which come necessarily also the omnivorous; while in the bat we have an illustration of those flying things that go upon all fours mentioned just afterward, although, of course, a much larger class. "We can trace," says [C. H.] Mackintosh, "in the habits of the above three classes the just ground of their being pronounced unclean; but we can also see in them the striking exhibition of that in nature, which is to be strenuously guarded against by every true Christian. Such an one is called upon to refuse every thing of a carnal nature. Moreover, he cannot feed promiscuously upon every thing that comes before him. He must 'try the things that differ.' He must 'take heed what he hears.' He must exercise a discerning mind, a spiritual judgment, a heavenly taste. Finally, he must use his wings: he must rise on the pinions of faith and find his place in the celestial sphere to which he belongs. In short, there must be nothing groveling, nothing promiscuous, nothing unclean, for the Christian." - (Notes on Leviticus.)

Subsection 4. (vs. 20-28.) The taint of the earth.

Every flying creeping thing, that goeth upon all four, shall be an abomination to you. Yet these ye may eat of all flying creeping things that go upon all four, those which have legs above their feet, to leap with upon the earth. Of these may ye eat: the locust after its kind, and the bald locust after its kind, and the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind. But all flying creeping things which have four feet shall be an abomination to you. And for these ye shall be unclean: every one who toucheth their carcasses shall be unclean until the even; and every one that carrieth aught of their carcasses shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even. [The carcass of] every beast that divideth the hoof, but doth not completely cleave it, or doth not bring up the cud, it is unclean to you, every one who toucheth these shall be unclean. And what ever goeth upon its paws, of all animals that go on all four, these are unclean to you, whoever toucheth their carcasses shall be unclean until the even; and he that beareth their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the even: they are unclean to you.

(iv.) The "flying creeping things" would seem to be unclean as belonging to two spheres at once, from which those whose mode of progression was a leap were excepted, the leap being perhaps a repulsion the earth(?). The earth-taint here in question accounts for the introduction of legislation as to death, the touch even of the carcasses of the unclean defiling. Here too, naturally from this point of view, are mentioned as unclean the beasts that go upon their "hands," - i.e., whose feet are unprotected by hoofs. The classification in this way shows clearly how a moral symbolism governs it: there is otherwise no order apparent.

Subsection 5. (vs.

29-43.) What and how they affect.

These also are unclean to you of the creeping things that creep upon the earth: the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise, after its kind; and the gecko, and the monitor, and the lizard, and the sand-lizard, and the chameleon. These are unclean to you among those that creep: he who toucheth them when dead shall be unclean until the even. And on whatever any of them when dead shall fall, it shall be unclean; all vessels of wood, or garment, or skin, or sack, every thing wherein any work is done, it shall be put into water, and be unclean until the even, - then shall it be clean. And every earthen vessel whereinto any of them falleth, whatever is in it shall be unclean, and ye shall break it. All food that is eaten, upon which water cometh, shall be unclean; and all drink that is drunk shall be unclean in every [such]vessel. And every thing upon which any part of their carcass falleth shall be unclean, - oven and covered pan shall be broken: they are unclean, and shall be unclean unto you. Nevertheless a spring or well, with plenty of water, shall be clean, but that which toucheth their carcass shall be unclean. And if any of their carcass fall upon any sowing-seed that is to be sown, it shall be clean; but if water be put upon the seed, and any part of their carcass fall thereon, it shall be unclean to you. And if any beast which is yours for food die, he who toucheth the carcass of it shall be unclean until the even. And whosoever eateth of the carcass thereof shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even; and he that beareth the carcass of it shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the even. And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth is an abomination, it shall not

be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath many feet, of all creeping things that creep upon the earth, these ye shall not eat, for they are an abomination. Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, nor shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye be defiled thereby. For I am Jehovah your God, and ye shall sanctify yourselves, that ye may be holy; for I am holy: and ye shall not defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. For I am Jehovah, who am bringing you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: and ye shall be holy, because I am holy. This is the law of the beast, and of the fowl, and of every living soul that moveth in the waters, and of every soul that creepeth in the earth; to divide between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten, and the animal that may not be eaten.

(v.) The reptiles follow, but along with these also the weasel and the mouse, - showing the same absence as before of any merely natural classification. Nor indeed does there seem at first a reason for the specification of certain species here when the whole class of creeping things is presently declared unclean (v. 41).

Commentators seem only able to say that these are mentioned as being of those from whom there was special danger of defilement in the way immediately particularized as dropping into vessels, etc., being generally found in houses or in the abodes of men. But we see also how differently they affect what they come into contact with - the comparative receptivity of defilement. Thus every vessel of wood, or garment or skin or sack, upon which they fell when dead, was to put

into water and would be clean at even; but the earthen vessel could only be broken. The fountain or well could not be defiled; nor seed intended to be sown, but if it had been moistened with water, to be used for food, then it would be defiled. That which died of itself also, though otherwise clean, became unclean, - death in this way being the type of that which had come in through sin. Whether we can read these things or not, it is plain that they imply a different susceptibility as to evil, and a difference in the treatment of that which was defiled, which should be to us suggestive and important.

Living By the Well

Living By The Well

An address, given by F.W. Grant on January 2, 1899

"And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac: and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi" (Genesis 25:11).

Isaac, on the one hand, is indeed the type of the Son of God Himself, but on the other hand, according to the Apostle Paul's testimony in Galatians, he is the representative of the people of God now; those who are called by grace to the adoption of sons, and who are the children, not of the bondwoman, as Ishmael was, but the children of the free woman. See Galatians 4:22-31.

What is striking here is that the child of the free woman, Isaac, dwells by the well. This well Lahai-roi, at which he dwells (at least, at this time it was his permanent abode) is the well where Hagar met the angel of the Lord, where the angel of the Lord found her and ministered to her in her distress.

A very striking picture that is. Let us recall it for a moment. The spring of water, well of water, "springing well," is the type to us of the Spirit of God, but of the Spirit of God as ministering the Word of God. Those two things, I would like to emphasize, go continually together in Scripture - the Spirit of God and the Word of God. He who does not honor the Word of God does not honor the Spirit of God. He who does not honor the Spirit of God does not honor the Word of God. God has

joined the two, you remember, in the Gospel of John, in that beautiful fourth chapter we know so well, and again in the seventh chapter. In the third chapter, on the other hand, you have the living water given to us in its component parts, as I may say. In the third chapter the Lord is speaking to Nicodemus of new birth, and He speaks of water and the Spirit. You remember that He says, explaining what He had said before about the necessity of man being born again: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

That type of water is explained for us very distinctly in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, where it is said that "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (vv. 25,26). Thus we have the interpretation in the most definite way. The washing of water is by the Word. That is the cleansing which Christ effects in His Church. Thus we can have the most perfect confidence as to the interpretation of the type there. And a most beautiful illustration it is, "water," the figure of that which is for refreshment and sustenance on the one hand, and for cleansing on the other. That is what the Word of God implies for us, but that Word, we are distinctly told is that by which we are begotten again. The Apostle Peter tells us that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

Thus, if we are born of water and of the Spirit, the water interpreted for us also in Ephesians must of necessity stand for this Word of God. Then, as I have said, in the fourth chapter of John, when the Lord speaks to the

woman by the well, He speaks of living water; that is the water and the Spirit again, but now the two are one. The Spirit is the life, so to speak, of the water, that which makes it living (that which makes the Word living). The two are bound together in one indissoluble figure; the Spirit and the water are here the living water, water with the life.

Let us remember, beloved, when we think of it, how God has joined these two together. Take the Word of God alone; what is it for our need? Nothing. If the Spirit of God is not in it, if the Spirit of God does not use it, it is absolutely nothing; it has no power.

On the other hand, where do you find the Spirit without the water, without the Word? Nowhere! The Word is the direct instrument of the Spirit. The Word is that which the Spirit of God has given us through His instruments, and it is that by which He works. The Spirit without the Word is mere fanaticism; that is, there is no such thing, really. The Word without the Spirit is mere rationalism; it is as vain and ineffectual as it can possibly be. The living water is God's thought for us - the living water, such as we find in the well here.

Notice how beautiful this name Lahai-roi is, which means "the well of Him that liveth and seeth me." That was Hagar's term, as she realized the wonderful care of the Lord for her, how He had met her in her need when she was fleeing from her mistress, Sarah, to bring her back. He ministers to her by the springing well which He discovers for her. But Isaac dwells there. Isaac, the child of the free woman, Isaac, our representative - the one who is the true child of God according to the type, the one who has really the spirit of adoption, the one

who has the full title, as it were, to the inheritance. He is the one who gets the well, the one who controls it.

Beloved, I want to ask us, before we go any further, how much are we dwelling by this well, Lahai-roi? If we were to interpret it as the Old Testament, for instance, I fear we should find sad failure. We don't dwell much in the Old Testament, do we? It is our glory, you say, that we dwell in the New Testament. Yes, but the well is one, and we cannot separate it from the way in which God has given it, in such a marked way, for us. God expects us to dwell by that Old Testament which is now illuminated for us. These wonderful Scriptures are those that, illuminated by the New Testament (brought into the full, blessed reality of what they are), Isaac dwells by, and God has given them to us.

We are talking out of these Scriptures tonight, and, beloved, I ask again, how much do we really have them? I want to speak of the value of the Word of God, of that which I believe God is pressing upon us at this time. I feel that we ought, therefore, to ask ourselves what is the value that we attach to the well of God's Word? If I may speak freely, I find that still, in spite of all that has been taught, the Old Testament has very much of a seal upon it. People don't care, as a rule, to take it up much. They are not familiar with it so as to be able to handle its precious types. They are not up to it. They don't dwell by it. They don't realize the power of it. It is not for them "the well of Him that liveth and seeth." It has not for them the divine meaning which it certainly ought to have.

Beloved, I think it is a very striking thing that at the present time these are especially the parts of the Word,

of which Satan is saying, "I will take them away." What is it that the so-called higher criticism has laid its deadly hand upon today? Moses and the prophets.

Treating the New Testament respectfully for a while (and only for a while), this awful rationalism which has invaded the heart of Christendom, and which speaks to us now, not only by learned professors, but by the clergy and others throughout the land - is simply taking what men think so little of, and saying, "You don't value that much do you? You won't miss it if it is gone, will you?" I see devilish subtlety in such rationale. What does the Lord Himself say? Ah, He says: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). That is the power of Moses and the prophets. And then, again Jesus said, "If ye believe not [Moses'] writings, how shall ye believe My words?" (John 5:47). Thus Satan knows what he is doing. Let him remove the foundation in these books of Moses, and he is really removing the very Word, or part of the Word, which we do prize; he is removing the New Testament itself.

Alas, don't you think it would do us good, if we as Christians dwelt more by Lahai-roi? if we knew a little better what our God has given us? and thus knew better the blessing in it? Hagar called it "the well of Him that liveth and seeth"! That is what it is. It is the "well of Him that liveth and seeth" us, the well of God, the living water.

I believe when you turn to Revelation 3:7-13, the point of the Lord's words to Philadelphia is a commendation: "Thou hast kept My Word." If the Lord says to any, "Thou hast kept My Word" - if He could say that to any - what

would it first imply? Most evidently it would imply that such must be a people who search the Word of God, who want to know it. Could you imagine, for instance, a people "keeping" a word which they did not search? which they read at their leisure to be sure, but did not like anything very deep about it, and were satisfied with very little? Could you expect that the Lord could commend people of that character by saying, "You have kept My word?" I don't think so.

You say, "We all have different capacities." Well, I agree with that in some measure, but I don't believe that the measure of a person's natural capacity is the measure for the children of God. Are we to leave out the Spirit of God? Did you ever notice, when the Word of God becomes a living thing to a man, how he grows? Have you ever seen the light come into his eyes, and the hearing into his ears, the power of observation, the power of realizing things, how he wakes up as if he were a new being? Not merely his mind, but the conscience, and all the man in full reality of manhood is awakened.

God has written that Book, hasn't He? For whom has He written it? Some wise and clever people who may naturally expect to know it by their own intelligence? God's people are, for the most part, the poor. The Apostle Paul said: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:26,27). Then did God write His Word for these? Yes, I suppose so. Did He write His Word for you, beloved Christians? Individualize it, and ask yourself, "Did He write all this for me?" Would He then keep you

from understanding it by the narrow capacity you have? Oh, let me tell you that Christ enlarges every heart He dwells in, and the heart which is large enough to hold Christ will of necessity grow larger and larger. You can only be limited by your unbelief, and not in any other way. I don't know any other way of limiting the capacity of a man taught by the Spirit of God, except by his unbelief. But alas, we can do that.

Beloved, do you value the Word of God? Do you value it so much that you absolutely must search it diligently, that it will be to you what it was to some of the saints of old?

Oh, think of it! Not only "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" but a thing that can make one wiser than one's teachers, of more value than your necessary food, in fact, "the food of the mighty," as God calls the manna with which He fed the people. This is manna, is it not? The Bread from heaven - Christ of course; but is not this all Christ? What other theme has God to write about than Christ? People often talk of the deep things, and they don't want the deep things. Where will you go where Christ is not in the Word of God? Do you mean that you don't want to know the deep things of Christ?

Ah, beloved, how the devil cheats us! In how many ways, alas, he can deceive the children of God! How zealous he is in doing his work! How thoroughly he is at issue with God in all this, and, you can be sure, wherever God is saying to a people or desiring to say to a people: "Thou hast kept My Word," there you will find the devil has one hundred good arguments why you should not keep it.

Do you notice what a day of reading it is, and do you notice the kind of things that occupy so many today - all the latest trash? The newspaper is thrust directly under your nose wherever you go. [Editor's Note: Today in the twenty-first century, the devil has many more things to distract the believer from reading the Word of God than ever before.] Do you see nothing in all that stir? Why, the devil will stir the whole world to accomplish his purposes, and his purpose is to crowd out what he fears and hates - the Word of God.

Keep it! Of course, not merely learn it, not as you would learn as I have often said, the geography of a country into which you never go. It is the Book of a people who are on the way to their land, of pilgrims who are making progress. It is all a pilgrim's progress, a Book which will lead you on to the land, give you more and more possession of it now, and lead you on to the full and final enjoyment of it.

Will it make no difference in eternity itself? Will you have then suddenly all the knowledge of God's Word which you have lost by your carelessness on earth? If that be the case, what a mistake God made in giving us all of that Book! Why then did He give us all of this great Book? People often say He did that because He wanted to save people. But did He have to write all of that Book just because He wanted to save souls? Do you actually mean to say that all of this Book is necessary to save our souls? I am afraid there will not be many souls saved if a person has to read and enter into all of the Word of God for salvation.

Why, a little child can be saved just by a few blessed words whispered into the Saviour's ear and believed by

the heart. Yes, it will make a vast difference in eternity, not only that one is saved, but that he reads and studies and grows in the Word now so that he will have the spiritual capacity to enter into and enjoy the surpassing riches of the grace and truth of Christ in the eternal ages yet to come.

But, you say, it is a bigger world than it used to be, there are a great many things in it that we need to know, and we must not be less informed than others. Very well then; go on, and at the end of your life sit down and count your losses. Will you be more fit for heaven by all your earthly knowledge?

Oh, beloved, I would like to arouse you - I would like to arouse all Christians as to this in the present day. It is the broadest, deepest question you must face. It is not merely a point about this doctrine or that doctrine, but about the whole Word of God.

What are you going to do, Christians? I believe God is saying to us today (it is the very thing He is saying in that letter to Philadelphia), "I have opened to you the Word of God; I want to know if you value it."

Isn't it a fact that in these latter days God has given us truth without which we never could have unlocked the Old Testament really? Isn't it a fact that until you know the blessed New Testament truths of being in Christ, a new creation, dead with Christ, seated in Christ in the heavenly places - that until you know such things as these you do not have the key to the Scriptures? Do you know those things? The majority of Christians do not know them today. When you know these truths, then you have the key to the whole Word of God.

Do you know that you have the Spirit of God? Many Christians don't even know what it is to have the Spirit of God in them. They talk about the baptism of the Spirit, but know not the living Person who has come to abide in them and make their body His temple. Do you have the knowledge of that? Do you really have the knowledge of the Holy Spirit of God, the Revealer of all these things, as One who has come to abide in you, to be with you forever? Do you know that? Do you believe that? "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), the Lord says. That is wonderful, isn't it? "He will guide you into ALL truth." Do you believe that? To whom is He speaking? To just a few people who are teachers or preachers or religious leaders, who have to know more than the rest? Is the Spirit of God confined to the teachers and preachers? We will have nothing but clerisy if that be the case! Are you going to give up your title to the Spirit of God, or, perhaps to the effects of the Spirit of God dwelling within you? Or, are you going to have all that that implies?

Beloved, you have in the Spirit the power which will open Scripture to you from cover to cover. But there is always a test that goes with every privilege. God is saying, "I am going to see now how you value it." Do you value an open Word? Do you value a Bible really open? Oh, if you do, believe that God has given it into your hand, and say, "Let this Book be mine, and the whole world may go."

I tell you, you will find, through God's infinite grace, not only that you will be superior to the power of evil that is rapidly coming in, but that you are, through God's mercy, really on a road which leads to heaven and gives you more of heaven every step of the way. That is what it

is. God's Word is something that leads on; it is the Word of a living Leader.

And now, how is this Book written? Let me turn to a passage that ought to be familiar to many of us. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). That word for "perfect" there is a striking word. It means "fitted all together," in complete harmony, every part in proper and regular development; so that the man is not a deformed creature, with his head bigger than his body, or one with some parts crippled and deformed, and other parts developed at their expense, but spiritually a full, developed man.

"That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." How do you get that? From the Scriptures, you say; yes, that is true in a way; through the Scriptures, supposing that you are a man of God. That is in some sense a very individual kind of title; a title, which, as you take up the history of the Scriptures, you find very few had. For instance, in the Old Testament you find as to Elijah that he was distinctly a man of God. So with Elisha, Moses and David. Men of God we must be. What does that mean? Scripture will not furnish any but men of God to all good works. Men of God are people who know how to stand for Him, people who have His ear, people who have intelligence in His ways, people who, as being near Him, can stand for Him, speak for Him, and walk with Him. That is what all Scripture is written for - for these men of God. If you say, "Then few have it," I say, you can be one of them if that is your heart's desire.

Look at it again. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine"; that is the first thing. "All Scripture is profitable for doctrine," "Adam, Seth, Enos," and so on. Did you ever try to read the first book of Chronicles? How strange - "profitable for doctrine"! To my shame I must say I have not gotten the understanding of the doctrine of this passage yet, but I know it is there, though the higher critic does not want you to think of it much today. He says: "Why, nonsense, man; how can that be profitable for doctrine?"

Suppose we snipped that piece out of the Scriptures; would you ever have missed it, and couldn't you have gotten along without it - all those names - which have never practically been in our Bibles at all?" We may not have learned it yet, and we may not know what the "doctrine" is yet, but yet it is there, and is profitable for doctrine. You have to look deeper than the surface, don't you? Yes, I believe so; but, beloved, I tell you it will pay. If you want to be men of sinews, men of muscle, athletes spiritually, if you want to be the people who can meet the world in arms, who can meet the devil in all his ranks, learned men and all, you must believe that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, and live as though you believe it.

But, then, it is not only profitable for "doctrine." Next is "for conviction"; that is what the word "reproof" should be. Ah, that is the thing. The very first thing that it has to do is to bring conviction to me, conviction as to this or that. Conviction puts the stamp of nothingness upon something that I love, or the stamp of corruption upon something that I thought was pure, which I must cast away as a defiling thing. Ah, beloved, we don't quite like that kind of thing, do we? But that is the next thing.

Scripture is all for practical application. If you want to learn from it, you must learn to apply it first of all to yourself.

Then, notice, comes "correction." What a lot of mending God has got to do, mending manners which are amiss, and with which He cannot agree. How much it costs, the world says! Yes, it costs a good deal of the world's paper money, a good deal of this kind of rag money, which many value so much, but it gives in return a good lot of real gold and silver. It will snip, and snip, and snip, and snip a lot of the finery off which people nowadays think so valuable, until you are very poor, and left in very bad shape in the eyes of the world. But notice how it all ends: "Profitable for doctrine, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Do you value that? Do you want that?

But, you ask, do you have to learn about types and all these pictures of the Old Testament? Will it help you to dwell by that well of Lahai-roi and look into that well and see the face of God meeting you there? Are you really going into all that about the prophets and all? Ah, beloved, I don't know whether you are, but I know that it is worth all that the world counts good. It is worth the sacrifice of all else to get what God has for you in this magnificent Word of His. I tell you, it is going to be the burning question of the day, for the devil says, "I am looking for a people who don't want that, and I am going to take it from them." You can't hold it unless you believe it. The Word is open to us. I don't expect to live long enough to learn all that is there in this wonderful Book; but, I tell you, how we will grow, and what men we will be, if we earnestly set to work upon it!

If we are going to talk about Philadelphia, this has much to do with the Philadelphian character. It connects with all that movement in which God has been moving for a long time past, the movement to discover and bring together again, as far as possible, His Church out of all mixtures and associations and unequal yokes - things which disfigure and dishonor God on every side. You would expect, when we come to read the Lord's word to Philadelphia, a great deal being said about gathering the children of God together. But no; what He has to say to us is, "Thou hast kept My Word"; not a little bit of it - not even a good deal of it; but "My Word" - whatever can authenticate itself to the soul as that.

There are many Christians who do not dare to look into the Word of God very closely, lest it should show them more than they are prepared to follow. They may read the Bible regularly. They may be entirely orthodox, too, and believe that it is all the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. They would not say God did not write Chronicles or the "fable" of Jonah and the fish; no, they would say He wrote it all. But that does not give them any absorbing desire to possess themselves of it. They are afraid it will make too many demands upon them; too definite a creed will narrow them, and cut them off from much that they desire.

On the other hand, there are many more for whom the Word of God is simply crowded out. They believe that the Bible is very plain, and all you need to know about it is very easily acquired. There are a great many other things that require your time; the world has grown very big, and there are many things you must know, or you will fall sadly behind.

They are not preachers, but those who can be trusted to keep them informed of what is needful to be known from the Scriptures. Any way, they will not take the time needed for these things, and do not see the good of so much Scripture study. Could the Lord say to any of these two classes, "Thou hast kept My Word"? I think not. He could not say that to those who, outside of what would keep them out of hell, had no real particular interest in it. To keep His Word means a great deal: it means all that He has given, from Genesis to Revelation. Will He be content to have you interpret that instead as all that you care to find there?

But now see what comes next: "And hast not denied My Name" (Revelation 3:8). See how immediately, as connected with His Word, Christ's Name comes in. This is, one may say, the very revelation itself. You have to realize the way in which, as you go on with Scripture, the Name of Christ, the fulness that is in Him, enlarges for you more and more. Isn't it Christ of whom God is writing everywhere in Scripture? Why, yes it is. Then, how much of Christ will you be content to do without?

Now we have gotten to the central point of gathering. As I have said, you do not find, in the Lord's address to Philadelphia, anything said of the actual gathering of the people of God together. Proselytizing is certainly not encouraged. No, it is the Name, the Name, that is to do all that can be done in this way. We are to go on with the Word, live in it, grow in it, let Christ thus grow in us, and get to be the people that God would have us to be - men of God. Let us have Christ in His glory the Companion of our way, and then this glorious Christ will gather His own together. This is the only possible way for these things to come to pass; it is the only way of

being really Philadelphian. The only communion that is worth having is a communion with Christ and in His things.

Laodicea has its door shut upon Christ. Philadelphia gives us the last word for those fully faithful. This is the one thing that will content Him, the thing that is on His heart. But here rings out the word, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11). Ah, beloved, sorrowful as it is, one must not wonder if we find in the smallest company of faithful believers, one and another dropping off and gone. The stream runs strong against all that is of God. Yet the mere force of it can carry away none, except as one is traitor to himself, and the hand of faith loosens its hold of Christ. To retain hold is not only to stand fast; it is to make sure and steady progress. Christ is a living Leader, and the path with Him leads ever on.

There is no room, no time for discouragement. God has amply provided for us for the little time we shall be left here. Already by faith we may enter into the things unseen by eye, unknown except as the Spirit of God reveals them to us. Into this the Word of God is the means of access, and of forming in us the mind of Christ.

More and more, assuredly, the Word of God is opening to those who desire such insight. They are few perhaps who do, and these make no great show in the world, it is certain. People may ask, "After all, how much is accomplished by holding fast to the truth of God's Word?" To this I respond, eternity will reveal more than time. To some it may seem that something is accomplished that Christ should have at least a few - nonetheless dear to Him in spite of the smallness of

their number - of whom He can say, with all His heart
breaking out while saying it, "They have kept My Word,
and not denied My Name."

Present Things

The Seven Churches - or four of them, anyway

From "Present Things"

EPHESUS

The ebb-tide of ruin can be stemmed by no hand of ours, and this feebleness of ours may seem an available plea to withdraw us from responsibility as to it. But not so teaches the word of the Lord. Our associations are here distinctly recognized as part of our general condition. We are to "depart from evil," not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour, and follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. For association with evil we are therefore ever responsible. It may be said that such principles, carried fully out, would involve a very narrow path and a wholesale giving up of spheres of usefulness. But be it so or be it not so, it is not ours to choose. Our path is defined for us. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry." Yes, "rebellion"! How gladly would we call an obedience limited by our own wills by some lighter name than that! Yet what else, in truth, was that which brought out Saul's true character, and lost the kingdom to him and to his seed forever? What he left undone was a mere trifle to what he did. And the sheep and oxen had been spared to sacrifice to the Lord. What fairer excuse have people now to offer for much disobedience - evil plausibly intended to bring forth good? And how hard is it to understand that which we may obey in much that in fact

costs us little, the true test of obedience is just in that in which we are called to renounce our wills and our wisdom, perhaps to forfeit the esteem and companionship of others, by doing what has only the Word of God to justify it and must wait for eternity to find right appreciation! Patience, too, is apt to degenerate into a toleration, more or less, of evil. Finding it on every hand, and no where perfection, the very contact with it is apt to dull the spiritual sense. Charity would fain put also the mildest construction upon every thing. We are bidden to "take forth the precious from the vile," but we learn to tolerate the vile because of the precious. We become liberal where we have no right.

SMYRNA

The decline of the Church opens the way for the power of the enemy to display itself; and the assault is a double one - from without and within at the same moment. The result is, however - very different in the two cases. The outside assault is failure, for it is impossible that the Lord should leave His saints to be subdued by power beyond their own; while the defeat of Satan's wiles is another matter. Here they must put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day.

SARDIS

The fresh truth calls for fresh confession; costs, and is meant to cost, something; brings its confessors into opposition to the course around them and separates at once from those whose only desire is to go with the stream, and with whom the profession of Christ and the cross are widely separate.

Doubtless the division may separate between true Christians themselves; and this is in itself an evil, that true Christians should be separated; but the responsibility rests with those who are not quick-eared enough to hear God's call when it comes, - not single eyed enough to discern the path in which the Lord is leading his own. We are bound, by the honour we owe to Him, to maintain that His own in contradictory paths - cannot possibly refuse the needed light to walk aright, however simple or ignorant the soul may be. No one strays and no one stumbles because God denies him light. But "the light of the body" practically "is the eye" - the inlet of it, and there the hinderance is. Thus a severance, sorrowfully enough, is made between real Christians; but the sin of it is not with those who separate from that which God has shown them to be evil, but that with those who remain associated with the evil which is forcing out the true in heart. Separation from evil, so far from being a principle of division, would, if honestly followed, make for unity and peace, as leading upon a path where God's Spirit, ungrieved, could really unite and strengthen His people. With evil He cannot unite; and this, indeed, therefore, wherever admitted, is a principle of division.

It is not schism, this separate path, when not my own will leads me, but His Word and Spirit! It is not separation in heart from brethren, if Christ be dearer to me still than they. Nay, love to them approves itself only thus, as the apostle teaches us, "when we love God and keep His commandments." (I Jno. v. 2.)

Faith's victories are not in applause wrung from a multitude, but in the path of One, true Joseph, separated from His brethren; and God has overruled the presence

of evil (which, I need not say, He has not caused) to the giving us a path at least in its circumstances, the more Christlike. We are not left to the subjection to evil: He calls us to rise above it. The difficulties of the path are only to carry us through them all. Every encouragement throughout these epistles is held out simply to the overcomer. The Lord gives us only the needed energy. The time is short: the end is at hand.

PHILADELPHIA

It is the voice and Person of Christ, which are here controlling, and he who is thus controlled is upon a path of unlimited progress and unspeakable blessing. The clue-line is in his hand, which will lead him out of all entanglements, from truth to truth, from strength to strength. There is but one condition here, and that is, manifestly, that he "holds fast" the clue-line. If he drops this, progress is at an end, his path becomes devious. Alas, it is a rare thing for those who have begun in the Spirit to be made perfect by the flesh?

And the character in which he displays Himself is that of holiness and truth; for there is no way of nearness to Him but by separation from the evil that He hates, and being formed by the truth which He reveals. The Word is separative and formative. The mark of its reception is, the abandonment of all iniquity, marked as such, not by the common conscience of men, but by the Word itself. This is the sign of entrance into the sanctuary - of the presence of the Lord realized, when in His light we see light.

Absolute truthfulness is rare indeed. The penalties attending it are so many, often to be escaped by so slight a swerving from the strict path, - a path often so lonely

and without sympathy, and so barren as it might seem in its isolation. Even to Christians, Christ often appears to have deserted it. And then after all to break down there! and what so likely as to break down? In this way we may connive at self-deception; for what do all these reasonings amount to, but that the path is to be a path of faith to us now as it ever was, and difficulties are to be as ever the test of faith?

Our eyes must be upon the path and the Leader. Success, where it seems fullest, must be tested rather by the future than the present - rather by eternity than time; and he who follows it most will be most distracted by other voices than His who speaks here. What tempter lures indeed the servants of Christ like this? For how many does success, rather than the Word of God, sanction their measures, while alluring them into direct opposition to the Word! If even gained in true obedience, how often does the flattery of great achievement unbalance a soul which adversity could only school to more endurance! These things are but common-places of experience; and in view of them, we need not wonder if God has, in general, been sparing in measuring out to His people great success.

A little strength He marks and approves; yet it is but a little. No Pentecostal energy revived, no faith that can move mountains, shall we find here. The "day of small things," in the Christian as in the Jewish history, is not at its beginning, but at its close. It is a great mistake to confound the day of Ezra with the day of David. And although it may be said, and truly, that eternal life and the power of the Spirit know no decrepitude, yet our day and generation leave their imprint on us. They should

not; we are not blameless in it; yet they do. Still "a little strength" is here approval.

And how is this marked? Surely in what follows, -- "Thou hast kept My word, and not denied My name." It is not in gifts restored to the Church, as some claim now; it is not in ecclesiastical position, nor in numbers, nor in place among men; -- In none of these things is there strength before God, but in obedience and devotedness.

An immense thing it is, in a day like this, to be keeping, with an exercised heart, the word of Christ! Not a word here and there; not following it until the cost may be too much; but through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report. For is there right obedience any where, when there is not in our purpose obedience every where? Can He whom we serve accept a compromise to His own dishonour, when we really tell Him we will do this, but not that, at His bidding? Solemn questions these, which may His grace keep ringing in our ears, until they wake up only harmonies of joy and peace within our souls, and not self-accusation.

Let us understand that keeping Christ's word means, if it means any thing, honest subjection to the whole of it: to that of which we may not even perceive the importance, as if we did; calling nothing little which He enjoins - of what has equal authority with the weightiest to emphasize it for us. Herein is often the truest test of a right spirit in us, when we obey not in uncertainty, but in darkness; and go out upon His leading, not knowing where.

We have need to remember, too, that our own contrary wills are often the most effectual hinderances to receiving what is really Christ's word. How solemn it is

to think that of the mass of things in which we differ from each other as Christians, this contrariety must needs account for very much the larger part. The Lord's words are plain enough, and universally applicable, that "if any one will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." It is due to Him to own that as the blessed Spirit of God could not lead into contradictory beliefs, these differences must be of us, and not of Him. But then, found as they are in so many whom we must esteem as godly men, what a warning they give us of how much that is not of God, - of real insubjection - may be found even in such. So far as we have indeed whole-heartedly followed Him, who can doubt that He has led us right? But then how little really unreserved following of Him there must be after all!

And who can measure the loss even now and who then can measure the eternal loss, when we thus let slip communion with Himself? And how many are trying to win it back, or make up for its absence by filling their hands with work for Him, as if they were almost persuaded that "to obey is" not "better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

How plainly perceptible it is when a soul reaches the barrier line beyond which he will not go! Activities may go on, and the whole outward man be no other than it was, yet there is something gone from the soul which at once one with God will discern as hindering fellowship. How sorrowful to lose one another's company this way, while yet perhaps the feet go on together! But if we lose Christ's companionship, what shall replace it?

Alas! in our day it is not "union is obedience" that is the motto, but "union is strength;" and for whatever purpose

men may have, they combine. Strength of a certain sort is found, no doubt; but it is not where he found it who says, "When I am weak, then am I strong;" "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

Let us take heed, then, that we be true Philadelphians. Tested we shall be assuredly all round, and in different forms if the spirit be not different. The Word here is the assurance, is it not? For the faith that might quail and question as the results of the trial become apparent. Not now, but by and by, things shall be manifested, and where Christ's heart is shall come out openly.

More decisively now He announces, "I come quickly." The day of grace is running out with the day of patience. Soon it shall be Christ's presence and glory. The centuries of delay have come to years, the years are soon to be months, the months days, the days moments. "I come quickly:" this is to be shown in its power for the soul by its keeping the exhortation, "hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

But all shows it to be a time of drift, - a time of declensions as well as revivals: overcomer is he only who holds fast. The Spirit of God moving, the Word manifesting its power, conscience responding; yet every where the ebb after the flow, the trial which sifts, separates, individualizes. By and by comes the terrible back-flow of Laodicea. Think not Philadelphia is a haven of refuge where we may lie at anchor and never feel it. Not so, - oh, not so: this is the fatal delusion of Laodicea itself: "Hold that fast which thou hast!" The tug, if it has not come, is coming: hold thou fast!

But to what? - hold what fast? The word, and the name, and the patience of Christ. Not the word of even the

leaders of God's raising up. The truth must ever commend the man, never the man the truth. One great danger is, lest, having begun with the former principle, we slip into the latter. Even the truth they teach is not truth received till it has been gotten at the Master's feet and in communion with Himself, - till you can hold it, not with the eyes shut, but with eyes open, - till you can maintain it for truth against the very instrument used of God to give it to you. if need be. "If WE, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Then, HOLD FAST! When it is no longer a question if it be the truth, but only of its consequences. Hold fast: though those who have held it with you, or before you give it up; though it separate you from all else whomsoever; though it be worse dishonoured by the evil of those who profess it; though it seem utterly useless to hope of any good from it: in the face of the world, in the face of the devil, in the face of the saints, - "hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown!"

Ruth from "The Numerical Bible"

The Book of Ruth, from "The Numerical Bible"

SCOPE AND DIVISIONS OF RUTH

The

Book of Ruth is plainly a history of the times of the judges, while as plainly it looks on to David and the kingdom. Thus it naturally stands between Judges and Kings (Samuel). Its spiritual meaning as plainly connects these together.

In its literal sense it shows us how, spite of Israel's failure, God's salvation could go forward, even among the Gentiles themselves. For He does not leave Himself without witness, and where there is a heart susceptible to His grace, there will His grace be found by it. Thus Ruth, this Gentile woman, and under the ban of the law (a Moabitess), finds yet her place in the genealogy of Christ - is one of those who can say, "To us a child is born, to us a son is given"

(Isa. ix. 6). Nor only this, but in this grace to her the Israelite also is built up again out of his ruin: only through such grace as this can the nation be at last restored and blessed.

The spiritual sense, as it is founded upon the literal, follows this very closely. For Judges having shown us the failure of the heavenly people (which results on the one hand in the Lord gathering his own up to Himself in heaven, and on the other in the rejection of the now lifeless profession upon earth), Ruth shows us now the remnant of Israel coming like a mere Gentile, all claim

forfeited, and under the ban of the law, converted, received, and built up in Christ (Boaz). And this prepares us for the view of David and Solomon as the double type of Christ in His coming kingdom.

For us also, Ruth may display the grace of God in salvation to the Gentiles, going on through all the time of failure depicted in the Judges. But the application here is only partial, and needs to be used with care. It is only the working of God's grace, being always in principle the same, and ministering to the same need, that makes the one case necessarily analogous to the other.

There are three divisions: which in a book so small as Ruth, and so connected, would class rather as sections.

Sec. 1. (Chap. i.) Left Alone.

1. (vs. 1-5) The barrenness of one's own way.
2. (6-18.) Separation and adherence
3. (19-22) The return to the land.

Sec. 2. (Chap. ii.) Help in humiliation: gleanings in the fields of him "in whom strength is."

1. (vs. 1-17) Power and grace.
 - 2 (18-27.) Confirmation and progress: a glimpse of redemption
- Sec. 3. (Chaps. iii., iv.) Redemption realized.

1. (iii) The claim of barrenness.
2. (iv. 1-8.) The legal kinsman
3. (9-22.) "The resurrection of the name upon the inheritance."

NOTES

It has been already noticed that the place of Ruth, in the present Hebrew canon, is quite different from that which it occupies in our own arrangement, which is that of the Septuagint and of our common Bibles.

Enough has been said as to this, probably, there being nothing to assure us of any divine warrant for the incongruous mixture of books in the Kethubim, while the historical place of Ruth cannot be doubted. The spiritual significance is in complete accordance with this also, as will be perfectly evident as we go through the book.

Spiritually, the place of Ruth is clearly that of a supplement to Judges, - it not being meant by this that its lesson is of inferior importance, which, being the salvation side, it cannot be. Judges, as we have seen, has given us the failure of the heavenly people, - of Christianity, looked at as a dispensation. It is not, of course, meant that God's purposes in it could fail. He never ordained it to "bud and blossom, and fill the face of the earth with fruit"; but has expressly assured us that Israel shall do so. (Isa. xxvii. 6.) Of course people may, if they will, say that Christians are the true Israel of God, and inherit their promises; but the passage cannot be found in which Scripture asserts this. On the contrary, it is just the apostle of the Gentiles, after Christianity as a dispensation had already begun, who tells us that to Israelites his "kindred according to the flesh" - as if he would not allow any escape from his assertion - "pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 3,4), - manifestly the Old Testament ones. Thus nothing can be much plainer than that Isaiah's words refer to no other than the nation now for their sins broken off and disowned.

Israel's blessings are all upon earth. Christians are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." (Epl. i. 3.)

Christians are therefore taught "to wait for the Son of God from heaven," and that "those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" shall then, together with the dead saints raised, "be caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and so, it is added, "shall we be ever with the Lord." (1 Thess. i. 10; iv. 15-17.) But this by no means ends the history of the world: it is plainly beyond this that Israel's promises are to find their fulfillment. "For I would not have you ignorant,"

says the apostle again, "that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. xi. 25, 26.) That is to say, when God's purpose in the gathering of the Gentile Church shall be accomplished, and its number therefore complete, Israel will pass out of thier present condition of partial blindness into, that of a people all holy (see Isa. iv.), a nation wholly the Lord's, such as has never yet been seen. For this, then, plainly, the present. dispensation must have passed away: "as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins." (vs. 26, 27.)

Read that new covenant in Jeremiah (xxxi. 33, 34), and how plainly does this new condition of the people appear! "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in

their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:" - just what we are doing now, - " for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Thus, indeed, shall "all Israel" in that day "be saved." But what will accomplish this? "The coming of the Deliverer out of Zion," replies the apostle. But is not Christ the Deliverer? - and has He not come? Yes; but not "out of Zion." He has come out of Bethlehem. and out of Nazareth, and, thank God, out of the grave also; but not yet out of Zion: for Zion is the royal city.

David's city; and when the King of kings reigns there, then, indeed, shall Israel's deliverance be accomplished. Clearly it stands written, that Israel's conversion nationally shall never be completed "until,"

says their gracious Lord, "they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son:. . . in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. xii. 10; xiii. 1.)

Now if one ask still, May not this be accomplished without any personal coming of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel? - the answer is given in Revelation (i. 7):

"Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." This is just Zechariah's

prophecy, and "all kindreds of the earth" is exactly what might be rendered "all the tribes of the land."

Thus it is when He comes in a way visible to all, that Israel will, as a whole, find forgiveness and blessedness: then, and not before.

Nationally, they will not be converted by any preaching of the gospel now, and so says the apostle, again, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes: for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

The change of dispensation, then, is obvious, when Israel is brought back; and the book of Zechariah, in the context of the passages quoted, and with many another prophecy, shows us that there will be a time of trouble, out of which they will be delivered only by the Lord's appearing, and which will be the time of their travail and new birth. In the midst of this it will be that a remnant which at last becomes the nation, will have their preparation, and in poverty and need find their way to Christ. This remnant, in their search and finding, have their fitting symbol in Ruth the Gentile: for on the ground of Gentile grace alone can they stand. For nearly two thousand years they have rejected the Lord: they have abode, according to Hosea's prophecy, "without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim," - Gentiles in practical condition, disowning and disowned of God; with an empty profession, however which may enable us to understand their picture to be that of the Moabitess. All the fitness of the history so allegorized will appear as we take it up in

detail, until in Boaz is found the Kinsman-Redeemer, in union with whom riches and establishment are found. This, too, is our Redeemer; and many a precious view of Him shall we enjoy as we go through the book. To Israel is, as has been said, the first application; and the only way of true profit as to all Scripture is in maintaining the divinely intended meaning. Among the sheaves there will be found, for us as for Ruth, much more than a gleaning.

RUTH

SECTION 1. (Chap. 1.)

Left Alone.

Israel in her faithlessness, her exile from her land, her widowed condition, is first presented to us in Naomi. All is in ruin with her: she is bereaved and desolate. To her, however, Ruth attaches herself; to share her fortunes. The meaning of this will be found in Micah (ch. v. 3).

Israel's travail-time of sorrow is there referred to - the fruit, on the one hand, of the gathering of the nations against Zion (ch. iv. 11, sq.); but, in a deeper sense, the fruit of the Judge of Israel having been smitten on the cheek (v. 1). Then we have, parenthetically, the glory of the insulted Judge: it is He who comes forth out of Bethlehem to be Ruler in Israel. This is the passage that the scribes quoted to Herod in answer to the question of the wise men at the birth of Christ; but they did not go on to speak of the great glory that is revealed here as His: "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."

He is Israel's divine-human King, yet rejected: and being rejected, He rejects: "therefore doth He give them up."

Here is the secret of their condition as a nation since, - a secret still, to them, alas, though so plainly declared; and here is the reason of their final sorrows. But there is a limit: He cannot always give them up: His promises to the fathers must find their fulfillment; so it is added, "He shall give them, up, until." What is the limit? - "until she which travaileth has brought forth." Their sorrows are the birth-throes of a people, to be born as in one day; and "then shall the remnant of His brethren return unto the children of Israel."

What this last statement means should not now be difficult. If we have but intelligently grasped the Scriptures that have been before us, it will be plain that those whom the Lord counts His brethren, that is, those who do the will of His Father which is in heaven (Matt. xii. 50), have, during the time of His rejection of Israel, been outside of Israel. Even Jews by birth, when converted to Christ, and baptized of the Spirit into one body, necessarily give up Jewish hopes, although for better ones.

When, however, the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, and this part of God's purposes has found its consummation, then Israel will be again, and more really than ever, the people of God; and those who are brethren of the King (according to the standpoint of the prophet, Israelite-born) will return to Israelite hopes and heritage.

Now if

Naomi stand for Israel as connected with her sorrowful past, and yet with the land to which she is returning, we can easily see in Ruth's clinging to her the return just spoken of; of the children of the King.

Yet, at first, all seems wrecked and hopeless: the return is in bitterness and sorrow: then comes the gleaning in strange harvest-fields, where the Lord of the harvest is met and becomes known in His bounty; and finally, redemption, and marriage-songs: and by Ruth, through the grace of Boaz, Naomi is "built up."

1. (vs. 1-5) The barrenness of one's own way.

And it was in the days that the judges ruled, and there was a famine in the land. And there went a man of Bethlehem-judah to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. And the man's name was Elimelech, and the name of his wife, Naomi, and the names of his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion: Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab and continued there. And Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them Moabitish wives: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the second, Ruth; and they dwelt there about ten years. And they died both of them, Mahlon and Chilion: and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband.

(i.) Fixing our eyes, then, upon

Naomi as the central figure at the first, we find that her name is "pleasant," - a terrible contrast, as she realizes it, to the Lord's dealings with her. Her husband is Elimelech, "my God," or, in the form here, "my Mighty One is King." Another contrast: for a famine in the land makes him leave it for the heathen land adjoining, and there he dies.

Thus Israel, self-exiled from her land through unbelief, - for the famine would not suffice for one who had heard the promise, "Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be

fed," - has lost her enjoyed faith as well as her land and is in Moab, the place of mere profession.

The names of the sons - Mahlon and Chilion - have been quite differently, indeed oppositely, interpreted: generally, in accordance with their brief lives, Mahlon as "sick," and Chilion as "pining." But it has been urged against this that in this sense they would be unlikely names enough to be bestowed by their parents in their happier days; and it might be urged more conclusively that they are not in keeping with those of their father and mother, both of them in contrast with their after-lot. Cassel proposes, therefore, to derive Mahlon (properly, Maclon) from machol, a "circle-dance" and Chilion from calal, to "crown," - thus "crowned." A third view is possible: that there may be a real ambiguity in the words, which we are intended to leave there, and which points the contrast between the beginning and the end in a way quite easy to be understood.

The names of the wives - Ruth and

Orpah - are similarly in dispute. Orpah is taken by most to be the same Ophrah, "a fawn," but this is merely conjectural. Without the transposition it could hardly mean anything in Hebrew but "her neck,"

literally "the back of her neck"; and to give the back of the neck means to turn the back, either in stubbornness or in flight. Orpah's desertion of her mother-in-law cannot but make us incline to such a connection.

Ruth can only be understood as having a letter omitted by contraction. If this be an aleph, then it means "appearance," which has been freely taken as "beauty." if the letter dropped be ain, then it is taken as "friendship, female friend." This seems to agree with the

story, but certainly adds nothing to it; while with a similar derivation it may mean "tended," as by a shepherd: this would seem every way appropriate.

That in the generation of Israel, to which

Ruth typically belongs, there will be a portion that will turn their back upon the true national hopes and heritage, becoming finally apostate followers of Antichrist, is plainly predicted in the prophets.

Orpah would naturally stand for these, as Ruth for the true remnant.

Both widowed, - their first hopes ended, in the time of their distress they turn their several ways, and are separated forever.

2. (6-18.) Separation and adherence.

"And she arose, she and her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab that Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread. And she went forth from the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and as they were going on the way to return to the land of Judah, Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house;

Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me: Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each in the house of her husband. And she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

And they said unto her, [Nay,] but we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Return, my daughters: why will ye go with me; are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Return, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, should I even have a husband to-night, and should I also bear sons, would ye then tarry till they were grown?

Would ye stay on that account from having husbands? Nay, my daughters; for I am in much more bitterness than you: for Jehovah's hand is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave to her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back to her people and to her gods:

return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me. And when she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, she ceased speaking to her."

(ii.) This is what we have in the next sub-section. Naomi, hopeless as to herself, yet drawn by her affections, sets her face to return to Bethlehem from the country of Moab. But she is unbelieving and bitter of soul, and manifests that strange self-contradiction which, in such states, is so common an experience. Herself on her way back to the land of which she had heard that Jehovah had visited His people to give them bread, she sees nothing for her daughters-in-law but that they must return to their people and to their gods, and prays Jehovah to give them rest, each in the house of a heathen husband! This is the confusion of a darkened

soul; for in darkness all is confusion. All that she is clear about is the ruin in which she is, and she can give counsel of nothing but her despair. Orpah, after a faint resistance, goes back; but with Ruth neither precept nor example can avail to turn her heart from the pursuit of what appeals to her with a power above all difficulties. It is truly with the heart that man believeth and how manifest is the heart in that touching devotion of hers! "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

This is not the language of natural affection simply, that stops short of this last. And where this can be said, though it may come in in a subsidiary way, yet it cannot be a secondary thing. The faith of Ruth is, indeed, a beautiful thing to contemplate; and a striking proof of how that which God has planted can flourish in the midst of contrary circumstances and oppositions of all kinds. How little does Naomi here commend her God of whom Ruth speaks! The famine in Bethlehem, mocking it as the "house of bread"; the withdrawal of Elimelech, denying what his name expressed; his death; the Moabitish marriages, one of them her own; then the quick widowhoods; how the mother-in-law's appeal to go back, as Orpah had gone back, to her people and her gods: this is all we know of her surroundings, but which of them is favourable faith? Ah, it is God that favours it and upholds it and all the opposition only rouses it into a passion of longing and resolve. There might be little encouragement: was there not all the more a deep and deepening necessity, which found only in Israel's God

the possibility of satisfaction, if not yet the satisfaction itself?

Could such longing go without satisfaction, or could He who alone could meet it be a dream, or afar off from the need created?

And thus will a remnant be drawn to the God of Israel in times now surely drawing nigh, when around them faith will have vanished from the earth, when darkness covers it, and gross darkness the peoples. (Isa. lx. 2.)

Brethren of the King, though as yet little deeming themselves that, they will cleave to the nation in its sorrows and widowhood, and following it be drawn into the land.

3. (19-22) The return to the land.

And they two went on till they came to Bethlehem; and so it was, when they came to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went, out full, and Jehovah hath brought me home again empty. Why call ye me Naomi, when Jehovah hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath done evil to me? So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, that returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley-harvest.

(iii.)

So Naomi returns, and Ruth with her, at present only to feel the bitterness of this return. She owns that Jehovah has brought her back empty, and that in doing this He has testified against her. But there is no light beyond.

No Father's arms welcome her. No Father's house opens to let her in. She comes back, as Israel will come back, to have the finger pointed at her, and the question uttered aloud, is this Naomi? And yet the cry, "I have sinned." is heard; and Bethlehem shall answer to its name. The fields are white, and the reapers ready: it is the beginning of barley-harvest.

SECTION 2. (Chap. ii.)

Help in humiliation: gleanng in the field of him "in whom strength is."

In the next section we have help found for Ruth, and are introduced to the redeemer Boaz, the plain figure of Christ. Not at once is redemption found, however, nor even known about. Ruth is at first merely a gleaner in his fields, soon learning, indeed, his bounty, and receiving from his hand, but in humiliation. It is a middle state that souls often pass through, before the realization of redemption; and with Israel's remnant in the day to come, such a gradual dawning of light, as to Christ, and their relationship to Him is natural, if not inevitable.

The story of Joseph's brethren presents this to us from the side of conscience and their guilt in relation to him. Ruth gives us rather the attraction of heart with light gradually breaking in - a gentler and quieter story, though not without connection with the older one.

1. (vs. 1-17) Power and grace.

And

Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a mighty man of valour, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me

go now to the field, and glean among the ears of corn after him in whose eyes I shall find favour. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. So she went; and she came and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light upon the portion of the field which belonged to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and he said unto the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless thee. And Boaz said unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab; and she said, Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came and continued from the morning even until now: her sitting in the house hath been but little.

And Boaz said unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence; but abide here with my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men not to touch thee? And when thou thirstest, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favour in thine eyes, that thou shouldst regard me, and I a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath been fully shown me, all that thou hast done to thy mother-in-law, since the death of thy husband, and that thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy birth, and art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore. Jehovah recompense thy doing, and may thy

reward be full from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge. And she said, Let me find favour in thine eyes, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken to the heart of thy handmaid, though I be not like one of thy handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her at meal-time, Come hither and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat and was satisfied, and left [some] over. And when she arose to glean, Boaz charged his young men, saying, Let her glean even between the sheaves, and reproach her not; and draw out also out of the bundles, and leave it for her to glean, and check her not. So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley.

(i.) First, we are made to know, though Ruth yet knows not, of Boaz and the relationship of Naomi to him. Boaz means "in him is strength," and he is spoken of as a mighty man of valour, - not of wealth, as in the common version, though the word may mean "wealth"; but not so probably in the connection in which it stands. It is the same expression which is used of the deliverers in the book of Judges, and has a good reason for its place in this sense here. The wealth which Christ has for the needy has indeed been attained by conflict; for though he was "rich" from eternity who "for our sakes became poor," yet the "riches of His grace"

had to be acquired before they could be bestowed. It is fit that we should be reminded here, first, of all, of that accomplished warfare into the fruits of which we enter, though this be not the subject of the book. Thus "in Him is strength" for our redemption.

Notice that

Boaz is strictly a relation of Elimelech only, and through him it is that Naomi has any claim. Israel has no relationship to Christ except through the faith that Elimelech represents. In fact, and on this account, it is only through Ruth that Naomi can claim; but this will come before us later. Of all this she knows nothing yet.

But it is harvest, and Ruth proposes to go into the fields and glean, - a humble occupation and a poor one, but where, in the mercy that characterized the law, the poor and the stranger had special rights. These harvest-fields lead us once more to think of that work of Christ, the death of the corn of wheat, whereby the bread of life has been provided for us. Nature is full of its testimony to Him, - fuller than even His people ever cared to know.

But what a harvest-field is there in

Scripture for us! And is it not true that, as surely as the whole of it is open to us now, so surely will the remnant of Israel, brought in after the Church is gone from earth, have but the gleanings? May not this even be a rightful application of the statute as to the gleaner, coming where it does amid the "set times" of Leviticus xxiii.? May not there be room left for a double application of such a principle?

But gleaning in the field brings Ruth into contact with the master of the field; and so it is with the precious word of God when sought as food for the soul: it brings us into the presence of Him, before whose eyes "all things are naked and open" and who delights to minister to the necessity thus making itself manifest. How tender is His desire toward the seekers of the living bread that they should "go not to glean in another field, nor go

from hence"! How soon do they find provision made for the inevitable thirst! How they are made to realize that here is One with knowledge of all their ways, and all the path by which they have come to where they are! Then there is nearer intimacy: we begin to learn what it is to take from His hand and to eat with Him till we are sufficed, and have something over. Then the gleaning goes on with more boldness and with more success: there is again and again what must have been dropped on purpose for us, until we find we have quite a store of precious grain. All this is the common history of seeking souls; while yet rest is not found, nor redemption known, nor relation established with the Lord of the harvest.

2 (18-27.) Confirmation and progress: a glimpse of redemption.

And she took it up, and went into the city, and showed her mother-in-law what she had gleaned; and she brought out and gave her what she had left over after she was satisfied. And her mother in law said her, Where hast thou gleaned today and where hast thou wrought? Blessed be he that regarded thee. And she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, Blessed be he of Jehovah, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is related to us, one of our redeemers. And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep with my young men, until they have finished all my harvest. And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, It is well, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they come not upon thee in another field. So she kept with the maidens of Boaz to glean until the

end of barley harvest, and of wheat harvest. And she abode with her mother in law.

(ii.) It is from her mother-in-law that Ruth learns presently as to the man with whom she has found favour; but the knowledge she gains is, after all, indefinite. There is some relationship, she learns, and he is one of our redeemers, - a phrase which shows how little she has to give that is intelligent or that can be laid hold of. Joseph's brethren are long, as we have seen, before they know with whom they have to do, and who knows them so well, and learn from his own lips that he is Joseph. It is a secret that can only be learnt from his own lips. For the remnant, attaching themselves to Israel's hopes and going back along the lines of Israel's history, it seems as if there would be much groping in the darkness before the light will dawn. They look upon Him whom they have pierced, only when He comes manifestly to all. Yet He has been with them as with Nathaniel before they see Him; and the Lord's words in the great prophecy of Matthew xxiv. seem clearly to imply that there will be those in Judea before He appears who will listen to his voice and obey Him. Are we to make a distinction here between different classes?

- those with less light and those with more - or is it true of all that they will be under the fog of Jewish teaching, learning from the mother-in-law, and counting him but as "one of their redeemers"?

Thus

Ruth, however, is brought into connection with Boaz; for the grace that is in him to make deeper impression continuously upon her. She abides through the barley-harvest and through the wheat-harvest following.

That which is gathered becomes naturally more valuable. But as to her own relations there is no change: Boaz is a kinsman, - one of her redeemers, and her home - a poor one yet - is with her mother-in-law.

SECTION 3. (Chap. iii., iv.)

Redemption realized.

All is now to be changed for Ruth; and thus, also, for Naomi. What follows is based upon two laws in Israel: the law as to the redemption of an inheritance (Lev. xxv. 25), and that of raising up a brother's name on his inheritance (Deut. xxv 5-12), - things which are here brought together, and which in application to Israel belong clearly together.

Heir and inheritance, in their case, need alike to be redeemed; yea, and the name of the dead raised up, which is accomplished for Israel by a true spiritual resurrection, the breath of a new life breathed into them, as in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones (ch. xxxvii). In Ruth the story is, indeed, differently told, but it is essentially the same, and here has a tenderness and beauty all its own.

1. (iii) The claim of barrenness.

"And

Naomi, her mother-in-law, said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek a resting-place for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now, is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself; therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and go down to the floor; [but] let not thyself be known to the man till he have done eating and drinking. And it shall

be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he hath lain down, and thou shalt go and uncover the place at his feet, and lay thee down; and he shall tell thee what thou shalt do. And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do. And she went down to the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law had bidden her.

And Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was merry, and he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn. And she came softly, and uncovered the place at his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass that at midnight the man was startled and turned, and behold, a woman lying at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she said, I am Ruth thy handmaid: spread then thy wing over thy handmaid, for thou art a redeemer. And he said, Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter: thou hast shown more kindness at the end than at the first, inasmuch as thou followedst not after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, fear not: I will do for thee all thou sayest for all the gate of my people knoweth that thou art a virtuous woman. And now truly I am a redeemer but there is a redeemer nearer than I. Tarry the night, and it shall be in the morning, if he will act the redeemer to thee, well, let him redeem; but if he will not redeem thee, then will I redeem thee, as Jehovah liveth:

lie down until the morning. And she lay at his feet until morning, and she rose up before one could know another: and he Said, Let it not be known that a woman came unto the floor. And he said, Bring the cloak that is upon thee, and hold it. And she held it, and he measured six [measures] of barley, and laid it on her: and he went unto the city.

And she came to her mother-in-law; and she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, These six [measures] of barley gave he me: for he said, Go not empty to thy mother-in-law. And she said, Remain quiet, my daughter, till thou shalt see how the matter will fall out: for the man will not be at rest until he have finished the thing today."

(i.) In this section we find Ruth no longer a gleaner. She is putting forth new claims and cherishing high aspirations. And here her mother-in-law is her instructor once more. She has already pointed out Boaz as a kinsman of Elimelech, and one of their redeemers, but, for some time this seems to have no practical significance for either of them. Now she is full of a new interest. Ruth must have a resting-place for herself, and to find it she must seek it. Very simply and naturally her mind turns to Boaz: ignorantly, indeed, and yet with a knowledge such as the heart teaches, and which in the end proves right. Ruth is bidden by her to put forth a personal claim upon Boaz, according to the law of Deuteronomy, and this she does, - to find in the first place that she has made an apparent mistake, but which in the end proves none. It is only upon the failure of a nearer kinsman than himself that Boaz can act. Naomi herself has called him one of their redeemers. It must be proved satisfactorily if there is more than one.

The remnant (whom

Ruth represents) learns, first of all, from the nation (which is Naomi)

certain lessons as to redemption, which personal experience, however, alone can interpret, and get right.

The only religion that avails anything is that of experiment: in making which both heart and conscience get searched out, their needs thoroughly explored, and then met. The believing that avails for us is one that shows itself in coming to Him; yet the soul coming may find at first disappointment.

The power of the "nearer kinsman" must be thoroughly and practically understood before Christ can show his power.

"Rest" can only come from a Redeemer. Naomi makes no mistake there. When Christ says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," He is declaring Himself this; and it is as such - the only and all-sufficient One - that He will or can give it to us. This we must learn aright. Thank God, He has proved His power to fulfill this word of His, all the centuries down.

Boaz is winnowing barley at night in the threshing-floor. And Israel is such a floor, which the Lord is going to purge, according to the Baptist's testimony. (Matt. iii. 12.) A night of affliction is coming for them, in which He will winnow the chaff from the grain, that He may gather to Himself that which has value for Him. "The fan is in His hand."

Judgment, alas, must come; but He means by it to take forth the precious from the vile. And this is the very time when the remnant, therefore, in the darkness of as black a night as the earth has ever seen, shall creep to His feet, and claim Him as their own.

Assuredly it will be a bold act then, if even Ruth's seems so; yet this grace has been dawning upon them, and His voice has seemed to speak amid the voices of the prophetic promises, yet but beginning to be intelligible.

At midnight, suddenly, just at the darkest, comes his voice with a question - how necessary a one, when it is redemption that is to be realized - "Who art thou?" How blessed to know that the right answer is but to own, "I am Ruth, thy handmaid," for this is the name of the barren woman whose natural hopes are dead. To such an one it is that the law applies and pledges itself: no other has any claim. "Spread, then, thy wing over thy handmaid," - this soul with its need of shelter, - "for thou art a redeemer."

But not yet can the prayer he answered fully. Always is there, indeed, encouragement for the needy from these lips that speak here. Still she must await the morning. She is to be answered; some way redemption will surely come: so much she knows, but is he - will he be the redeemer? This question, is it not answered for the remnant also only fully in the "morning," - a morning which He makes by His own coming, the glory of His presence. Ministered to they are, sustained by His hand, still sent back, as Ruth to her mother-in-law, to await the morning!

Ah, but His heart will not have its rest till the matter is finished, and redemption is found for Ruth - "shepherd-tended" Ruth!

2. (iv. 1-8.) The legal kinsman

"And

Boaz went up to the gate, and sat him down there; and behold, the redeemer of whom Boaz spake passed by. And he said, Ho, such an one!

turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside and sat down, And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and

said, Sit down here. And they sat down. And he said unto the redeemer, Naomi, who is returned from the country of Moab, hath sold the allotment of the field that was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to inform thee, saying, Buy it before those that sit [here], even before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem [it]; and if thou wilt not redeem it, tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. And Boaz said, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: do my [part of the] redemption for thyself, for I cannot redeem it. And this was the custom in former time in Israel, in cases of redemption, and in cases of exchange, to confirm the whole matter: a man drew off his shoe and gave it to his neighbour; and this was the attestation in Israel. And the redeemer said unto Boaz, Buy it for thyself; and he drew off his shoe."

(ii.)

Now we are to be introduced to the other kinsman: there is but one other in the story; and strange it is, when we know our Boaz, that he should have the prior claim! Is there, then, another redeemer? Does the word of God give any ground for such a supposition? Yes, as a supposition. Hypothetically, there is a mode of salvation other than by Christ: test it, and you find by experience (once more the teacher)

that there is, and can be, only one.

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." This is the voice of God by the prophet Ezekiel (xviii. 27), and every word of God shall stand. It is a way of salvation, too, that is declared, - not simply of a righteousness that needs none. It is the wicked man who is spoken of, - the man who can already be called that, and who as that needs salvation.

Forgiveness of sins is announced for him: "All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live" (v. 22). Thus the mercy of God is pledged to a returning soul: and, of course, one must say, in all sincerity and truth, or it could not be from Him.

Yet this is not the salvation which we find in Christ. Its condition is not of faith in Him, but of works: to obtain it one must have a righteousness which is of works. And these two principles - of faith and of works - are principles that cannot be united together, so that it will not do to say that although faith in Christ is not here formally made mention of, it must in fact be found. On the contrary, it is most certain that the principle here declared excludes faith in Christ in any evangelic sense. "For if it be of grace," says the apostle, "it is no more of work, otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6.) As surely, then, as the principle here is that of righteousness by work, so surely is it not a righteousness by faith: it is contrastive and contradictory to faith.

It is the principle of the law as given the second time, after the people had sinned and made a golden calf. It is not pure law, but law modified and tempered by mercy,

so as to give man as failed the means of self-recovery, if self-recovery were possible. But it was not possible for them, and is not possible for any. Of this law the mediator was Moses, and not Christ and so entirely unavailing was it, that the very mediator of the law becomes of necessity the accuser of the people: "there is one that accuseth you," says the Lord to Israel, "even Moses, in whom ye trust." (John v. 45.)

Thus we see the redeemer who is not Boaz, but the redeemer who cannot redeem. The law is, indeed, the nearest kinsman that man has, and the one to which, apart from the teaching of divine grace, man naturally turns. One of the reasons of the delay in Christ's coming was that the law should first of all be tried; for this is but the trial of man's righteousness. And so in the history of a saved soul, the law's claim must first be set aside, that Christ may not be to it as "one of our redeemers," but the only Redeemer possible, the Boaz "in whom is strength."

It is a matter for judgment., and therefore Boaz goes up to the gate, where causes were habitually tried. Presently, behold, the redeemer of whom he had spoken passes by. Notice, the man is quite indifferent: he has none of the loving interest that we find in the heart of Boaz: he would pass by, as the priest and Levite did the man on the road to Jericho. And such is the heartlessness of the legal method. Law has no personal interest, and cannot have. It speaks in the third person: if one comes under the rule, be it so; this is its impartiality, its indifference. But thus it cannot represent the heart of God.

Boaz calls the man, and he sits down; then ten men, elders of the city, are called, and they sit down; the ten commandments are our Boaz's witnesses that the law is incompetent to do aught for a sinner's salvation. How soon and simply could the case be settled, if always the ten and no others were witnesses! But people make this great mistake, that, because, in fact, God is merciful, He will not require the righteousness which the law requires, which the ten commandments specify, but something, they know not how much, under this. Whereas, though He may be patient and give time, and give repeated opportunities, He never lowers His demand, never can accept less than "what is lawful and right." Above all, He has never proposed Christ as a makeweight for our deficiencies. "If righteousness come by the law,"

says the apostle, "then Christ is dead in vain."

Boaz begins with the question of inheritance: "Naomi, who is returned from the country of Moab, has sold the allotment of the field that was our brother Elimelech's. . . . If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it. . . . And he said, I will redeem it." We see here the connection between the land and the people of Israel. In fact, how carefully has the land been guarded for them, keeping sabbath while the heirs are exiled! God has given it by absolute promise to the seed of Abraham, and that according to the flesh. But here is the difficulty: "And Boaz said, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou buyest it also of Ruth, the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance."

Elimelech is dead, that is Israel looked at as identified with the faith of God as King; yet Israel, in fact, remains, though as Naomi, widowed and destitute. But there is a young life, a new generation, through whom the name of the dead may be raised up. Yet these are as the Moabitess, whom the law cannot bring in, but must keep out: for it is written that "a Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of Jehovah forever." Well may the kinsman fear, therefore, lest in taking Ruth he should mar his own inheritance.

Throughout the story this is the title that everywhere comes into prominence.

Despite all Ruth's attractiveness and piety, she is always spoken of, emphatically, as Ruth, the Moabitess. And the law, in presence of this conceded truth, can make no exception in her favour. The law is against her wholly, - accuses, convicts, and cannot justify. So hopeless is Israel's case in the hands of Moses.

If we look at the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel of Matthew, we shall find there, without the stigma of her origin, the name of Ruth. She is the third of four women only who stand exceptionallly in the record there. At a first glance, we might think, uselessly also: for of what use are they in establishing His title to be David's Son? None, clearly; and so they must have another purpose: for everything has purpose in the word of God; yet what purpose in a genealogy?

But the genealogy is not merely His as Son of David; the title of it adds to this that it is Christ's as Son of Abraham. And the three names that end with Ruth are in this part, as we see: can they have part, then, in showing that Christ is Son of Abraham ?

Now here light breaks in at once: for the

Seed of Abraham is he in whom all families of the earth are to be blessed, - Gentile as well as Jew; while these three names are Gentile.

How vain, then, to think of denying the Gentiles their part in Christ!

But more: in each of these names we may discern what might be easily taken as a blot upon the genealogy. What was Tamar? what Rahab ? what even Ruth, the Moabitess? But does not this, then, show us all the more the Seed of Abraham, the blesser of the nations? Yes, and each name tells out, and in perfect order, the reality of grace. Tamar, whose sin alone brings her into the list, begins the story; for sin is the fundamental fact for the gospel; and our sin owned gives us title to the Saviour of sinners. But then Rahab (no less the sinner) shows us faith, a faith that separates from judgment and brings into blessing: that is as clearly the second foundation.

What, then, does the name of Ruth emphasize in this series? Can it be anything but this, that the law therefore is not the way of blessing, does not furnish the redeemer, but grace only does? - for Ruth the Moabitess is debtor to the grace of Boaz! Here, surely, all is consistent, all is harmony. And how Ruth's character, so different from that of those who precede her in this list, assures us that not those whom men would class as sinners, but those also whom they might class as saints, are all together by the law convicted and condemned, and that for all who receive salvation grace must reign!

No, assuredly the law cannot raise up the name of the dead on his inheritance. The power of God in grace can alone meet the need that is here symbolized. The

kinsman passes his shoe - the sign of entering upon possession - to him in whom power is. The law testifies and yields its rights to Christ, and He is declared the only possible Redeemer. Such will the remnant find Him in the day that comes.

3. (9-22.) "The resurrection of the name upon the inheritance."

"And

Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have acquired all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. And Ruth also, the wife of Mahlon, have I acquired to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders said, [We are] witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that cometh into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and make thee strength in Ephratah, and get thee a name in Bethlehem; and let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which Jehovah shall give thee of this young woman.

And Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son.

And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed he Jehovah, who hath not left, thee this day without a redeemer, and may his name be famous in Israel.

And he shall be to thee a restorer of life, and a support of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse to it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron, and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."

(iii.) Boaz proclaims his title and his grace. The inheritance becomes his by purchase; and Ruth also, once more and for the last time spoken of as the Moabitess, he acquires for himself. Israel's land is yet to be known as Immanuel's.

for indeed he has bought it at its full value. The people, also, are the purchased of His love. In Ruth's case the figure falls necessarily short, and the word used does not positively convey the idea of purchase. All types must, indeed, fall short, whether as picturing our need or the way that He has met it. This we are prepared for. The outline may be slight, but is sufficient. When it is followed up in the day to come, how it will be seen that here is One who has strength in Ephratah, and His name in Bethlehem; and how will the remnant "break forth" like the house of Pharez, "breaker forth," as it is written, "For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shalt inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited, . . . for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember

the reproach of thy widowhood any more." And how Ruth's story is transfigured here! "For thy Maker is thy husband, Jehovah of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel:

the God of the whole earth shall He be called." (Isa. liv, 3-5.)

Naomi, therefore, is built up by Ruth, and her son becomes (in another sense, of course) her redeemer, the restorer of her life, and the support of her old age. For the son's name is Obed, the "servant," and the sweet adoring service of the new generation of Israel will be in those days the restoring of life indeed. Fit it is that the "women, her neighbours," should give the name to this new seed, as the nations round (then neighbourly!) will speak the praise of the new nation. For then for the first time shall they completely fulfill the word: "But thou, Israel, art my Servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away." (Isa. xli.

8, 9.)

This is indeed a sign of perfect redemption, whatever the dispensation: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." (Ps. cxvi. 16.)

Redemption is thus the spring of service, and gives character to it; and if we are indeed in the nearer and more wonderful place of sons of God, the service of sons is only the fullest, the most joyful service.

Yea, the only-begotten Son, to the wonder and delight of heaven, has come forth and served; yea, and still serves; and in that day will serve; as He has Himself said: -

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them." (Luke xii. 37.)

Scripture Queries and Answers

ARTICLES FROM MAGAZINES

Q. How is Matthew i. 16, taken in connection with Luke iii. 23, to be explained? Matthew says, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary;" and Luke, "being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was of Heli, which was of Matthat," etc Matthew in ver. 15 had said, "Matthan begat Jacob."

In Luke iii., I presume, Mary's genealogy is given down to 31, "Nathan (who was) of David," while in Matthew i. 6 "David the king begat Solomon," and so on down to Joseph. But what explains the apparent discrepancy between Matt. i. 16 and Luke iii. 23? O. P.

A. The solution of the difficulty turns on the true marking of the parenthesis in Luke iii. 23 "(being, as was supposed, son of Joseph)". The Revisers are no more right than was the A.V. in limiting it to "(as was supposed)." Christ's being considered son of Joseph is thus intimated to be outside the proper genealogical line which is here traced from Heli or Eli, Mary's father, up to Adam and God Himself. Jesus, reputedly son of Joseph, was really of Heli, &c. Even the unbelieving Jews did not question that Mary, the virgin mother of our Lord, was Heli's daughter; for the Talmud speaks of her thus, and as tormented in the unseen world. The fact is that there is a choice of ways which all remove the apparent discrepancy. On these we need not dwell here, but simply state the one which we believe to be the truth.

The internal evidence entirely sustains this view as intended of God. For as it was expressed in the parenthetical clause as the reputed relationship, so by a purposely different construction the real natural succession through Mary is traced from her father up to the father of all, a grand fact characteristic of our Evangelist. In Matthew, on the other hand, where it was essential to trace the Messianic title of our Lord legally, we have "Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary." Again both Evangelists are equally careful to repudiate the actual fatherhood of Joseph; and to affirm the divine generation of our Saviour, as well as His eternal being in the Godhead before the Incarnation.

But there is much more in corroboration, which goes along with the special design of each of the two Gospels. For it will be noticed that only Matthew records the apparitions of Jehovah's angel to Joseph (i. 20, ii. 19) ; whereas in Luke i. 26-38 the angel Gabriel was sent by God not to Joseph but to Mary, even though Jehovah's angel appeared to Zachariah before (i. 11), and to the shepherds after (ii. 9), the Child was born, the Son was given. Of course, His birth of Mary was of absolute moment for His person as now Man no less than God for ever, and for the infinite work He was about to accomplish. But so far was the legal position of Joseph as His reputed father from being unimportant, that He could not have been indisputably viewed as the promised Son and Heir of David's throne, till Joseph passed away. Hence not a word is said in any one of the four Gospels which supposes Joseph alive, when Our Lord enters on His manifestation as the Messiah, though (as every believer knows) much more than the Messiah. This also disposes of the notion, cherished by not a few

ancients and moderns, that Joseph had a family of sons and daughter, before Mary was betrothed to him. For in that case his eldest would have been legally the heir to David's throne. So completely was the law fulfilled, as well as the Prophets and the Psalms. Scripture cannot be broken. FWG Q. - Does not 1 Cor. vi. 9 with many like scriptures warrant the inference that Christians who fail in faith or fidelity will be excluded from inheriting the kingdom of God, though saved at the end from the second death ? MATHETES.

A. - In no way is this true, but wholly opposed to the mind of God in His word, and productive of nothing but confusion like any other serious error. On the face of this text itself, how can any taught of God allow that one born of the Spirit is to be classed among the unrighteous? Compare also the rest of the verse and the following verses, where not failure in a believer is in question, but unqualifiedly wicked characters are denounced, with the very different statement that "such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord, and by the Spirit of our God." Take the strongest apparently for such a construction - Luke xii. 45, 46, "But if that bondman should say in his heart, My lord delayeth to come", and &c. We may see from the corresponding parable in Matt. xxiv. 48 that it is no case of a believer excluded but of an "evil" servant, a hypocrite. No indeed need we travel beyond the further words of Luke to arrive at the same fact; for his lord is said to cut him in twain and appoint his portion with the faithless. Will the Lord so deal with any born of God? It is indeed a far other lot than missing the reign though blessed for eternity, a portion assigned to not a single

Christian in a single scripture. That the language of our Lord, and also of the apostle in this Epistle and elsewhere, implies it of professing Christians is true and solemn. "That bondman," in fact, seems expressly intended to warn of this tremendous issue.

But Christians in the genuine sense, as the query supposes, stand on other ground. If they discerned themselves, they should not be judged. If they grow careless in self-judgment, the Lord does not fail to deal with them. Yet when judged in this way, they are chastened by the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world, as say the scriptures in the text queried. The doctrine behind the query is wholly false and evil.

The Bible Its Pentateuchal Structure

THE Bible as a whole has sixty-three books; Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles being really only one each: our present division of them having been adopted from the Septuagint. And $63 = 7 \times 32$. Here we have, then, the symbol of perfection, and that of divine manifestation intensified, - "God glorified in His perfectly accomplished work." It is, as God's testimony to man, divided into two parts, perfectly distinct, the Old Testament and the New. ("Testament" and "covenant" are the same word in the original.) In the Old Testament, we have the Creator-God, sovereign and almighty. And here thirty-six books ($36 = 3 \times 12$) exhibit Him in holy and manifest government. In the New Testament, we have God speaking in the Son, also Son of Man, the Saviour. And its twenty-seven books (33) show us how He has gloriously manifested Himself. Eight writers (the new-covenant number) carry us on to new creation. ITS PENTATEUCHAL STRUCTURE THE five books of the Law - far from being a comparatively modern compilation; are in fact the structural basis of the whole Bible which consists of just five Pentateuchs, which correspond, not in number only, but in respective lines of thought. Of these, the Old Testament has four Pentateuchs, the New Testament, one. They compare as follows:-

THE LAW Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy THE COVENANT HISTORY Joshua, Judges/Ruth, Ezra/Nehemiah/Esther, Samuel/Kings, Chronicles THE PROPHETS Isaiah, Jeremiah/ Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, The Minor Prophets THE

WISDOM BOOKS Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon THE NEW TESTAMENT The Gospels, Acts, Paul's Church Epistles, Non-Pauline Epistles, Revelation Too large in character to have this justly exhibited in one table, the relation of these books to one another must be sought in the analysis of the individual books themselves, or of the sections to which they belong. THE OLD TESTAMENT THE main divisions of the Old Testament are, then, four in number, each division being a Pentateuch. Four Pentateuchs, or 4 X 5, give us the number of the world and of trial, along with that of exercise under divine government. The Old Testament is the earthly part of revelation, addressed to the earthly people of God, though typically, of course, going far beyond this. Then it speaks also of the ages of probation and exercise, especially under the law, times measured and characterized by the forty centuries of their duration before Christ came. The divisions are- THE BOOKS OF THE LAW, in which are enforced God's almighty power and sovereign rights. THE COVENANT HISTORY. 2 is the number of legal covenant, and this characterizes the whole. Thus it is a history of discord, division, and the enemy's power, though with divine interventions in deliverances, which stand as types and assurances of the final deliverance to come. THE PROPHETS then give us God's voice-the reasoning of divine holiness with man, that he may be partaker of it, as it is seen in the visions of the future he shall be, and the glory of God be then fully displayed. THE PSALM-BOOKS are the books of experience and trial in the world, - speaking of the lessons he has learned in it, the wisdom which is their outcome, and the goodness of God which turns sorrow into song.

THE LAW

The books of the Law have a double character; as literal history and as spiritual type. Both need to be considered, the literal fact being the necessary basis of the other; and in both respects the numerical structure is significant, and the same. We have literally, then; - Genesis: the ages of promise, and the birth of Israel.

Exodus: the people redeemed and taken into covenant with God. Leviticus: their sanctification in view of His holiness. Numbers: their trial in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy: the moral summing up as wisdom for the land. Spiritually, the Christian side; the Law as a whole signifies "the re- establishment of the authority of God over the (new) creature." Genesis: (new-)creation life.

Exodus: redemption and fellowship with God through a Mediator. Leviticus: sanctification through the offering of Christ and the work of the Spirit. Numbers: testing in the divine path through the world.

Deuteronomy: the ways and end of divine government.

THE dispensational types seem to be scattered through these books, coming out here and there into unmistakable prominence, and then disappearing, always linked with, and apparently dependent upon, the individual ones, which seem to extend throughout each book and the whole series of books, and to be the thread upon which all else is strung. God has been pleased thus to show us what to Him His saints individually are, and to enforce upon us that personal walk with God which we see in that type of the Church, Enoch. It will be seen, moreover, that in this way the types are exhibited, not as fragmentary and hap-hazard as to order, but in perfect

connection with each other and with the whole: a thing which certifies to us their interpretation, and places it far beyond the possibility of being merely conjectural, while it puts a wholesome restraint upon the imagination in the things of God, and assures to our hearts the full inspiration of His entire Word. Let it be noted, too, that this typical meaning gives us alone to see the real importance of many parts of these books, which as simple histories would seem unworthy of the detail with which they are narrated. What, for instance, should we make of the lengthy account of the mission to take a bride for Isaac, if the mere history were all? As it is, although we have only penetrated into it a little way, what is already seen cheers us, not only with the precious things we find there, but also with the assurance of abundance to reward our further search. Thus God would never allow us to shut up His Word as if we knew it, but bring us to it again and again with fresh and ever-growing delight and interest. May He grant it to all readers of this, and that by the truth they may be sanctified.

Excerpted from F. W. Grant's *The Numerical Bible*,
Volume 1 - The Pentateuch (1890)

The Mediator

(Ex. xxviii. 15-30.)

I have read these verses, beloved friends, not with the thought of trying to bring out, in any wise, even in outline, all that might present itself to me here, but rather taking them as the key to some thoughts with regard to our blessed Lord Himself, in that character which is His exclusively, - the character of Mediator. He is the "one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." And this word, Mediator, means, one who is in the midst - between two. Thus Christ is, on the one hand, with God, for God, and God; and with man, for man, and man. The fact of what He is in His own person is, I would say, the basis-fact for all the rest.

How wonderful, beloved friends, that there is now in the presence of God for us a Man, - yea, and upon the Father's throne! though there, of course, because He is, in the highest and most exclusive sense, Son of the Father. He is thus the only begotten Son in virtue of His deity as He is the first-begotten Son in virtue of His humanity - head of a race. In the tabernacle of His manhood was thus displayed, and without a veil, the glory of Godhead. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled, the word is,] among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Thus, what answered to the glory dwelling in the tabernacle of old was the glory of the Eternal Son. But the glory in Israel's tabernacle they could not behold. The glory of Christ we do behold (that of which the other was but a type). And why? Because it is full of grace and truth. "No man hath seen

God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"- "told Him out."

Now, in this expression-"full of grace and truth"- we have, in brief, the two main thoughts of the breastplate. "Truth" is the effect of the light, and God is light. Light is what manifests, brings out, the truth, - is the truth. Christ, the light of the world, is the truth come into it: every thing gets its true character from Him. "Grace," while it is what is in God, is toward man. Look, now, at the breastplate. It was, as you know, what was on the heart of the high-priest when he went in to God. In the breastplate were the Urim and Thummim-"lights and perfections," as the words mean; and the Urim and Thummim must be upon the priest in order that he might give an answer from God.

Thus, in the day of the return from the captivity, when the remnant who returned found certain priests who could not show their genealogy, they were put from the priesthood, not because their claim could be disproved, but because it could not be proved. There was no one to decide the question whether they were really priests,- no recognized way of getting an answer from God; and they were told that they must wait until there should stand up a priest with Urim and Thummim. God might raise up a prophet and send a message through him, as He did at that very time by Haggai and Zechariah, but there was no regular way of access to God, to get answer such as the case required.

Now, these Urim and Thummim are the things I want to speak of particularly. "Lights and perfections" the term means, as I have said. And these things are one: the

"lights" are the "perfections,"- they are two ways of speaking of the same thing. "God is light;" He is "the Father of lights." That is to say, all partial displays of glory, of whatever character, come from Him as Source. Light is a wonderful thing - a thing in which nature itself (now that we have the Word) speaks to us very plainly, and very beautifully too. According to the views of modern investigators, light is (as God is) a trinity - a trinity in unity. These primary rays, so called, make up the one ray of white, or colourless, light. There is, at the outset, a very evident basis for the Scripture comparison.

But then there is something more, and more striking, I think; and it is this: that the colour by which every thing in nature is clothed comes from the light itself - from the different combinations of these three primary colours; or, to express it better, from the partial display by the object of the light itself. To make plain what I mean: A blue object is one in which the red and the yellow rays of the white light are absorbed, and only the blue, therefore, are left to come out. The blue of the object is thus derived from the light itself. So with a green object - the red alone is absorbed, and the blue and yellow combined makes the colour green. Again, if the blue be absorbed, it is an orange; if the yellow, a purple; and so on for all the rest.

Now, what a beautiful thought that is! and how true, that every thing here - every work of God's hands is the display, more or less, of some attribute or attributes in Himself. These colours are the diverse glory of the one light, displayed in a various beauty, which we have not eyes for in the one white ray. Yet, though invisible, these colours are all there, and by being separated from one

another are brought to our notice, so that the distinct beauty of each is seen.

Now, that is how God delights to come out and spread Himself before the vision of His creatures. As "light" in Himself, we could at least but little know Him; but as the "Father of lights," as He displays these before us, we learn Him so.

Take the gospels as an example, in which the one Son, whom in His fullness "no man knows, but the Father only," is given to us in four separate ways, that, as Son of David, as Minister (not ministered unto), as Son of Man, as Son of God, we might be able to discern Him better. So, in fact, the separate books of Scripture divide the truth for us into distinctly characterized parts, too little realized, indeed, for what they are, or accepted in the gracious design of God in shaping them.

So, again, in the Church,- collectively, the "epistle (not epistles) of Christ." No man could be an epistle by himself - the parchment is not broad enough to write it; yet each one, reflecting in its measure some part of the divine image, and getting thus according to his character, (or colour) may help to manifest Him to the eyes of men. Thus you may find in one man, as in Job, remarkable patience, in another as remarkable energy; seldom, perhaps, one who can display in equal measure the patience and energy. Men are thus characterised by some over-balance - some one or more things prominently developed, and which often means a defect of some other quality; and yet to our dull eyes the predominant one is thus strikingly brought out.

And so, beloved friends, does God display, in His various dealings with us, His various attributes; in one thing His

holiness shining out pre-eminently, in another His truth, in another His love, and so on. Thus He adapts His greatness to our littleness, speaking to us in languages that we are able to bear, that we may apprehend Him more as He desires that we should.

A few words more as to the light. Not that I want to dwell upon this too much; and yet I think it is not in vain, especially in the present day, to speak of what nature presents to us, where Scripture gives us the only real key. We find, if we turn to the first chapter of Genesis, that light was before the sun. It puzzles the wise men to explain it; nevertheless for the natural to figure the spiritual, it must be so. For what is the sun? Is it not a dark earth-mass which God has clothed with the glory of the light - His image? Now, that is what God has done in Christ. He has clothed humanity in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the glory of deity; and that is the Sun in Scripture type. That "Sun of Righteousness" yet to rise upon the world with healing in His wings is Christ - Immanuel: manhood clothed with the glory of the godhead - dark no more.

Thus the "lights" in the breastplate are the "perfections" the various perfections, of God Himself. these many-coloured jewels are the manifold display of the divine excellency. And mark, these jewels are crystallized lights - unchangeable perfections. It is not a display, passing however great. In the rainbow, the token of God's covenant with the new earth brought through the judgment, you have what is essentially similar in character, but it is the display of God in one act. The whole diversified display of divine glory, I believe, - the whole spectrum of colour-banding the storm of divine judgment in the cross. "Now is the Son of Man glorified,

and God is glorified in Him." But however God might thus be at one time displayed, it is for all time that He is displayed; for He is always the same, and that is what is marked here. The jewels never lose and never change their light; and so is God always the "Father of lights," always "without variableness or shadow of turning."

Mark, now, where these stones are found. They are upon the breastplate. And where is the breast-plate? Upon the heart of the high-priest. The stones press upon the heart of Israel's high-priest. Surely we know now what that means,- that the one who goes to God for man (and that is what the priest does) must be one who has upon his heart before he goes, and as going, all that God Himself is. Only Christ could be, or was, that; but all that God is, in every varied attribute of His - every colour, so to speak, of the light - is there upon His heart abidingly; so dear, that He can never forget it, never lose sight of what is due to God in any one solitary particular.

But even that, taken by itself, would not qualify Him for a mediator. There must be something else, and there is. The mediator-priest springs from the tribe of Levi - "joined," - third son of Israel; for in resurrection (of which these "thirds" manifestly speak) alone can He "join" or bring others to God. In Himself personally He is indeed, we know, a Levi - "joined" only begotten and first-begotten-Man to God; but in resurrection is He priest-Levite to join as Mediator others. This He is perfectly in heart as office; for upon these jewels, "graven upon them with the engraving of a signet" ("Set me as a seal upon thine heart," says the spouse in the Song of Songs), are the names of God's people,- here, of course, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; for us, the type of all the people of God. These twelve names are

engraven upon the jewels, so that you would have to break the jewels to pieces to get them off. There they abide, unchangeably as the jewels themselves. In the light of the jewels you read the names. They are identified with the display of the lights and perfections of God Himself; so that here is One upon whose heart the people of God dwell, unfailingly and unchangeably connected with the display of the glory of God. Standing as He does on the one hand for God, on the other for man, it is not as if these were two separate or separable things with Him, much less things that might be in opposition to one another; they are things seen together, as the names written upon the Urim and Thummim-jewels - typically, the divine perfections.

Beloved, that is what the Lord Jesus Christ is; that is how He abides before God now, the blessed One who can never forget what is due to God, never the need of His people, never the righteousness which must be displayed in the blessing itself. Aye, for blessing, there must be righteousness! and again, thank God, for righteousness now (such the value of His work), there must be blessing! There is no discord then; there is the very opposite. The blessing of the people is the very way in which the glory of God is to be displayed. God takes them up for that very end; not merely to bless them and retain this too, but to show it forth in blessing them, to the end "that in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Thus the names are upon the breastplate, and the breastplate upon the high-priest's heart. How glorious the Person in whom all this is fulfilled - in whom Godhead and manhood meet in one!- Immanuel !- in His

own person "God with us." And oh, beloved friends, marvellous as the cross is, (surely, the most marvellous thing that could be,) yet we should do Him wrong if we thought of that prepared body of His as if it was only prepared that He might go to the cross in it. No, He has taken it to keep it forever and ever; He has taken it as the equivalent of those bored ears of the Hebrew servant which signified perpetual service, when he might have gone out free. Think of One who looked down upon us when we had all gone astray from God - "turned every one to his own way" - and, seeing how we had fretted ourselves against the will of God, and esteemed as bondage His easy yoke, took up Himself that slighted path of obedience, - took up that service which we had so disparaged, - never again to relinquish it, becoming Himself the "Leader and Perfecter of faith," "learning obedience" - He to whom all was due - "from the things which He suffered"! For that path of His lay not through a fair world, decked out as Adam's was, but in one such as the sin of Adam and our sin had made it, - a world to Him, beloved friends, such as we can scarcely have an idea of; yet He chose such a world in order to display in it, amid all its misery, how blessed the Father's will is.

See Him ministering to one poor needy soul, as at the well of Sychar, where hungered and athirst Himself He ministers to her and is satisfied. "I have meat to eat," He says to the disciples, as they bring Him the food which they have procured, - "I have meat to eat which ye know not of." He is satisfied. His meat is, to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. In hunger, in thirst, in weariness, in lowliest service to one poor sinner, the Son of Man finds His own satisfaction, and

delights in the Father's will. And such as He was He is, however different may be His surroundings now. He has taken this place unrepentingly, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." yes, if I look at Him, I see how in His very person God and man have met in an eternal embrace impossible to be sundered. God's Fellow on the one side, owned such when He was upon the cross - "' The Man that is My Fellow,' saith Jehovah of Hosts ;" on the other, the cross accom - plished, "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.

What preciousness in the manhood of One of whom the apostle can say, "We have heard Him with our ears, seen with our eyes, looked upon, and our hands have handled"! Notice how in these words all distance is put away, and He comes, as it were, continually nearer to us. For He might not be visibly in sight at all to be heard with the ears, so it is added, "seen with our eyes." Then, it is no mere momentary vision, - " we have looked upon" Him - have had Him before us steadily and continuously. But more, "our hands have handled" Him. And yet this is the One who is God over all, blessed forever; One "whom no man hath seen nor can see, dwelling in the light. which no man can approach unto." And this it is that gives its infinite value to that manhood in which He gives Himself into our hands and hearts in all the blessed reality of unchanging love.

But if He is God with God and God for man, He is also man for God - true, perfect man, in whom manhood finds and fills its destined place forever, - God's thought from eternity. "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" has its answer in the One made a little lower than the angels; His own title for Himself in the address to

Laodicea -"The beginning of the creation of God." He is the Mediator.

But now look how this runs through His work. We have thought of Him a little in His path down here: what was He on the cross? Oh, beloved friends, it is there that we find indeed the very storm of judgment of which I have spoken, in which, after it has passed, we see the many-coloured rays of divine glory. The rainbow was, as you know, the sign of God's covenant with the new world risen from the flood; and this blessed bow of promise is the sign of His covenant with the new creation forever and ever. Sin shall no more disturb. God has been glorified as to it, and being glorified, He has absolute title over it. Title, I do not mean, to put sinners into hell: that title, of course, He ever had; but title in goodness,- absolute title to show His grace. But now, what was the cross, beloved friends? Surely the crisis in which was summed up the whole conflict between good and evil, and the victory of divine goodness over evil. Sin had come into the world, and God had been dishonoured by it. What was the hindrance to God's coming in in grace? This: that He must first be honoured where He had been dishonoured, and about that which had dishonoured Him. He must be glorified,-that is, He must be displayed in His true character: not indifferent to sin, and not indifferent to the misery resulting in a world of sin. He must not fail in love, nor in righteousness. In the work which puts away sin, the glory of God must be displayed,- that is, all the glory of divine goodness, for that is His glory. Goodness must be manifested supreme over evil, supreme as goodness. Not power must get the victory: that might put man in hell, but not bring him to

heaven. Not power, I say again, but goodness, and as such.

And on the cross, as is manifest, power is all on the other side. "He was crucified through weakness." You see the power of man, you see the power of the world, you see the power of the devil,- all these are manifested fully; and on the side of the One who is left to suffer there, no sign of power at all. There He is,- unresisting, helpless: men may do as they will with Him who made them. He will not withdraw Himself, will not hide His face from shame and spitting. He has taken the servant's place: "Man has acquired me from my youth," He says; and even to a slave's death He will stoop for man. "What are those wounds in Thy hands?" "Even those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends."

And yet, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" And was He ever otherwise than for His people? Let all others leave them, what is it to them, if God be with them? Men have been in the fire itself and come out to ask, as one did - the first martyr in Spain, when supposing he was going to retract they had released him for the moment,- "Did you envy me my happiness?"

How easily, then, could He, the Prince of martyrs, have gone through martyrdom, if it were only that. Much as He felt all that man was doing, and showing himself to be in all he did, yet in what perfect quietness could He have gone through it all if it were only man's hour-"your hour," as He said to the Jews,- aye, or Satan's! But oh, beloved friends, it was not that only. God must be against Him. That was what gave its real character to the cross; that was what distinguished the death of the Lord from the death of any righteous man before or

since; and it was that which gave even His precious blood the power to sanctify us. It was not simply because He was what He was, but that because, being such, He took our place, our guilt, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, His soul also being made a sacrifice for sin. This was man's double sentence - death and judgment; both parts of this He took, dying in the outside place, type of the deeper and more dread reality - "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate."

But where was power in all that? Everywhere against Him. This was not a victory that power could gain. Evil must be overcome by good alone. He must be left to drink man's full cup to the dregs. The One to whom God had given testimony - "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," now cries, and is not heard. The One whom they had seen on the mount transfigured, above the brightness of the sun, now lies with that glory eclipsed in utter darkness. But not the pressure of that whole agony upon His soul could get from Him aught in response but perfect sub-mission, unfaltering obedience. The more the pressure, the more manifest the perfection - the absolute perfection that was His: goodness absolute-"the Son of Man glorified, and God glorified in Him."

Such was the cross. And thus, and thus only, could flow out, as now we know them, those "rivers of waters in a dry place" - yea, from the Rock itself, now smitten, the streams of abounding grace. There had been no compromise; nothing had been given up; He had borne all. Righteousness had been displayed, not merely conciliated. I look at the cross to see in its fullness what the righteousness of God is. Righteousness, holiness,

love,- all that God is, has been displayed and glorified, and now He can be what He will, He can be gracious. Such is the Mediator in His work Godward and manward. How the jewels shine upon the golden breastplate! Let us not think that God claimed from Him this work merely. God forbid. He who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will,"-He whom zeal for the Father's house devoured,-He claimed the atonement, claimed and made it, both. And now, as the fruit of it, He is gone up into the presence of God, to take there His place in His presence, resurrection-priest and Mediator; no more on earth, for "if He were on earth, He should not be a priest," but "such a high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." There, beloved friends, now He is for us, as we rejoice to know. Let us look now at this truth of His priesthood, and of that other form of intercession of which Scripture speaks - of advocacy. The priest is the intercessor for infirmity; for if you look at the epistle to the Hebrews, it is denied there that as such He has any thing to do with sin. He is now "separate from sinners." His work of atonement had to do with sin, and so complete is the efficacy of that that we are perfected by that precious blood which has gone into the presence of God for us. "By the which will," says the apostle, speaking of that will which Christ came to do,-"by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;" and again, he says, "By one offering He has perfected forever He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." They are given Him, put under His hand and care, as of One of assured competency to bring them through. All the responsibility of their salvation rests upon Him who has done the work of atonement and gone into

heaven, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him. Beloved, He is competent: God is satisfied - satisfied! Why, He brought Him out in the face of man, of the world, of the devil, before His work was done, when He had just pledged Himself to do it, as in John's baptism to that deeper baptism which was to follow,-He opened the heavens in testimony of unmingled delight in Him: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And what then? The Holy Ghost, just come upon Him, the seal of that divine complacency, carries Him up into the wilderness. Why there? "To be tempted of the devil." God says, "This is My beloved Son." I know Him; I can trust Him; I can rest all My glory safely in His hands. Take Him away; try Him; do what you please with Him; and see if He be not worthy of My delight.

Thus He goes forth into the wilderness, (complete contrast with all the surroundings of the first man,) to fast His forty days; not as a Moses or an Elias - to meet God, but that in weakness, and with the hunger of that forty days upon Him, He may meet man's adversary, and be fully tested. Did the Spirit of God ever bring up another to be tempted in most utter need, in all the reality of human weakness, by the devil?

Aye, God can trust Him. In a deeper need than that, in a darker scene by far,- nay, darkness at its height, upon that awful cross, (the last step in His self-emptying,) God could leave Him there in solitary weakness, with all the counsels of God - all that which was to be the manifestation of God in His own creation forever,- all His love and all His righteousness,- all the blessing of man,- all, all, resting with its whole weight upon Him ;- He can rest it there, I say, and turn away His head, and leave all

to Him, satisfied there shall be no loss of any one thing trusted to His care.

And now, shall He not carry out what He has begun? Shall He not, as the Captain of salvation, save to the uttermost (or bring right through, as that means,) all that come unto God by Him? Yes, He, as risen priest, shall have the responsibility of the people for whom He undertakes. Every thing shall be in His hand, and come through Him. Our Mediator-Priest, not interposed between us and God, as if He had not brought us Himself to God; for in that sense He says, "I do not say that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." No, we have not to come to Him that He may go to God for us, as if we could not go to Him ourselves. That is not the meaning of His intercession; but it does imply His charge of carrying through to full result the blessed work He founded at the cross. Whatever is in question here, He is the One who is with the Father, Himself also God. With man, on the other hand, about it too. He is the One who as Priest or Advocate goes to God, or as Guardian of His people charges Himself with all their need. He can take the basin and towel to wash the feet of His people, that they may have part with Him.

And how in this action once more the character of the Mediator appears! He is going up to God -He is going up, His work just accomplished. For although as a fact it had not yet been completed, He can, in the consciousness of what He is, already account it so. As the One, then, into whose hands all things are given, and who comes from God and goes to God, He rises from supper, and takes a towel and girds Himself. The jewels are upon His breast. He cannot give up what is due to

God, nor we have part with Him except we are cleansed according to His estimate.

But then, mark, it is not merely, "Except you are washed," you can have no part with Me, but, "Except I wash you." Thus this most necessary work He will accomplish for us, stooping to the towel and the basin as in love the Servant of our need. Peter may resist, but Peter and all must bow. His embrace must hold us fast to God. Blessed be His name, if the jewels are on His breast, His people's names are engraved upon the jewels.

Let us ask ourselves, Are we submitting to this washing? Do not look at it, beloved friends, as if it were a question of souls gotten away from God. Don't let us think, if we are going on, as we may think, pretty well, and our consciences bear witness of nothing particularly against us,- don't think it implies that we have no need of this washing. It is not a thing of which we have need once or twice in a lifetime. We have constant need of being in the hands of this blessed One; not merely of taking the Word and judging for ourselves what is wrong,-of judging this or that,- but of putting ourselves into His hands and saying, Lord, I may not know even what is wrong, but without reserve I come to Thee, that I may learn from Thee what cleanness is, not taking my thought at all. You see what it implies, brethren,- that it implies an absolute surrender into His hands; and you and I are not right, not fit to have part with Him, if there is with us tonight a reserve,- if we would say, "Cleanse off that spot" merely. That is not it. It will not do if we are not looking up to Him and saying, rather, "Search me, O God, and try me; prove my reins and my heart; see

well if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

Are you and I with the Lord Jesus Christ without reserve like that? Are we ready to be told, whatever the evil is; asking God to search it out? Not merely saying, I repeat, "I am not conscious of any thing particularly wrong." Are we exercising ourselves to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man? Are we in the consciousness of the failure of our own judgment, looking to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and asking Him to see well if there be in us any thing He cannot tolerate?

For we must be cleansed according to His own estimate, in order to have fellowship with Him.

Oh, beloved, how easy for our hearts to slip out of this fellowship, blessed as it is! Let us be jealous over ourselves, and not take for a heart in communion a heart at peace with itself because unexercised. If our feet are in His hands, then, thank God, He takes the responsibility of our being cleansed. Basin and towel are His, with all things in heaven and earth also. We shall have part with Him even now;- in the midst of a poor, poor world, rotten to the core with sin, blessed, satisfying part with Him. Which of us would sacrifice it for aught else whatever that could be given us?

And now I want to point your attention to this before I close,- that, as I have said, the regular communication with God in Israel was by means of the Urim and Thummim. If they wanted an answer from God as to a certain thing, an oracular judgment about it, it was a priest who had Urim and Thummim who must go to God.

How can we apply this now? First of all, of course, to Christ our great High-Priest, who is passed into the heavens; but as a principle for us, and an important one, we may apply it this way: If we seek and obtain a divine answer as to any thing in the Church down here, what characteristics will it have to prove itself a divine answer? Well, surely these two which the Urim and Thummim imply. God must first of all have His place in it. We must see the jewels, the lights and perfections, whole and altogether there. But then across the jewels must be seen the names of His people too. Love,- divine love - to His people must characterize it, as well as love for God. Nay, the apostle asks how he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, can in fact love God whom he hath not seen.

Here are two things that will surely characterize every divine judgment - every judgment of the Priest with Urim and Thummirn. If God is light on the one hand, He is love on the other. As partakers of the divine nature, we must be doers of righteousness on the one hand; on the other, we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. Nay, as light and love are one in God, however much to us they may be two, so we may be sure of this: that whatever is not righteousness is not love, as whatever is not love is not righteousness.

Perhaps we have learned to say, if a thing be not righteous, it is not love; and it is most true and most important: for true love to my brother is not indifferent to evil in him, and cannot be. How can I take no notice of that which is dragging down his soul, and dishonouring God in him? It is impossible that love can act so. Call it social good feeling, if you will; that is love

according to man's idea: but it lacks the divine quality - it leaves out God. But leave Him out, and you have left out every thing. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments." That is the test. Emotion is all well, but the test is not emotion. Obedience is the test, and nothing else.

It is not love to our brother if in the way we show it we are not keeping His commandments; but on the other hand, it is not keeping His commandments if we are not showing love. Do not imagine that there can be righteousness apart from love. As I say, these two things are really, at the bottom, one. If God has shown us love, for us to show it is but righteousness. What witness have we, if it be not witness of the grace we have received? Surely, of nothing so much are we the witnesses. Is there not sometimes a very sad and serious mistake, as if because it is grace we are called to show, that therefore as to quantity and quality, as it were, we may please ourselves about it? - nay, as if it were a little something extra we were doing in showing it at all! Ah, but God will require from us what He has been showing us. It is not a work of supererogation to show grace.

Look at this man. He owes his master an immense sum - ten thousand talents, representing perhaps £2,000,000,- and he is bankrupt: he cannot even make composition, he has nothing to pay. So he comes and falls down at his master's feet, and beseeches him for time in which to pay him. But his master is moved with compassion, and he does more,-" he loosed him, and forgave him the debt."

Now, mark this forgiven man. "But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence"- a pitiful sum in comparison, about £3 : 2s: 6d, calculated at the same rate,-"and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me that thou owest.'" Then, in words and action so like his own, you would think it must have smitten him to the heart, "his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.'" Could you imagine a heart so hard?-"He would not, but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt." What does the lord of both men do when he hears this? "O thou wicked servant," he says, "I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Beloved, what a lesson for us,- that for those who have received grace it is but righteousness to show it. It is not, I say again, a little overplus - a little more than duty,-something it is very good for us to do, and if we fail in it, it will not be required of us. It is a positive, absolute duty: God will require it of us.

And though it be in matters which concern God directly, and although it is true we cannot forgive debts that are due to God, we must not take it as if He could tolerate in us what He does not Himself practice - mere exaction. Neither must we forget, whether it be as regards our brother or ourselves, that grace, and grace alone, breaks the dominion of sin. The law is the strength of it.

Do not upset the balance on either side, beloved friends. Remember, the Priest who has the Urim and

Thummim alone can give the divine answer. In a true judgment of any thing, God must be first ever, but in indissoluble union with His people, as He holds them together, blessed be His name, the true High-Priest, upon whom is the breastplate of righteousness; as He will hold them fast forever: He, the Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.

The Parables of Matthew 13

From THE NUMERICAL BIBLE

Outline:

DIVISION 4 (Chap. xiii.-xx. 28.) The Kingdom in the hands of Men.

SUBDIVISION 1 (viii. 1-52) Viewed as a Whole.

SECTION 1. (1-35) As left to itself,-- the King absent.

Subsection 1 (1-30): Individual aspects.

Part 1 (1-23): a kingdom of the truth.

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Subsection 1 (36-43): the beginning of the reign of righteousness.

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DIVISION 4. (Chap. xiii.-xx. 28.)

The Kingdom in the hands of Men.

We have now come, therefore, to that which directly appeals to us, the Kingdom as we know it at the present time, Israel while refusing the King having necessarily lost it, as the Lord declares to them (chap. xxi. 43). But this involves a momentous change: for the promises

concerning it, all contemplated Israel as in the central place of glory and power in that day, the law of Jehovah going forth from Zion and His word from Jerusalem, the glory of God being manifested there, and the Lord reigning openly in power to the ends of the earth (Mic. iv.). These promises still belong to Israel, because His counsel shall surely stand - His gifts and calling are without repentance (Rom. ix. 4; xi. 29). But this being so, either the Kingdom itself must be delayed till Israel is brought to receive the Lord; or else, it must in the meantime come in in a different manner from that contemplated in the prophets. This last it is which has actually taken place; not, surely, as an afterthought on God's part, for there is no such thing with Him as this, but on the contrary, revealing the riches of His grace according to counsels hidden, indeed, from ages and generations past, but now to make known to principalities and powers by means of the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. iii. 10).

The whole time of the working out of these counsels is necessarily, therefore, a gap in Old Testament prophecy, and a time of delay as to the accomplishment of blessing for the earth - a blessing which is inseparably bound up with that of Israel nationally. Christianity is indeed universal in its character, the call of the gospel being world-wide - "to every creature which is under heaven" but it is not a call to earthly but to heavenly blessings, and to strangership and pilgrim character upon earth. And this is, so far, only what the family of faith has all along confessed (Heb. xi. 13-16.) Israel's inheritance nationally is another matter: and here the voices of the prophets unanimously direct us on to such a scene as we have seen Micah picture. Heaven in the prophets is the

place of God's dwelling, but little is known of what is inside, even though Enoch went there, and Elijah went there, in days long since. For us it is opened and furnished; Christ has come out and gone in, and now we know it; and He is coming again to receive us to Himself. Our blessings are in heavenly places in Him; our home is with Himself.

In two different ways people get confused and confuse others, as to things as plain as this. Some, in the enjoyment of what is simple Christian truth today, read their Christianity back into the Old Testament, and can think of nothing else but a heavenly inheritance for all the saints of all times. Some, on the other hand, read the Old Testament forward into the New Testament, and make the earth the final habitation for all. Scripture is larger and more diverse than either understand. The Old Testament outlook is earthly unmistakably, the New Testament revelation is what our Joseph, rejected of his brethren, is telling as the "Revealer of secrets" in the ears of His Gentile bride.

These are the "mysteries," which characterize Christianity, so that the apostle bids us account of his fellow-labourers and himself "as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1). The first great mystery is that of Christ Himself - "the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). Along with this, however, and as part of it, we have His whole life here, "justified in the Spirit" - by the descent of the Spirit of God upon Him, - and again by His resurrection from the dead, - "seen of angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." It is Christ actually come and known in His whole life down here, that is the mystery: not the

prophetic picture merely, which certainly and clearly made known His Deity (e. g. Mic. v. 2), but the fulfillment of this in the person of Jesus Christ. Next we may put "the mystery of God's will... to head up," as the word really is, "all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. i. 9, 10) - the Headship of Christ over the (new) creation. Then we have "the mystery of the Christ" - not simply of Christ personally, but that in Him "the Gentiles should be joint-heirs, and a joint-body", a body formed of Jews and Gentiles brought together, - "and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. iii. 4, 6). Then the mystery of Christ and the Church, His Bride (Eph. v. 32). Then the mystery of "Christ in you" (Col. 1. 27). The change of the living concurrently with the resurrection of the saints at the coming of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 51), the present blinding of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in (Rom. xi. 25), even the "mystery of iniquity" working out in Christian times, (2 Thes. ii. 7), and which the woman "Babylon the Great" bears as a brand upon her forehead (Rev. xvii. 5). - all these are "mysteries" connected with the Christian dispensation, hidden, therefore, in Old Testament times (Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 5; Col. i. 26): secrets made known to those initiated into Christianity.

It is not the place here to inquire further into these: none of them are mentioned as such in the Gospels; but we can see that in them the essential and distinctive features of Christianity are to be found. In that part of Matthew to which we have now reached, such secrets begin to be told out; and according to what we have seen to be the theme of this Gospel, they begin with the "mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven," - the Kingdom in the new form which it acquires by the rejection of the

King, and His consequent absence from the place of His Kingdom. He reigns indeed, but on the Father's throne (Rev. iii. 21), - a higher place, and which manifests His glory as the divine Son: none could sit upon such a throne but He; still it is not His human throne as Son of man. The Kingdom is administered for Him in His absence by His servants, and the fashion of it, therefore, greatly changed. In a parable in Mark, the Lord compares it to a man casting seed into the earth, and seeing it no more till the time of harvest: it springs up and grows, he knows not how (Mark iv. 26 - 29). This is already significant as to the possibility of failure. Left in the hands of men, we know, only too well, what man is. Divine wisdom and love cannot really be baffled; and yet we must be prepared for this seeming to be so.

These mysteries of the Kingdom speak of "things that had been hidden from the foundation of the world" (verse 35), and he that is now discipled unto the Kingdom of heaven has, therefore, in his treasures things "new" as well as "old" (verse 52). Of the bringing together of these the parables that follow here will give us decisive proof.

SUBDIVISION 1. (xiii. 1-52.)

Viewed as a Whole.

The history of the Kingdom is given us before the principles. It was necessary to have clearly before the eye the character of that to which the principles apply. And more especially is this so because of the opposition between the Kingdom in its initiation and in its after-development, which the history so clearly shows, and which would naturally raise question of their application altogether, if this contradiction were not accounted for.

On the other hand, the veil of parable is thrown over the whole; and the Lord's explanation of the reason of this (verses 11 - 13), while applying primarily to unbelieving Jews, has in it most important principles of far wider application.

History given beforehand, as One alone is competent to give it, is given, not to gratify curiosity about the future, but as practical wisdom for the wise in heart, that the servants of the Lord may find the path wherein to walk and to serve Him (Rev. i. 1). Exercise of conscience will be needed to understand it, far more than grasp of intellect, and we need not wonder at diverse interpretations. Yet the Lord expects us to be able to see clearly through the veil (Mark iv. 13) and without certainty no application can be safely made: Scripture must first of all be for "doctrine," in order that it may be for "reproof; for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16).

Matthew gives us here seven parables - the usual number indicating completeness. In some sense, surely, they are designed to give us a perfect picture of the Kingdom, but in what sense we are not entitled to decide without examination of the whole series; which is divided by difference of place and audience into four and three, the usual division of a septenary series. Four are spoken to the multitude upon the seashore; the last three to the disciples in the house. The numbers concur with the circumstances to lead us to expect in the first four a more external, in the last three a more internal and spiritual view. The explanation of the second parable has its place also with the three.

SECTION 1. (1-35.)

As left to itself, - the King absent.

The first four Parables also are plainly susceptible of another division. Four is often divided in Scripture into 3+1; and in this way is significant of what is good: the number of the creature (4) resolves itself into the numbers which speak of divine manifestation. On the other hand it may divide into 2x2, which as true division seems generally to have in it an evil significance. The four parables here divide in the latter way: the first two giving individual aspects - the wheat and the tares; while the last two give us the collective aspect, the seeds gathered, as it were, into one seed; the leaven permeating the meal. We shall see as we go on, the importance of these divisions.

But the character attaching to the whole four parables may first of all be emphasized. The series as a whole has been already spoken of as applying to the Kingdom in its present "mystery" form; but we shall find that in fact only the first four parables develop this - the fact that it is a Kingdom left to itself - the King absent. This certainly does not characterize in the same way the last three, inasmuch as in two of them we find the figure of the King Himself. The man who in the one sells all that he has to buy the "field" - if the interpretation of the second parable hold good here ("the field is the world") - can be no other than the Lord. And then also the similar action of the merchantman who buys the pearl must surely point out the same blessed Person. Here, then, we are in another line of thought to that of the first four parables. Of course, this waits for confirmation or disproof upon a closer examination.

Subsection 1 (1-30):Individual aspects.

The first two parables are in evident contrast with one another in this respect: in the first we have the various success - as to three parts out of four we must say the ill success of the good seed. In the second we have the enemy and the bad seed. Even thus far, it seems to be a picture of decline that is before us; or at least, the scene in the meanwhile grows darker and not brighter; and the tares remain, we are authoritatively told, until the harvest. But let us now take up the parables in detail.

DIVISION 4. (Chap. xiii.-xx. 28.) The Kingdom in the hands of Men.

SUBDIVISION 1. (xiii. 1-52.) Viewed as a Whole.

SECTION 1. (1-35.) As left to itself, - the King absent.

Subsection 1 (1-30): Individual aspects.

Part 1(1-23): a kingdom of the truth.

1.1 On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a ship himself and sat down; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed, some [seed] fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. And some fell on rocky places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no depth of earth; but when the sun arose, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them. And some fell upon good ground, and yielded fruit, this a hundredfold, this sixty, this thirty. He that hath ears, let him hear.

And the disciples came and said to him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Because unto you it is given to know the 'mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him. Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, In hearing ye shall hear, and not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for this people's heart is grown fat, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have longed to see what ye behold, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that ye hear and have not heard them.

Hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, the wicked one cometh and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he that received seed * by the wayside. But he that received seed* upon the rocky places is he who heareth the word and immediately with joy receiveth it; but he has no root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when affliction or persecution cometh on account of the word, immediately he is stumbled. But he that received seed* among thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this life† and

the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that receiveth seed * on the good ground is he who heareth the word and understandeth it, who also beareth 'fruit and bringeth forth, this one a hundred-fold, and another sixty, and another thirty.

*Literally, "is sown." usually "age," but its oldest meaning (in Homer) was "life."

Part 1(1-23): a kingdom of the truth.

1 The Lord goes out of the house and sits by the seaside. He has just declared the principle which carries Him outside of Judaism. The doers of His Father's will are now alone to be His kindred. He leaves therefore the house, the sphere of natural relationship, and takes His place by the sea, the figure of man in the restlessness and barrenness of nature, of man apart from God, and so of the Gentiles. The concourse of the multitude, instead of detaining Him, hastens His departure: He enters into a ship and sits down there - takes His place definitively in separation from them.

He speaks to them indeed from this new place that He has taken, but He speaks in parables. The nation as such is given up to hardness of heart: there is no use in increasing their condemnation by more light. And yet the very addressing them shows that all are not given Up. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel:" if there are those who have earnestness of heart to penetrate within the external form they shall find still a gracious heart that heats towards them. The national rejection leaves individual responsibility where it ever is. He that hath an ear, as the Lord tells them, still may hear.

Yet behold, a Sower is going forth to sow; and here is a decisive change. Israel had been God's vineyard planted once and enclosed and nurtured by God's unforgetting love. That had now long been given up: the fence had been taken away; the boar out of the woods had wasted it; the people had long been scattered. Still, though this were so, the end had not then been reached: after seventy years a remnant had been permitted to return to the desolate land, and a "fig-tree" had been "planted in the vineyard" (Luke xiii. 6). But this, too, had now failed to bring forth fruit; if such was to be found, there must be a fresh labour of the husbandman and in fresh fields: the sower must go forth to sow.

There is not now the planting of vines or fig-trees, but what better suits the character of work among the Gentiles, - the broadcast sowing of seed. Are we not to think also of our Lord's words, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone" (John xii. 24) and to realize the new form of the gospel which would follow that death of His now coming so plainly into sight? Its being, as the Lord in His interpretation calls it, "the word of the Kingdom" does not hinder this; for the apostle shows us in the epistle to the Romans (x. 9-13) the gospel of the Kingdom in its present form, as based fully upon the death and resurrection of Christ. Death and resurrection both we have, wherever the seed springs up; and that is what we are called to watch now where and with what final result the seed springs up. What success in its world-wide sowing is the word of the Kingdom now to have?

We are at once made aware that it is not world-wide success we are to expect from it. First of all, we see in the seed received by the wayside, the hard, unreceptive

heart, hardened like the road by the constant traffic of the world, so that the seed never really finds lodgment in it. True, it is said to have been "sown in his heart," and that is a solemn thing. It is what the apostle's words imply, where he speaks of "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2). And yet he goes on immediately to speak of those to whom his gospel is hidden, "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of those that believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." These two things are easily reconcilable, and we can see that the case here is quite similar to the first one in the parable, where the "birds of the air" are interpreted by the Lord as "Satan." In the parable the word has first been sown in the heart: Satan could not prevent that. It has made its appeal to the conscience, commended itself as truth to it, been sown in the heart for acceptance or rejection.* Conscience commends it, but that is not faith; in which always the personal will is concerned. Conviction is not acceptance. The soul may tremble, Felix-like, before the truth, and yet refuse it: the seed after all lies outside; and now comes Satan's work, - the god of this world blinding the minds of those that believe not, Satan catching away that which was sown in the heart, but which the heart has not accepted. Those may well tremble who have not been true to what they could not but recognize as truth: for here Satan has his opportunity with them, and he never fails to use his opportunity. Well he knows what blessedness lies for them, contained in what they so lightly refuse. His business is to prevent their knowing that - to hide the glory of Christ from those who might be attracted by it.

* Compare Rom. x. 8. 9: "the word is... in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou... shalt believe in thy heart," etc., The "heart" in Scripture is not necessarily the affections, as we generally take it, but the man himself, the real man.

For Christians also the same principle holds good. For every truth in the word of God has to be accepted thus in the soul or rejected, and we are tested by it as to how far we also are "of the truth:" "every one that is of the truth heareth" Christ's "voice" (John xviii. 37). Not of mere ignorance, but by the refusal of truth, have all systems of error flourished and been built up. And how few, alas, comparatively are there who have not admitted some darkness into their souls by the lack of perfect absolute uprightness before God in every particular! And in some respect it is always the glory of Christ that is thus hidden. What need have we to be cleansed according to His mind that we may have (as He desires for us) "part with Him."

Here, then, in this first failure of the good seed, the opposition of Satan is manifest. We are at once made aware that it is in a world which lieth in the wicked one that the Kingdom of heaven (in this new phase of it) is to be found. Man's responsibility is carefully maintained; but, alas, he is a fallen being, and manifests himself as such: the world, the flesh, and the devil are but too fully united in opposition to Christ. This may be detected even in the first case: for the heart has rejected the truth, and the world's traffic has hardened the heart, and Satan has only taken away that which was unwelcome. But each element of opposition must be fully shown, and we go on to see other forms of it in the

seed upon the rocky ground, and that sown among the thorns.

Rocky ground it is, not stony: bed-rock, with a slight layer of earth over it, in which the seed grows rapidly but superficially, the very cause of its destruction in a little while, operating at first to produce hot-house growth: "forthwith it sprang up because it had no depth of earth;" by and by the sun growing hotter scorched it; and, because it had no root, it withered away.

Here it is the nature of the ground that is at fault. In the case of the wayside hearer it might be urged that circumstances had made him what he was: the traffic over it had made the ground hard. Here it was the nature of the ground itself. The prophet - or rather, God by him - speaks of a "heart of stone" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26); and this, without any question, is exactly pictured here. Yet there is earth also, a superficial susceptibility, which promises largely at the beginning: "he heareth the word, and immediately with joy receiveth it" this is, as the parable states, a sign of a lack of depth. There has been no deep conviction, no true repentance: the sentiments are engaged, but not the conscience; and such an one may be warm and enthusiastic, and make rapid progress in the learning of truth; but he has not counted the cost: "when affliction or persecution ariseth because of the word, immediately he is stumbled."

This is the flesh at its fairest; capable of coming so near to the kingdom of God, and all the more manifesting its hopeless nature. There is the unbroken rock behind that never yields itself to the word, and gives it no lodgment; and the class of hearers pictured here are born of the flesh only, and so only flesh. Let things be outwardly

favourable to profession, it is plain that the number of these may multiply largely, and may stick like dead leaves to a tree that has no rough blast to shake them off. But life is none the more in them.

There is still a third class of the unfruitful, and in these the influence of the world is paramount. The seed sown among thorns represents those in whom the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word. Poverty and riches, as Agur long before noted (Prov. xxx. 8, 9), are seen here as alike unfavourable to spiritual life. Yet riches may entice the poor, and care weigh heavily upon the prosperous rich man. The deceitfulness of riches is so great a snare that the Lord has elsewhere said that the rich man could hardly enter into the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. xix. 23). But He expressly guarded this from any implication of its applying to salvation, as if salvation (when men sought that) were different for different classes. Of those who realize their need of salvation there is but one class: "Christ died for sinners" covers every case. But if it be a question of men seeking after it, the more they have to satisfy themselves with here, the less real is eternity likely to appear. How many have the interest awakening within their souls stopped by such things as these the day will declare.

And so one part alone out of four of the good seed becomes fruitful really. Not, of course, that this is to be taken as numerical proportion. One fears, indeed, that any reckoning in this way would give less satisfactory results rather than more; but we must leave this with Him who "knoweth them that are His." At any rate we know well that the success of the good seed is partial; and with those in whom it does bring forth fruit, there

are still various measures of fruitfulness; "one a hundredfold, another sixty, another thirty," says our Lord. The devil, the flesh, and the world, are the unchanging, untiring foes of all that is of God, and the true people of God have no discharge in this life from this war.

In this first parable, then, we see the beginning of the Kingdom to be in the sowing of the word of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is, ideally at least, a kingdom of the truth (John xviii. 37). The subjects are "disciples" (ver. 52). How far the Kingdom being in the hands of men may affect this we have yet to see; but even as we find it already, we find in it unreal disciples as well as true; and this the after-parable confirm. The sphere of the Kingdom is profession, a profession which will be in due time tested by the fruit it bears. There is no undue haste to realize this: the picture is that of a field of growing wheat, as to which the harvest alone can properly decide what the fruit may be; and the harvest itself is not yet spoken of. Manifestly it is a kingdom introduced in a very different way, not merely from any Jewish conception, but from anything that the prophets had announced. Thus it is of the mysteries of the Kingdom that the Lord is speaking. Of the sower himself we do not hear: it is upon the seed that our attention is fixed, and whoever sows that is the sower. Thus it might be the Lord Himself in His work on earth, although the Kingdom does not begin till the end of the Gospel* (xxviii. 18); it might be any one afterwards. In the sense in which the second parable speaks (ver. 37), where ever the good seed is sown, the Sower is the Son of man: personally or by His agents, it is all one sowing.

*Which is probably the reason why this parable does not begin, as the others do, with "The Kingdom of heaven is like" — The eleventh verse guards against any mistake resulting.

2 Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed * darnel among the wheat, and went away. Now when the blade shot up and produced fruit, then appeared the darnel also. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, hath it darnel? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather it up? But he saith, Nay; lest when ye gather up the darnel, ye root up also the wheat with it. Let both grow together till the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather together first the darnel, and bind it in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.

* Literally, "oversowed."

Part 2 (24-40): the enemy and the spurious wheat.

2 The second parable now shows us the work of the enemy to defeat, as far as he may, the work of Christ. Satan as the prince of the world, which has rejected and cast out the true King, will not receive now His Kingdom; and he is permitted to work without the curb of manifest power to restrain him. It is the "kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," as the apostle at the beginning of Revelation fittingly reminds us (chap. i. 9); and Satan remains throughout, not only the "prince of this world," but the "god" of it (2 Cor. iv. 4). The expression used in

the last passage is, in fact, much stronger than even this: it is "the god of this aion" or "age"; which shows conclusively, therefore, what the "spirit of this age" must be. It shuts out hope of any effectual change of this until the Lord comes and Satan is shut up in that prison (Rev. xx. 1 - 3). in which so many, who ought to be wiser, suppose him to be already, but which will be then a more effectual restraint than even these can persuade themselves is upon him now.

Yet it is not by persecution of the saints that we see Satan acting in this parable. He has practised this often enough, and always will, as far as he can realize that the time is favourable; but he knows, too, and that by plentiful experience that the "blood of the martyrs is" apt, at least, to be "the seed of the church." and he has found for his purposes what is a better way. This is the way of imitation, "as Jannes and Jambres," in Egypt long since, "withstood Moses (2 Tim. iii. 8), counterfeiting God's miracles with lying wonders; and such is his method in the parable before us now.

The good seed has been sown and is growing up: the "word of the Kingdom" preached has developed into "sons of the Kingdom;" so far, we have just what the previous parable has put before us, the effect of the sowing of the good seed only. The work of the enemy cannot be accomplished by sowing seed of the same kind: he sows darnel in the midst of it, and goes his way. Such "over-sowing" is today in the East a common piece of malice; and darnel is a poisonous kind of rye, which among the Jews was credited with being a degenerate wheat: its grain is black and bitter. Thus it is evident that we have not here false profession merely, but error and its fruit: at first, deceptive and appealing at any rate

not very different from the truth, but by and by developing radical opposition. The dissemination of this is accomplished "while men slept," a thing that shows an evil state among the "children of the day," however natural it may be with others (1 Thess. v. 5 - 7).

Notice that, throughout the New Testament, if the flesh is opposed to the Spirit, and the world to the Father, the devil is the constant enemy of Christ, and the perversion of the Word and the denial of the Person of Christ are his special work. As Christ is the truth and the true Witness. Satan is "a liar, and the father of it" (John viii. 44). The tempter of Christ in the wilderness, he enters into Judas for the betrayal at a later time. He it is who "deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. xii. 9). and who is cast into the bottomless pit to deceive the nations no more until a thousand years are fulfilled. At the end of this time, being let loose, he again goes out as of old to deceive, and is then cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 3, 8, 10).

The "children of the wicked one" in the parable are thus those who are the offspring of his deception, by whom he seeks to antagonize the truth. And the New-Testament epistles give us plenty of proof of such a state of things already begun a good while before the canon of inspiration was completed. It is not needed to do more than refer to this. They show us how insidiously the "mystery of iniquity" began its work (2 Thess. ii. 7), which, however it might be hindered, would never cease until the "wicked one," energized by Satan, should be destroyed at the appearing of Christ (ver. 8). Thus the darnel would remain until the day of harvest, no human hands being competent to accomplish the separation of Christian profession from it. After many centuries now,

we are all clear, whatever may be our standpoint, that this separation in fact never has been attained.

But we must remember, however, that it is of the Kingdom that the parable speaks, and not of the Church or Assembly, of which we have not heard, in fact, as yet. A large mass of Christians make no distinction between these, although here it should be plain that "the field is the world" - the Kingdom in its present phase, the profession of Christianity in the world, or what men call Christendom; and we have no capacity, authority or responsibility to purify Christendom after this fashion. But, if we are truly Christians, we have responsibility to purge out from our assemblies "all things that offend, and those committing lawlessness" the thing which the angel-reapers alone can do as to the profession at large.

Rome has taken in hand, and insists upon her authority to anticipate the time of harvest; and the state-churches, following her, have feebly and spasmodically attempted the same thing. Necessarily that has followed which the Lord declared: with some darnel, they have rooted up the wheat also, and indeed this most of all. Yet the prohibition, to these Jewish disciples of the Lord, (taught as they were by the Old Testament to expect the kingdom of Messiah to be an open display of judgment upon transgressors,) would naturally be a mystery indeed; and so to those who confound the New with the Old Testament. But the Lord recognizes fully the coming of the judgment. It is only delayed, not set aside. Evil is allowed in the meanwhile to manifest itself: in the time of harvest, He will say unto the reapers, "Gather together first the darnel, and bind it in bundles for the burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."

We shall find that the Lord in His interpretation carries this further: the darnel is actually burnt, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. This we must look at in its own place. At present we have only the preparatory work with the darnel, which is bound in bundles with a view to its being burnt; and then the wheat is gathered into the barn. The last is clear enough: it speaks of the removal of the true saints to heaven; but the binding of the darnel in bundles is not so clear. It cannot refer to the associations now so characterizing the days in which we are, except we take the ground that harvest-time has already begun; and indeed it does begin, as is plain, before the saints are taken home. If this were true, it would show the end very nigh. The multiplication of associations, the prevalence of the principle more and more, every one must admit. We should look for it to take a form which would more and more gather the false and shut out the true, while at present true and false are sadly mixed together. With the growth of infidelity so manifest as it is today, this might very quickly result. Even the religious associations are swallowing up the churches, and taking their work into their own hands; and all things move to-day with marvellous rapidity, as the stream grows quicker near the bunk of the precipice.

Subsection 2 (31-38): collective aspects.

2. The two parables that follow differ strikingly from those that have preceded them, and agree together in this, that we have no longer individuals before us but the mass. In the grain of mustard seed the many grains of the wheat field are massed together: the "sons of the Kingdom" are no longer seen, nor indeed the "sons of the wicked one," but a general condition - I believe we

may add, resulting from their mixture. The "woman" of the second parable here, the common figure of the professing church, gives us in this the collective aspect, and not the leaven, nor the three measures of meal. This we must examine fully in its place; and as to both parables there has been sufficient disagreement among interpreters to make us look carefully at every step we take. Nor have we as to either of them the help in this way that the Lord gives as to the first two.

All the more thankful we may be, therefore, that the second parable has already carried us on to the time of harvest, mournful as it is to realize that it is thus settled without possibility of successful question, that the evil result of the oversowing of the field of profession with false doctrine never will be repaired, - that the crop, as a crop, is very much spoiled, however much the good wheat still reproduces its own likeness. But this, at least, assures us that the parables to follow cannot alter this: they cannot take away the certainty of the failure of things in man's hands which the whole history of time past declares. We have indeed but shown ourselves all along the road the too faithful imitators of our first parents in the violation of every trust that God has committed to us. One might perhaps have hoped that, with the new power of Christianity, a new history might have begun for man; but, on the contrary, every feature of Israel's history has been reproduced in that of Christendom. It is even a proverb that "history repeats itself." Prophecy and history unite to assure us that as to this Christianity is not an exception to the rest.

2. 1 Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is less

than all seeds, but, when it is grown, it is greater than herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and lodge in its branches.

Part 1 (31, 32.): in independence.

1 The parable of the mustard-seed is similar to those that have gone before it in its being the growth of a living thing that is brought before us, but that which is to be remarked in it now is its disproportionate growth, in which it seems to overstep the limits of its nature. The round seed of the mustard was used proverbially among the Jews for the smallest of things, which it was relatively to the other seeds they sowed. Its development in the East in favourable places is indeed in conspicuous contrast with its growth elsewhere. But the question is raised at once, Is the world, then, a favourable place for the growth of a kingdom "not of this world," and where the devil and the flesh unite with the world in unceasing opposition to it? Either the world must (measurably, at least,) cease to be what it is. or the seed must change in some respects its character, for the Kingdom of heaven to take its place among the kingdoms of the earth: and this is, in fact what the parable shows.

"And the general meaning," says Edersheim, "would be the more easily apprehended, that a tree whose wide-spreading branches afforded lodgment to the birds of heaven, was a familiar Old Testament figure for a mighty kingdom that gave shelter to the nations. Indeed it is specifically used as an illustration of the Messianic kingdom."

He refers in the first place to Ezek. xxxi. 3-6, where we have the picture drawn by God Himself of the Assyrian

power: "Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied,... all the fowls of the heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations." In Daniel we have a similar picture of the Babylonian in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is interpreted by the prophet (chap. iv. 20-22): "The tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight therefore to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the air had their habitation: it is thou, O king. who art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth."

The likeness here to the "tree" of the parable cannot surely be doubted: it is a figure of earthly greatness that is pictured. And yet it cannot but be remarked that there is not in the parable after all anything like the greatness of the Assyrian or Babylonian empire. The passage in Ezek. xvii. also, to which Edersheim refers as picturing the Messianic kingdom, - in fact, the resurrection of the house of David in Messiah's day, - still represents a cedar, the stateliest of trees, under which "dwell all fowl of every wing, and in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell." But this speaks of a future time, and a very different dispensation.

The tree of the parable is a garden shrub out-doing itself. It grows into a tree, and the birds of heaven lodge in its branches; but if you look at this as divine increase, it will naturally be asked, why then is there nothing

more glorious than this? As growth it is dubious, and the mention of the birds of heaven cannot but remind us that the birds of heaven carried away the good seed in the first parable, and that the Lord's interpretation is, "Then cometh the wicked one." Great Babylon, the figure of a professing Christian body in guilty connection with the kings of the earth, becomes "a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. xviii. 2). If we remember that this seed and its development give the Kingdom as a whole, and that the previous parable has shown us a mixed condition in fact, the result of' the enemy's work, then the anomalous tree becomes perfectly intelligible. The state of the whole has been affected by this mixture of diverse elements. There has resulted from it what we know as Christendom to-day. Christianity has been more or less assimilated to the principles of the world; the world, in consequence becomes more favourable to the adulterated Christianity. The shrub grows - overgrows - its nature, if you consider what its character is as defined at its first beginning. A people unknown by the world (1 John iii. 1), and strangers in it (1 Pet. ii. 11), followers of One it crucified, and crucified to it by His cross (Gal. vi. 14), not of it, even as He is not of it (John xvii. 14), become a people well-known, honoured and at home in it. Nay, they acquire the right to rule, and like their predecessors at Corinth, "reign as kings" (1 Cor. iv. 8), quite without fear of apostolic rebuke for it. Yet after all, the spiritual and political interests can never become so accordant that the tree shall assume the dimensions of full imperial power. The woman may ride the beast, but even so these are diverse. Alas, this political Christianity is more powerful to corrupt the Church than to elevate the world, and she that rides the beast is but a painted harlot. It passes the subtlest imagination to

conceive how what is "not of the world" can become of the world and yet retain its character. The birds of the heaven are wiser: they understand their claim upon the abnormal tree for lodgment, and find it there.

The Kingdom is now, in the form it has taken, in independence of its King. To the Corinthians the apostle could say, "Ye have reigned as kings without us:" they were not in communion any longer with men "appointed to death," for their sufferings "a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men." "I Would to God," he says "that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." If the saints reign now, they are still reigning without the apostles. Time can make no difference in this respect, so long as it is still true that all the saints are not reigning together. And that time will not come until the Lord takes His own throne as Son of man, - a human throne that He can share with others. True, He reigns now, but on His Father's throne, which no mere man can ever sit upon (Rev. iii. 21); and He reigns, distinctly, as rejected by time world: "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1). Thus the saints cannot reign now, except in unfaithfulness, in independence of their Lord Himself. The tree is thus anomalous, and the condition evil.

Part 2 the leaven of falsehood.

2 Another parable spake he unto them, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

2 A worse thing follows, which clearly connects with what precedes it here: "The Kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Here the explanations ordinarily given are so generally in contradiction to the truth, that it will be well to look at them more particularly before attempting to develop this. Edersheim gives thus briefly the generally accepted view: -

"To this extensive power of the Kingdom [as shown in the Mustard-seed] corresponded its intensive character, whether in the world at large or in the individual. This formed the subject of the last of the parables addressed at that time to the people - that of the Leaven. We need not here resort to ingenious methods of explaining the 'three measures,' or seahs, of meal in which the leaven was hid... To mix three measures of meal was common in Biblical, as well as in later times (Gen. xviii. 6; Judg. vi. 19; 1 Sam. i. 24). Nothing further was therefore conveyed than the common process of ordinary, everyday life. And in this, indeed, lies the very point of the parable. that the Kingdom of God, when received within, would seem like leaven hid, but would gradually pervade, assimilate, and transform the whole of our common life."

Alford's view is similar, but he adds: -

"Leaven has its good as well as its bad side, and for that good is used: viz. to make wholesome and fit for use that which would otherwise be heavy and insalubrious. Another striking point of comparison is that leaven, as used ordinarily, is a piece of the leavened loaf put among the new dough, just as the Kingdom of heaven is the renewal of humanity by the righteous Man, Christ Jesus."

Lange still adds: -

"The woman is an apt figure of the Church. Leaven, a substance kindred, yet quite opposed to meal.- having the power of transforming and preserving it, and converting it into bread, thus representing the divine in its relation to. and influence upon, our natural life. One of the main points of the parable is the 'hiding,' or the mixing of the leaven in the three measures of meal. This refers to the great visible Church, in which the living gospel seems, as it were, hidden and lost. It appears as if the gospel were engulfed in the world; but under the regenerating power of Christianity it will at last be seen that the whole world shall be included in the Church."

Trench remarks: -

"In and through the Church the Spirit's work proceeds; only as that dwells in the Church is it able to mingle a nobler element in the mass of humanity, in the world. The woman took the leaven from elsewhere to mingle it with the lump; and even such is the gospel, a kingdom not of this world, not the unfolding of any powers which already existed therein, a kingdom not rising, as the secular kingdom, 'out of the earth' (Dan. vii. 17), but a new power brought into the world from above: not a philosophy, but a revelation."

This is a sufficiently full account of the most widely accepted interpretation; and, if not absolutely harmonious in detail, as presented by these different writers, it is still as much so as it would be reasonable to expect, and has in itself a very reasonable appearance. From the Scriptural point of view, however, it must be judged; and it has been often pointed out that in this way there are insurmountable difficulties to our receiving it.

In the first place, it is contrary to the general tenor of the previous parables. After all that has been before us, we do not expect a change so sudden and complete as this seems to involve. If the three measures of meal speak of humanity in general, or the world, the progress of the leaven is distinctly declared to be, till the whole is leavened." But the other parables, from the very first one, are entirely against this; and the whole witness of prophecy as to the Christian dispensation. To apply it, as some would, simply to the work of regeneration in individuals, destroys in another way its harmony with the series of pictures of which it forms a part, all of which give us the public and general history. "Three measures of meal" seems a strange figure for the world, and the "measure" seems not realizable. Not that this would be a weighty objection with the many who deprecate any particular attention to such minutiae as they would consider this. For such, a general resemblance is all that one need expect: which would leave in result a large uncertainty of interpretation, and Scripture to the reproach of many unmeaning words.

The signification of "leaven" in every other passage in which it is used is a great difficulty also. The Lord applies it to the "doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (chap. xvi. 12), and to their hypocrisy (Luke xii. 1). He speaks also of the "leaven of Herod" (Mark viii. 15); the apostle again of the "leaven of malice and wickedness" and of "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 8). Twice we are warned how "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. v. 6; Gal. v. 9). That very piece of old dough which Dean Alford interprets so strangely of the Lord's humanity, the apostle applies in quite another manner, when he bids

the Corinthians "purge out, therefore. the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump," and this where he is interpreting the Old Testament feast of unleavened bread in its connection with the passover, and which must remind us how absolutely leaven was to be excluded from every "offering of the Lord made by fire" (Lev. ii. 11).

It will be urged in answer to this that it is the Kingdom of heaven itself which is here compared to leaven, and the Kingdom of heaven cannot be evil. But we have to go no further than these parables themselves to perceive that this objection cannot be sustained. In the very next one, if we interpret in a similar way, the Kingdom is compared to the treasure which a man found, but in that which follows, not to the pearl which corresponds to this, but to the merchantman who seeks it. Evidently, the whole parable it is which is the similitude of the Kingdom, and not separately either treasure or finder: and this is completely confirmed upon examination. *

*See also chap. xviii. 23; xx. 1.

In this way, too, it will be seen that, while the Kingdom of heaven cannot indeed in itself be evil, it may still be in an evil condition. This series of parables have surely exhibited in it a steady growth of evil, which in that of the mustard seed affects the form which as a whole it takes. We may naturally expect, therefore, to find here this development going on; and if, as Edersheim and others truly say, the leaven in contrast with the mustard-tree gives us intensive character rather than extensive growth, then we may expect to find this inward character affected now in a way corresponding to the outward form before. And this is in fact the meaning of

the leaven: it is an energy, but alas, of evil from without, which transforms the character more and more of what it works upon, and completes the sorrowful picture of decline at which we have been looking. From this point of view also, all the details of the picture assume significance, and give a definiteness of meaning to the whole which vindicates the parable from the reproach of ambiguity or of useless verbiage.

The safest of rules that we can have is to let scripture be the interpreter of scripture. Now, if in carrying this out we ask ourselves, what leaven put into the meal may mean, we are at once reminded of the meat or meal-offering, as to which it is distinctly said (Lev. ii. 11): "No meat-offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven... in any offering of the Lord made by fire." If then this be the application here, at once we see that the parable falls into line with the previous parables in this that it continues that thought of evil and opposition to the Word which they all more or less exhibit. The woman is doing what the word of God prohibits: she is putting leaven into the meal-offering.

But what, then, is the significance of this? A terrible one indeed: for the meal-offering speaks, as these offerings in general do, of Christ as the food of His people, of which they partake in communion with God (see Lev. ii., notes); and thus we see that to bring in the merely natural thought (whether it be true or not) of the wholesomeness of leavened bread, as Alford does, is most misleading. God insists upon the feast being kept to Him with unleavened bread: all mixture with leaven is adulteration; and if the Church, as Trench with Lange and others rightly say, is intended by the woman, then

the professing church here seen as adulterating the pure doctrine of Christ, the bread of life, with impure admixture.

"Three measures of meal:" does that add nothing to the significance? Is it merely, as Edersheim says, the usual quantity, and is that what his texts suggest? Not, surely, to one who is accustomed to see the New Testament in the Old, and to read the histories contained in it, as the apostle does that of Abraham (Gal. iv.) as types and prophecies of spiritual things. In this way it is most instructive to observe that Gideon's ephah of flour, which is the equivalent of 'three measures' was offered to the Lord; and that Hannah likewise brought her ephah to the house of the Lord in Shiloh. The third case he adduces (and the only other) is still more in point: for Abraham's food with which he entertains his heavenly visitants was undoubtedly overruled, at least, to show us again Christ in His Person and work (three measures of fine meal and the calf-life sacrificed) as the means of communion between heaven and earth.* "Three measures" are the full divine measure, God in manifestation, and that is the right measure surely of the true Meat-offering, the Man Christ Jesus.

*These are not random or fragmentary applications, but have their place in a history completely significant throughout, in which by the significance of the whole each part is certified see Gen. xviii. notes).

How all this brings out what is before us! Christ, the bread of life, is what the professing church has had entrusted to her for her own sustenance and for the blessing of others. The doctrine of Christ is her most precious deposit, and the maintaining this in purity her

great responsibility. Alas, she has adulterated it with leaven: the Lord's own explanation of this as "the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" and the "leaven of Herod," remains still for us in Christian times as wherewith to interpret His parable of the Kingdom. Formalism, ritualism, rationalism, the corrupting tendencies of world-pandering Herodianism, have all had their share in perverting the precious doctrine of Christ. And here distinctly the "woman's" form appeals in that which Scripture itself stamps as "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Rev. Xvii.), she who, claiming to be emphatically the "CHURCH," at the same time assumes the power of adding to it her own authoritative interpretations. Doubtless she is not alone in this: others have followed her more or less distinctly, in claiming to give the "voice of the church," whether in the "catholic" or some lesser form. In whatever way this may be done it is an intrusion upon Christ's office as the only "Master* and Lord;" and wherever it is done, some kindred evil will spring out of it. Christ's voice, and that alone, must be authoritative for the soul.

*"Teacher" (John xiii. 13).

The leaven is leavening the whole lump. No doubt, there is a present hindrance to this in the power of the Spirit working, and as long as the present purpose of God is not complete, the lump as a whole cannot be leavened. God will preserve His truth, which never has been as a whole allowed to be in the woman's hands to be leavened. Once let the true Church be removed, the truth of God will be removed with it, and the leaven of falsehood do its fatal work upon all that is left.

Subsection 3 (34, 35): things hidden manifest.

3 "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables, and without a parable spake he nothing unto them: so that that was fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world."

3 With this the parables spoken to the multitude are ended: and except in parables He did not speak to them. The prophet's word was being fulfilled in Him (Ps. lxxviii. 2): He was taking the place of another Asaph, to speak of things more deeply hidden than those of which Asaph spoke. The psalmist's words therefore are not exactly but freely quoted: his deep things were contained in a past history, the meaning of which it is given to him to utter; Christ's in a history of things to come, but which mournfully reflect in their general lesson that older story of another people. Alas, man's history does repeat itself: now, however, it was of a state of "things hidden from the foundation of the World" - of which the prophets of the Old Testament themselves knew nothing. Subsection 3(34-35): things hidden manifest.

SECTION 2. (36-52.) Faith's view.

The Lord now leaves the multitude and goes into the house: the audience is changed, and He is now with His disciples only, and able to speak out. He does now give them the explanation of the parable of the darnel, carrying it further also than the parable itself had done. But to this he adds three other parables, the third of which He partially explains, but not the others. We are left to spiritual apprehension to discern these.

Between these last three and the first four we shall find the difference which the numbers indicate. Four is the number of the world, and they are spoken in the world - before the multitude. We find in them, in fact, what we can see to be the external aspect of things, - the Kingdom in the form which it has taken manifestly, even though those who see it may discern little of its import. In what is said to the disciples in the house we shall find what is for those of the present time only spiritually discerned, - what is not public fact, but either lies beyond Christian times, or else is of such a nature as only to be understood by those who have learned it from God, from His word. It is faith's view, then, that we now are to be occupied with, and it need not be a strange thing to us to find that we have very different interpretations to consider, and which it will be necessary to consider seriously, before we shall be entitled to speak with conviction upon the subject.

Subsection 1 (36-43): the beginning of the reign of righteousness.

1 "Then, having sent the multitudes away, he went into the house; and his disciples came and said unto him, Explain unto us the parable of the darnel of the field. And he answered and said, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world, and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the sons of the evil one are the darnel; and the enemy that sowed it is the devil; and the harvest is the completion of the age, and the reapers are angels. As then the darnel is gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the completion of the age. The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those committing

lawlessness, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears let him hear."

1 But first of all we have what is itself an explanation. The interpretation of the parable of the darnel finds its place with the last three parables, and for this there must be some special reason. It would not be enough to say, it is an interpretation; for the Lord had before this explained that of the sower apart to His disciples, without reserving it for the after-teaching in the house. The true reason seems to be in that which is manifest in it, that it goes beyond the parable itself, and therefore beyond the end of the Christian form of the Kingdom of heaven. It presents, therefore, what must be to us as long as we are down here a matter of faith simply: and thus it comes into the second section here, and finds its place with the last three parables.

The parable ends with the gathering of the wheat into the barn. The saints of the present are removed, while the darnel, the fruit of Satan's sowing, is left in the field - in the world; bound in bundles for the burning, but not burnt. It is noticeable that there is nothing else but this mentioned now. There are no mere lifeless professors, but only the followers of false doctrine, - the reason for which is an unspeakably solemn one,, as explained by the apostle in the second epistle to the Thessalonians: the mere professors will be swept off by that "strong delusion" which will come with the apostasy of the last days upon all that "have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved" (ii. 7-12). The public judgment here is upon those in manifest rebellion, not

upon what is hidden but what is manifest. The words in the epistle are decisive as to this.

It is with what takes place after the saints are taken home that the interpretation of the parable has mainly to do: "As then the darnel is gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the completion of the age. The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom" - it is now His Kingdom, He is not simply sitting on the Father's throne - "all things that offend, and those committing lawlessness, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

Notice the contrast: the Kingdom of the Son of man below, the Kingdom of the Father above: the righteous reign in the Kingdom of the Son of man; they shine in the Kingdom of their Father. The Sun of righteousness is risen upon the earth; and this is why the righteous shine as the Sun: they are with Him, sharers of His glory; not suns - central, independent orbs, - but lustrous with the glory put upon them. But this carries us, as is plain, beyond the present form of the Kingdom, as also we shall find the parable of the net does. For us, to whom all these parables of the Kingdom belong, it is a matter of faith alone. The numerical symbolism stamps this, I doubt not, as what it so plainly is, the beginning of the reign of righteousness.

Subsection 2 (44): Preserved and reserved:

2 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in the field, which a man having found, hath hid, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field."

2 We come now to two parables which ought, by their evident likeness to one another, to render mutual help in their interpretation - the parables of the treasure and the pearl. They are commonly understood by Christians as portraying in somewhat different ways the value of Christianity or of Christian blessings, and the need of sacrificing all else in order to secure them. But we must take them separately.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in the field, which a man having found, hath hid, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field."

An old note of Luther gives what is still the common view: "The hidden treasure is the gospel, which bestows upon us all the riches of free grace, without any merit of our own. Hence also the joy when it is found, and which consists in a good and happy conscience, that cannot be obtained by works. The gospel is likewise the pearl of great price."

"True Christianity," says Lange, "is ever again like an unexpected discovery, even in the ancient Church: the best possession we can find, a gift of free grace. Every one must find and discover Christianity for himself. In order to secure possession, even of what we have found without any merit of our own, we must be willing to sacrifice all; for salvation, though entirely of free grace, requires the fullest self-surrender."

He is naturally perplexed, however, about the purchase of the field, to get the treasure. His solution of the difficulty is so strange that it can only be of value as showing to what strange methods people have to resort to interpret consistently: "If 'the field' refers to external

worldly ecclesiasticism, the expression might mean that we were not to carry the treasure out of the visible Church, as if we were stealing it away, but that we should purchase the field in order to have full title to the possession hid in it. Accordingly it would apply against sectarianism." It is hardly worth while to go further.

In fact the interpretation is scarcely scriptural in any part. A man like Luther may speak of "buying" the riches of free grace, and so, no doubt, does Scripture; but it never speaks of selling all that one has to do it. God says rather, "Come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price." And the Lord does indeed say, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 33); but He has taught us elsewhere how to understand all such expressions, and that the would-be disciple does not by this "buy" the grace of God, but must receive that grace first to enable for such whole-hearted discipleship. Not "whosoever will lose his life," in order to find it, but he who does so "for my sake, shall find it" (chap. xvi. 25). For "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3). Love must be the motive power, or there is nothing that can count; but then we cannot love in order to gain for ourselves by it: there is but one way of acquiring it, and that is, as flame lights flame. So love alone kindles love: "we love Him, because He first loved us" (1 Jno iv. 19).

To sell all that one has to buy the free grace of God is not according to the gospel: that alone wrecks this interpretation; but, if we inquire further, What is the "field" that is bought to get the treasure? the Lord has Himself answered, not with Dr. Lange that it is "external

worldly ecclesiasticism" - a strange thing indeed to buy at such a cost! - but the "world." simply the world. That is the field in which the Word is sown, clearly; ecclesiasticism may spring up in it, but only after the sowing, and must always be a very different thing. But, if "the field is the world," are we to sell all we have to buy the world, to find the gospel in it? That is mere absurdity, of course.

This interpretation breaking down, then, it only remains to reverse the order of thought, and find in it the Saviour seeking the sinner, instead of the sinner seeking the Saviour. Divine love is first and worthiest: and then how the central figure here shines out! He went and sold all that He had - "emptied Himself," as the word in Philippians literally is (ii. 7, R. V.): "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). Texts are easy enough to find in this direction, and simple enough, too, in application. Here is a view of the Kingdom which lies outside of the range of the first four parables, as the continuation of the second parable does, but antecedent, not consequent to them. But it is the foundation upon which all rests, and which could not be omitted from faith's view of things. It is the fundamental view of the Kingdom itself, and now its being the field of the world that He buys, instead of being out of place, or difficult to understand, is most exactly accordant and most perfectly intelligible. "Even denying the Lord that bought them" is said of those who bring in "damnable heresies," and bring upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. ii. 1). They are not, therefore, of His redeemed (for redemption involves the forgiveness of sins, (Eph. i 7,) and is much more than purchase); nor of the

treasure, therefore, for which He buys the field; but they are purchased, as all the world is purchased, and He is Lord over them: the word used here being not the usual title of authority, but "despot" or "owner."

The world, then, belongs to Him, and the treasure He has found in it, and for which He buys it, must be His people, who are therefore His purchased ones, the people of His possession (Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. ii. 9, Gk). Yet there are still points of difficulty about this parable, if we apply it to Christians now, as is usual and natural with those who accept the interpretation which we must believe to be the true one. For, according to this view; neither the (implied) first hiding, nor the finding, nor the re-hiding of the treasure is accounted for, and even the buying of the field does not seem fully explained, though the meaning of it in itself is clear enough. But beyond all this the parable that follows it, so similar, and which yet cannot be so close a repetition of it as it appears, needs explanation. We must go on, therefore, to this and compare the two together, before we can get a satisfactory view of the whole matter.

Subsection 3 (45, 46): His own and for His glory.

3 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; and when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

3 Here "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; and when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Such interpretations as those of Lange need not long detain us, since they are but slight variations of what we

have, in the case of the former parable, already rejected. "The following points," says Lange, "are plain: he who obtains the Kingdom of heaven is no longer represented, merely as a fortunate finder, but at the same time as an untiring searcher. He is consciously seeking and striving after goodly pearls, of precious spiritual goods. At the same time what was formerly described as a treasure is now characterized as a pearl of great price: it is presented in a concentrated form as the one thing needful, bright and glorious in its appearance, i.e. the person of Christ and life in Him, are now all in all. Accordingly all former possessions are readily surrendered." Surely, one would not expect two parables to present things no wider apart than these; and the buying of Christ after this manner is an unscriptural thought. If we have had to refuse, moreover, the similar interpretation of the treasure, the parallel features in the two forbid our acceptance of dissimilar explanations for them. If Christ be the Finder of the one parable, He must be also the Seeker in the other.

But why, then, the two parables? If Christ be the central Figure in each case, there must be surely difference as to the object before Him; but the general thought of those who accept this view is that it is only one and the same object, though differently presented: "The parable of the hidden treasure," it is said, "did not sufficiently convey what the saints are to Christ. For the treasure might consist of a hundred thousand pieces of gold and silver. And how would this mark the blessedness and beauty of the Church? The merchantman finds 'one pearl of great price.' The Lord does not see merely the preciousness of the saints, but the unity and heavenly

beauty of the assembly. Every saint is precious to Christ; but He 'loved the Church and gave Himself for it.'"

This, however, does not adequately distinguish between the two parables, and indeed passes over entirely some of the most conspicuous differences between them. One cannot understand, if this be all, why the "pearl" should not by itself suffice for both.

That the pearl is the Church is indeed capable of fullest demonstration. If, then, the Church, the heavenly object be pictured in the second parable, does not this naturally raise the question whether the "treasure hid in the field" of the world is not intended to mark a contrast in this respect? If so, and in connection with the Kingdom of heaven, our thoughts are at once directed to Israel as brought before us in the treasure. Let us examine the possibility of such an application, and see whether it may not help us with regard to some of the otherwise unexplained differences between the two parables.

We have seen that the Kingdom was first announced to Israel. But they rejected the King, and on this account it passed from them. This is, no doubt, why the thought of Israel being before us here has not been more frankly entertained. The parables are "mysteries" of the Kingdom: but is not Israel's rejection from that which according to Old Testament prophecy belongs to her (and which shall be yet hers in a day to come) part of these very mysteries? The words of the apostle of the Gentiles seem to be clearly in the affirmative with regard to this. He says: "For I would not have you to be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened unto

Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. xi. 25). Thus he names the very thing which has caused the rejection of Israel for the present time as among the mysteries of this time. Is it not, then, antecedently probable enough that among these parables Israel's relation to the Kingdom should be found to have a place?

When we look at the parable again, we cannot but be confirmed in this. To Israel it was promised that if they obeyed Jehovah's voice, and kept His covenant, then they should be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people (Ex. xix. 5); and the psalmist would wake up their praise by the recollection that "Jehovah hath chosen Jacob for Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Ps. cxxxv. 4). Yet when the Lord came to His own this treasure as such was hid in the field of the world, - as it were, lost among the nations. He discovered it, but could not possess Himself of it. He must first purchase it as at the cross, where Caiaphas' unconscious prophecy declared He would "die for the nation" (John xi. 51). We see also why the field must be bought: it is in the world that Israel is yet to be displayed as Jehovah's treasure. But the purchase being made, there is nothing further done as to possession: here the parable stops; the end of this belongs not to the "mysteries;" and in the meanwhile another purpose comes into sight, and is the very thing of which the next parable certainly bears witness.

Thus the interpretation in this way fairly and fully unlocks the whole parable; and a scriptural interpretation which does this must needs be the true one; for if not, - if two interpretations, equally consistent, could be given of the same words, then the

words would not distinguish, would be defective in significance, as the Lord's words could not be. We would have no means of discerning between the true and the false: a conclusion which would be the destruction of the power and authority of Scripture: for that whose meaning cannot be known ceases by that fact to have authority.

In the pearl of great price it is no wonder that Christians should imagine the Lord to be intended. But it is the Church which is thus spoken of, and its preciousness is not only insisted on, but in measure explained also. Its value is estimated by One who knows fully what it is He values. It is now not merely a man who finds, but a merchant who is seeking goodly pearls. The thing he finds he is in pursuit of, and with the practised eye of the skilled observer. Notice, too, that it is intimated that there are other pearls. This is one, however, whose value is such that, having found it, he will sell all he has to buy it.

But what is a pearl? It is, first of all, the product of a living being: it is the only jewel, as far as I am aware, that is so; and this is the first thing, surely, that we are intended to realize in it. A pearl is the result of injury done to the animal that produces it. Its material is the nacre, as it is called, or "mother of pearl," which lines the interior of the shell, and which is renewed by it as often as injured or worn away. A particle of sand getting between the animal and the shell, the irritation causes a deposit of nacre upon it, which goes on being deposited, layer after layer, till a pearl is formed. But "completely spherical pearls" - and these are the valuable ones - "can only be formed loose in the muscle or soft parts of the animal. The Chinese obtain them artificially by

introducing into the living muscle foreign substances, such as pieces of mother of pearl fixed to wires, which thus become coated with a more brilliant material."

The pearl is thus, as we may say, an answer to an injury; and it is the offending object that becomes, through the work of the injured one, a precious and beauteous gem. It is clothed with a comeliness put upon it, as the objects of divine grace are, with the beauty and glory of Him we crucified! It is in truth nothing else that He sought in coming among us but object of divine grace.

Between a common pearl and one of great price, the difference is only of degree. The size and brilliancy depend, not upon the grain of sand which may be inwrapped, but upon the number of layers of nacre which inwrap it. The greatness of the grace bestowed is the distinguishing feature in what is here. Different bestowals of grace there are, and Scripture asserts this in the fullest way. The calling of Israel is not that of the Church, which is Christ's body; and though the departed saints of former dispensations will plainly be in heaven as we shall be, Scripture again makes a difference between "the Church of the first-born ones whose names are written in heaven," (Israel being the first-born upon earth) and the "spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23). God is going "in the ages to come to show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7).

Israel may be the treasure in the field, but the pearl speaks of personal adornment. Christ will have the Church in heaven with Himself, putting in the highest place what is to show most conspicuously the glory of His grace. It is one pearl: as the body of Christ is one.

There cannot be, it is evident, another body of Christ. The "fullness" or complement "of Him that filleth all in all" admits of no other.

The treasure and the pearl both speak of what is faith's view as to the Kingdom, not the external view presented in the first four parables. In the treasure we find Israel preserved for blessing, but reserved, they having in the meanwhile rejected the only possible way in which it could be theirs. In the pearl we have that in which, during this reservation, the purpose of God as to the Church comes out. It is the first expression of it, and as yet we do not realize just what it is: as the "assembly which is His body," or even as "the house of God," it is not yet mentioned, but as people for Himself, destined to display His glory - the glory of His grace: heavenly, therefore, not earthly, the earthly promises being Israel's still. The revelation will, of course, become fuller as we go on. The light increases to the perfect day.

4 (47-52): the mercy to the world

4 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a draw-net, cast into the sea, and gathering of every kind: which when it was filled, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless away. So shall it be at the completion of the age: the angels shall go forth, and separate the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[Jesus saith unto them],* Have ye "understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. And he said unto them, Therefore every scribe who is made a disciple of

the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder that bringeth out of his treasure things and old.

*Omitted by some.

4 Israel comes no more into this picture: all has been said about it that needs. The rest is told fully in the Old Testament prophets. What we have in the last parable here concerns neither Israel nor the Church, as is plain by the interpretation which our Lord Himself gives: it is the mercy to the Gentiles, - after the purpose of God as to the Church is complete. A new gathering now begins with the net cast into the sea, the figure of the Gentile nations. It gathers of every kind, and is then drawn to shore, and the sorting of the good from the bad is by angel-hands alone. This is at the completion of the age, and while coincident with the final harvesting of the wheat-field, is a different thing from it. To the present time it cannot apply: the putting the fish into denominational vessels, as some have applied it, is not a possible thought here: for we are not in the "completion of the age,"* which is, as our Lord explains, the time of harvest; and the sorting in this case is not by human but angelic hands.

*The full explanation of this term will be given in the notes on the twenty-fourth chapter, where the whole prophecy relates to it. The "end of the world" is a wrong translation.

The net applies to the going out of the "everlasting gospel," as in Rev. xiv. 6, 7, after the Church is removed to heaven, and where the terms of it show at once the difference between it and the gospel at the present time. We cannot say, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come," and on the other hand

the grace which it is ours to proclaim is infinitely fuller. The issue of what is here is, no doubt, seen in the separative judgment of the living, when the Lord appears, as shown forth in the "sheep" and "goats" of the twenty-fifth chapter. In the wheat-field of Christendom there will be at the end no separation of the wicked from among the righteous, but the righteous will be gathered first of all, and removed to heaven; after which nothing but the darnel will remain to be gathered and burnt. With the fish here and the sheep and goats in the later chapter, there is a true judicial separation of the "sheep from the goats," the wicked departing into everlasting fire, and the righteous left for blessing upon earth under the "Shepherd" rule of the Son of man now come.

This is the end of the parables of the Kingdom; and the Lord's words that follow to His disciples are self-evident in their application to them. New things have been declared and put in connection with the old; all the latter part being such an adjustment. The scribe of the old dispensation, becoming now the disciple of the new, is brought into the fullness of the whole revelation of God.