Papers on Salvation

William Kelly

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No More Conscience of Sins

Heb. 10:2

It is not enough to believe that the atoning work is done, great a truth as it is. The Christian knows that Christ entered once and for all into the holiest, having obtained everlasting redemption. There and now He appears before the face of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, else He must often have suffered, which could not be. But now once in the consummation of the ages He hath been manifested for putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Such is the Christian's confession not of His person only but of His work. But the Holy Spirit follows it all up by declaring its revealed effect, in contrast with those under the shadows of law and its sacrifices which they offer continuously year by year, unable as they are to perfect those that approach. "Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers having been once purged would have had no more conscience of sins." This is the result for every Christian. So perfect is the cleansing of the worshippers one and all, that they have "no more conscience of sins."

"Believest thou this," my reader? It is revealed as the consequence of Christ's work, not for some only but for all that believe. Do you believe it for your own soul? It is of the utmost moment that you should receive it as God's mind about yourself; as the settled and continuous state Christ's work has effected for you and every other Christian, that you may enjoy it by faith, honour Christ in it, bless God through it, worship and serve in the

consciousness the indwelling Spirit gives of so great a privilege.

1. Time was in your unconverted days when you made light of sins, and tried to quiet yourself that as we were all sinners, it was no wonder if you sinned like others; but then God was very merciful to those so born and brought up with bad examples on every side. Conscience awoke qualms now and then, especially when you read or heard scripture warning of God's hatred of evil and of His judgment righteous and inevitable. But you soon went to sleep again after a vain effort to do well. It never occurred to you that you were by nature a child of wrath, and Satan's slave by doing your own will. You went to church or chapel, you read the Bible or good books occasionally, being in fact not so bad as many you could name but that charity forbade it. During this while you practically had no conscience of sins, save a painful twitch now and then which quickly passed and left you no better but worse.

2. A moment came when God by His word and Spirit laid on your conscience your evil, dangerous and lost state. No longer did you parry the dread conviction that you were wicked and ungodly, an enemy of God, and powerless for good. But He probed the wounds, and made their depth felt, and gave you to bow down in the confession of your guilt, and of your corrupt and wilful nature. Palliatives you refused, and you loathed yourself, and cried to Him whose goodness was leading you to repentance; and like Peter at the knees of the Lord Jesus, you said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord; yet still like him, there you knelt, and owned Him as your hope. You had now the conscience of your sins, and the dread of God; but to go away from Jesus, No,

No. To whom should you go? He had words of life eternal; He was the propitiation for sins; and you felt the need of both.

3. How precious then to hear from the Lord Jesus, the judge of quick and dead, that He came, the Sent of God, to give all of which the Holy Spirit made you feel the want! to give it in the fulness of love and grace and truth according to the worth of Christ and His work in His sight. Who but He could even have conceived of such a standing as “no more conscience of sins” for such as had been brought to the feet of Jesus, owning themselves as nothing but guilty and lost? Yet there and then never had they so deep a sense of their inexcusable evil; never was the burden of their sins felt to be so intolerable. The gospel of God was His answer in the cleansing power of Christ’s blood. It cleanses from all guilt, from every sin, him that believes. Rest then on Him at God’s word for your iniquities; and they are remembered no more.

We may and ought to remember our sins as the witness of our ruin, of God’s righteousness, of Christ’s grace, and of the efficacy of His work. Henceforth this is our new place as Christians. Having been once purged we have no more conscience of sins. When unconverted we were dark and dead as to any right sense of our state or of God’s abhorrence of them and necessary war against them. But now that we believe, God sees not our shameful sins but the blood of Christ, which has for ever and completely effaced them. Thus the worshippers, having been once purged, have no more conscience of sins.

Dear reader, this is a fundamental truth of the gospel; and God looks for your appropriating it to the utmost, as

due to His own Son's suffering once for your sins. It is here in its unmeasured fulness of blessing without a word to qualify it or any statement of the resource of grace, if a believer should sin. This we have in 1 John 2:1, 2, but not in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is occupied with our drawing near to God, not with the provision for restoring our communion when interrupted by sin. The serious thing for believers now is the same defect as characterised the Hebrew saints to whom the great Epistle was written. Therefore are they so fully instructed in that perfected state of the conscience to which Christ's work entitles them, but which few, then as now, enter into as becomes them. This is pursued in Heb. 10:9, 10, and especially in 12-14. "But he [in contrast with the Jewish priest], having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down continuously at God's right hand, waiting from henceforth till his enemies be set as footstool of his feet. For by one offering he hath perfected continuously the sanctified." It is a description of the standing His work gains for every true Christian, not a special attainment of some, but the new and common privilege for all by faith.

What a living illustration Peter affords in Acts 3:13 of a worshipper once purged, having a clear conscience! How else could he charge the men of Israel with denying Jesus? Had he not denied Him notoriously, recently, and repeatedly with oaths? Now so completely was he cleansed by the Saviour's blood, that he boldly taxed them with that sin! Had it not been effaced, he must have been ashamed to whisper the words. This clearance you by faith are entitled to know and say as to all your sins. You owe it to the Saviour and may you own it for His glory. W.K.

Propitiation

It may help souls in danger of being perplexed by words as unintelligent as they are confidently uttered, if it be clearly understood that the same Hebrew expression for “atonement” is used throughout Lev. 16, and that this finds its counterpart in the Greek verb which the Revisers correctly render “make propitiation” in Heb. 2:17, and its derivative substantive “propitiation” in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.

It is a characteristic of the N.T, that there alone do we find “ reconciliation “ in the sense of divine grace. The Septuagint never uses καταλλάσσειν or καταλλαγὴ with any such force. Indeed the verb only occurs in Jer. 48:39, the substantive in Isa. 9:5, the one meaning “changed” and the other exchange or “restitution”; so remote is the application from its N.T. usage. We can easily understand that, as with other words, so Christ’s presence and-work of grace gave k. an entirely new and blessed character. God was in Christ reconciling, not merely the Jews, but the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them — the very thing the law must do. But the world, though made by Him, knew Him not: its wisdom was its darkness. The Jews more guiltily received Him not. In result both crucified Him. On that cross Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us. This is atonement; for no ignorance can be more pitiable than only looking for the bare word. God has graciously revealed the thing in all variety of forms, for which faith praises Him. On the cross the Saviour was charged with sin and our sins, and bore the judgment of all unsparingly, that we might become God’s righteousness

in Him. Thus the reconciliation which unbelief and hatred refused is now made good; and God has not only reconciled to Himself us who believe, but given us the ministry of reconciliation. Grace reigns through righteousness here also. What do we not owe Him?

Now the fact already stated as to Lev. 16 proves the utter fallacy and sheer heterodoxy of denying that propitiation applies to the blood of the cross, and of limiting it to putting within the sanctuary. For in that chapter, which is the main ground of course of the N.T. references, call it atonement or propitiation, one and the same term is used of all the work of that great day. So we find it employed in general, ver. 6, as none can deny, without the least restriction to the sanctuary. It is striking that it is next expressly said of the scape-goat, Azazel (ver. 10), where such a limitation is manifestly absurd. Again in ver. II it occurs with presenting the bullock for sacrifice. Afterward it is said, as all agree, of the sanctuary in vers. 16, 17, whatever be judged of ver. 18. What is more, the same term is applied as elsewhere to the burnt offering for the high-priest and for the people. In short the Holy Spirit applies the word for making atonement or propitiation to all the sacrifices of that day, and to each part without no less than within (vers. 30-33), so as completely, and without the least arguing, to demolish the human theory that restricts propitiation to the sanctuary alone, and thus excludes the work on the cross from that expression.

The N.T. speaks with no less largeness; and “to propitiate” or “propitiation” there means that God-glorifying work as a whole, not a part only. To limit it to an act in the heavenly sanctuary, to deny propitiation to Christ’s work on the cross, is therefore flying in the face

of the truth of scripture without the smallest warrant, and to the deep-dishonour of that which gave its righteous efficacy to the blood before God, or to the dismissal of all sins into the land of forgetfulness.

If any one were to say that the Lord on the cross failed to make good the type of the blood put within the holiest, etc., such teaching on Lev. 16 ought surely to be refused as unsound. To set forth the efficacy of Christ's blood in figure, Aaron had to bring in some of the atoning blood, as well as when he came out to lay the sins on the scape-goat for their total removal out of sight. But the substance of the atonement or propitiation was the sacrifice offered to God. The slaying of the victim, the carrying in of the blood, the dismissal of the confessed sins (to say nothing of the incense at an early point and of the burnt offerings at the close), were each and all aspects of the same one work. What is so painful and new to most of us (certainly to myself in general fairly informed) is the singling out the intermediate portion of this instructive ritual as alone propitiation or atonement, in the face of the scripture which itself so speaks of all the parts composing it. To me this is an irreverent anatomy of atonement, as dangerous to faith in His work as the severing of His person in which other speculators have unholily indulged. All sound in the truth hold that the propitiation or atoning work of Christ is a whole, and "finished" here below as He Himself said. And a most serious slight of His infinite sacrifice I cannot but regard it to deny that to be propitiation wherein sin was judged and God for ever glorified as to it.

But the new doctrine goes farther, and by a mischievous putting together of Heb. 2:17, Heb. 8:4, and Heb. 9:12,

assumes that Christ went on high after death and before resurrection (of course therefore in the disembodied state) to effect propitiation; and that this alone did it! NOT His sacrifice on the cross instantly owned before God, as the rent veil testified on earth! Propitiation was not even begun then, whatever the Lord cried! The new doctrine boldly tells us that He in the separate state and in heaven alone made propitiation for our sins. Is this the truth of God? or a cheat of the enemy? He that rests in the simplicity of faith on the atoning sacrifice of Christ as prefigured in Lev. 16 rejects the hypothesis of these separate stages of life and death, of earth and heaven. The true force of the types he sees in their combined value, as the inspired text carefully impresses on every soul subject to the word. The interpreting of the blood taken within, as alone propitiation, and never verified till after Christ died and was a separate spirit on high, not only shocks the spiritual sense but dislocates scripture, disparages the cross, and invents a strange unheard-of propitiation in lieu of that which God's elect have hitherto believed in. Familiar as perhaps one may say I am with what has been written on propitiation since the church began, it has not been my lot to hear a whisper of the kind till some four or five years ago, if memory fail not.

But what say the N.T. scriptures whence we are entitled to look for the fullest final light from God? Does Heb. 2:17 give a hint of a work done after death to propitiate? We hear very simply of Christ "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation (or atonement) for the sins of the people": a clear reference to Lev 16 and as clearly fulfilled in that complete work in which He stood representatively on

earth for the exceptional work of atonement, the basis of all that blots out sin, and glorifies God, before interceding for the saints in their temptations and sufferings. But not the most distant hint of a disembodied priesthood before He was made perfect, saluted of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and for ever set down on the right hand of God.

Does 1 John 2:2 or 1 John 4:10 give cause for the scheme? The first text simply declares Christ the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the whole world. Thus the essential requirement, the foundation of all the rest based on it, is the death and blood-shedding of the victim; for apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. Now the truth includes what is meant by putting the blood before God, but it insists on the sacrifice as the absolutely necessary and most integral part of propitiation. This spurious novelty on the contrary as absolutely excludes it from being itself propitiation, which is conceived to be a special action by Christ's presence in heaven for a little while after His death. Just think of the boldness of trusting a bit of reasoning against the plain and large bearing of God's word in order to pick out, not Jehovah's lot nor the people's, nor yet the bullock, but a manifest result however interesting, instructive and momentous, and contending that this alone is propitiation! Certainly 1 John 2 is ominously silent on any such point.1 Still less does 1 John 4:10 help the desired inference. It appears distinctly and decisively adverse. The love of God was manifested in our case, that God hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Such was the first want of man morally dead, even

life Godward; and this life is in His Son. But however precious and eternal, it is not all we want, for we were guilty and lost sinners. Therefore another proof and gift of His grace: — “Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins.” He sent Christ to be such. The heterodoxy to gain the least show requires His going to heaven after death, for the purpose. As far as it speaks, the intimation here is altogether in favour of the large, full, and sound view of propitiation, and against the notion of a retreat to heaven to effect it.

And scripture cannot be broken. Whatever added light may be from other texts (and I am dead against limiting our view to where the mere word literally occurs), no other can undo the certain and simple intimation to our faith that God sent His Son to be propitiation, instead of the dream that He went back to heaven after He died and before He rose for any such purpose. We know that He was that very day of His death in Paradise and the converted robber too; but what scriptural link has this with making propitiation? If ever a time and place could be supposed to forbid such an association, Lev. 16:17 excludes it. The triumph of grace is seen in such companionship in Paradise. Whatever the importance of our Lord’s passing through the separate state, nowhere does scripture connect it with effecting propitiation. And as for Heb. 9:12, what can be stranger than to lower that grand entry once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption, to the imagined brief errand to make propitiation? To say that it is not ascension is the merest assumption.

I am not ignorant that some complain because I do not set out other views of the author, such as his faith in the

Lord's sacrifice, bearing the curse and judgment, and dying for us. This seems to me wholly unreasonable. I did allow of much truth, and truth altogether inconsistent with his error. The statement that "expiation was made on earth, for Christ suffered on earth, died on earth" (Help, 63, 4), overthrows his system completely. For every scholar knows that expiation means at bottom the same thing as propitiation, and that any real difference is imaginary. In Greek and Hebrew it is the same word.

Nor ought it to be forgotten, by those who feel a difficulty of seeing how the dismissed live goat fills so weighty a place in the rites of atonement that, Aaron was expressly to take the "two he-goats for a sin-offering," and to set both before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting (Lev. 16:5, 7). Indeed it is added, as if to forestall any objection of this kind, that "the goat upon which the lot fell for Azazel shall be set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement over (or, with) him, to send him away as (or, for) Azazel into the wilderness"(10). The removal of our sins, though thus typified, as truly hung on our Lord's death on the cross as the witness to the efficacy of His blood in the sprinkling of the sanctuary. To deduce separate acts of Christ, at distinct times and different places, and even in another condition of His person, is foreign to christian truth.

What I affirm (in the face of all special pleading to minimise a mere fable, which lowers the cross by denying its propitiatory value, and draws the mind away to itself from the solid truth of God's word) is that all which is peculiar to Mr. C. E. S. on the most solemn of subjects is unquestionably false. Therefore I envy not

the human feeling that essays to put forward other things that are true, in order to weaken the just indignation which rejects and resents such an error. An outcry from any beguiled by the heterodoxy is natural. What can one think of an apology for it from any that reject it? With such human liberalism one cannot sympathise. God is light and God is love. To predicate of Christ as propitiation a false scheme which diverts from the revealed truth is to my conviction beyond measure grave, though I do not expect to convince all that may read this protest. To palliate it by a show of argument in order to justify fellowship with those in such error one can leave the Lord to judge.

When we are subject to the scriptural testimony to Christ and His work, there is no difficulty. If we take it up in a human way, there is nothing to save us from error one way or another. But it does seem marvellous that one imbued with N.T. truth should fail to see that what gives character to all the accessories of Lev. 16 is the offering to God, the great sin-offering of Aaron, not more the centre of the book than of the entire Jewish system. No doubt, therein were many measures and many manners; but it formed, specially to the christian eye, a unity without parallel among these types. We may study with profit the distinction of the goats from each other, and of the bullock from both (5- 11); so also the censer with its burning coals causing the cloud of incense to cover the mercy-seat, the witness of the personal acceptance of Christ when ever so tried by divine judgment (12, 13); again, the sprinkling of the blood, not only of the bullock but of the goat upon the mercy-seat and before it, and the cleansing and hallowing of the holy places and altar (16-19). We may

weigh the dismissal of all the confessed iniquities on Azazel to a land of separation (20-22). We may consider the resumption of the ordinary garb of the high-priest instead of what marked the exceptional action in the previous verses, and the offering of the burnt-offerings as well as the fat of the sin-offering (23- 25). But not even a pious Jew would have singled out one of these many parts as exclusively atonement or propitiation, whilst he would simply, unequivocally, have viewed the sacrifice as not only the grand basis but that which in the highest way gave an atoning character to all that followed.

That Aaron had to enter the sanctuary in order to put some of the atoning blood there according to the word of Jehovah is true. That Christ had to enter heaven before He rose to do something analogous is to beg the question altogether; just as it is to overlook the type of Aaron's coming out again for the transaction of the scape-goat. The force of this last is evaded by making it solely prophetic of future dealings with Israel at Christ's appearing. For it figures what Christ did atoningly, as the ground of that mercy to guilty but repentant Israel by-and-by. It is the removal, rather than the forgiveness, of the iniquities confessed. The two goats are regarded together as a sin-offering. It is valid for every true penitent.

And when the christian looks at Christ on the cross, given in infinite love, yet withal abandoned of God, His God, drinking the cup His Father gave Him, suffering infinitely for sins, sin itself judged on His person, — there it is that both conscience and heart rest by faith according to the fullest revelation of the word. He believes without hesitation that all was made good there

and then. He does not limit the work any more than the person of our adorable Saviour: it immediately penetrated heaven, and is the ground of a reconciled universe for eternity. He gladly interprets the shadow of the incense, and of the blood put in the holiest as the highest witness to Christ vindicating God for His own presence, but this solely because the essence of the propitiation was in the sacrifice. He does not admit for a moment another act in the Antitype for the necessarily separate and the subsequent stages of Aaron; and he points not only to the scape-goat as the manifest disproof of it, but to the burning of the fat of the sin-offering as well as the burnt-offerings as assuredly fulfilled in the one great sacrifice of Christ. All were parts of the atonement, as the chapter clearly shows, save to a reasoner bent on his own will and indifferent to the N.T. key which God graciously affords us in our weakness and ignorance.

It is this holy and beautiful and solemn unity which is infringed by the delusion lately broached of the blood in the sanctuary being alone propitiation; and this in the face of the express statement of the chapter itself which applies the same word, call it atonement or propitiation, to the entire work of the high-priest on that day. So arbitrary a restriction has the effect of denying the sacrifice itself, the ground of what follows, to be propitiation. And this not only does the greatest wrong to Christ’s work on the cross but opens the door for the will-o’-the-wisp of a distinct action of Christ in heaven after death and before resurrection which alone claims to be propitiation.

It is by more than one said that in pointing out the unscriptural temerity of this false teaching I am

attempting to fasten heterodoxy on its author. But this his own words fasten really on himself. Nor am I in truth unfair or one-sided, as they are who set the true things the author says to screen the error from the abhorrence of all who glory in the cross of Christ. Nothing is easier than for a partisan, if he will, to give good excuses for a bad thing. It is the invariable way of human alliance faithless to Christ and the truth. I have briefly enough exposed a novel intrusion into a foundation of the faith, which is refuted by the scriptures alleged and would supplant the revealed propitiation by a fable. Nor has the author or any friend title to complain of its summary and decided exposure, after venturing in his “Recent Utterances” to attack the faith of all save his own small following, as if others denied propitiation or made it impossible.2 For in this respect Mr. P. differs not substantially from all saints known to me. The aim of the enemy is plain. If the only propitiation be something that followed Christ’s going to heaven after death, the sacrifice is robbed of that value which scripture gives it in the faith of all outside the Reading fraternity, and must sink into a subordinate place. Some who accept the dream may continue in a measure old habits of speech notwithstanding; better still some having real faith underneath their new creed may retain honour for the cross of Christ. But inevitably where souls are formed only on this notion, they must eventually sink to the level of the heterodoxy that Christ’s sacrifice is not the essence of the propitiation, which last is a mysterious and subsequent sprinkling of His blood by Himself in heaven after His death and before His resurrection. To state the view is its truest and strongest condemnation to all single-eyed believers. And any effort to fritter away its seriousness by putting forward other

things the author states is, in my judgment, not of God. Error is apt to be inconsistent.

It is a fact that the N.T. does not expressly say that God was propitiated, but speaks of Christ expiating our sins, of His being a propitiation for them and sent for this purpose by God. Admiring the wisdom that avoids language which heathen, ignorant of divine love and holiness, might from their old habits seriously misunderstand, I believe it quite another thing to deny that God needed propitiation. For herein the offended majesty and violated will and outraged nature of God were vindicated. It is therefore profoundly erroneous to confound it with reconciling love. The gift of the Son in God's love in no way negatives the necessity of Christ's blood as a propitiation: it is unbelief to array them in opposition. Therefore one hails these words of C. E. S. in Dec., 1888 (only just seen), "God requires propitiation to be made, because men have sinned, that He may in righteousness be propitious to them," even though the N. T. may not so express itself. But they seem quite inconsistent with, and surely corrective of, the expressions reprobated in "Help and Instruction," which shocked souls by setting the letter against the spirit of all scripture. For the essence of propitiation is Godward, on man's behalf indeed, but in the unsparing judgment of his evil, the ground of divine righteousness as we see so plainly declared in Rom. 3:25 and elsewhere. Nowhere was it said, thought or implied, that the author believed not in Christ's sufferings on the cross. But this doctrine was judged, whatever else was right, to be ruinously wrong: first, in eliminating propitiation from the sin-offerings of atonement to confine it to the blood carried and sprinkled within the sanctuary; secondly and

worse, in insisting that Christ only made this type good, and Heb. 2:17 true, by going into heaven after death and before resurrection, to make propitiation for our sins.

To me it seems no honour to brethren beloved but a real indignity to the Lord, that every question of moment seems of late to drive so many to a departed and honoured brother, as to their living oracle. Have we no Bible? or can christian men not interpret it in the Spirit? are they cast on the safeguard of that tradition? No man had a greater horror of such unbelief in God's word, such idolatry of man. And perhaps I may be allowed to express my personal grief and shame, the more for having given not a few laborious years to collecting and editing what is being so painfully abused. But it seems unobjectionable and called for to say, now that his name is so often invoked for what he detested, that J. N. D. has repeatedly left on record under his own hand (what his life-long ministry proved to all that knew it) his distinct faith that Christ's making propitiation for our sins was here below on the cross (Heb. 2:17), and by no means after death and in heaven as an action of His priesthood there. Any one who has access to his Collected Writings can verify this without doubt by examining Doctrinal iii. 484, 485, iv. 325. From this conviction I never knew a single godly man in or out of fellowship, still less a teacher, dissent; and if it be true that the Reading error appeared ten or twelve years ago, I can only presume that no man of discernment had read the articles, almost all such at that time being absorbed in the then impending or occurrent sorrow.

W. K.

1 I leave it to the reader to find out what there is in Rom. 3:25 and Heb. 9:5 to support the new theory.

2 Neither the author nor his apologists have a just plea against hard measure from others in presence of such words as these, still uncancelled — the first hint of the dogma that came before me (in 1886 I believe). — “Now as propitiation by blood could only be made in the holiest and the Lord never entered that on earth, for He was not a priest on earth, where and when has propitiation been made by Him? The answer is simple — in heaven and after death. Mr. Pinkerton affirms all was done in this world, not in heaven [and in this I should have thought all saints concurred unhesitatingly]. If so, propitiation by blood the Lord has not made, nor can He make it. The doctrine we are asked to accept [and I never to my knowledge heard other from an orthodox believer of any age, land, or confession] sweeps away all hope of salvation, for atonement is not complete without propitiation, and thus Mr. Pinkerton really denies that the Lord could and did effect [a monstrous conclusion and simply from his own delusion]. His doctrine is in flat opposition to the word of God” (Recent Utterances by C.E.S., p. 42). Either people do not believe such language reprehensible, and then what can one think? or, if they do, they are bound to have the courage of their convictions, and to act as they speak. If the saints at large, who differ as to this from Mr. S. wholly, and not from Mr. P., “sweep away all hope of salvation,” and deny true propitiation, are they not in deadly error, or are they condoned by the author as so ignorant of the truth that their error is a small matter and quite unworthy of raising a question of fellowship or discipline?

Christ - the End of the Law

(B.T. Vol. 8, p. 308.)

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The two righteousnesses are then contrasted. Moses describes the one, saying, “The man that doeth these things shall live by them.” The law was man’s righteousness; it was God’s perfect rule for a creature. It required man to give a righteousness to God; if he did, be lived by it.

The righteousness of faith, on the other hand, brings a righteousness to man. A man has not to ascend up to heaven, to bring Christ down from above; He has come down even to death. A man has not to go down into the deep, to bring Christ up from the dead; He has risen: God has raised Him. A dead and risen Christ is set forth as the display of God’s righteousness, in direct contrast to human righteousness, which would be keeping the law. We have seen what the righteousness of faith does not say; now let us see what it does say: “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” With the heart man believes unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, as scripture says.

Man confounds human and divine righteousness together; God distinctly divides them. We have Seen man’s righteousness is, “The man that doeth these things shall live by them.” Christ, as man, fulfilled it; but that is not the righteousness of God. The righteousness

of God, or the justice of God (for it is the same word), is His own character as such, displayed in His own acts, viz., the death and resurrection of Christ (see also Psalm 71:19, 20), and handed over in Christ to the sinner who lays hold of it by faith, and is justified by it. Truly, O God, thy righteousness is very high; as high as heaven: no one can reach it! But God Himself has come down to settle His own claim: Christ has been delivered for our offences, and God has Himself judged sin itself, in the person of His Son, on the cross. He has shown Him great and sore troubles on account of man's sin. I look at sin; I look at the dread darkness; I bear the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I see the blood gush forth; I ask, Why is this? The only answer is, sin is the cause. God there judged sin in the flesh on the sin. less One. I say, That is righteousness! It is the Judge passing judgment. God's righteousness against sin is displayed. I look again: I hear a great earthquake; the stone is rolled away from the sepulchre; the guards become as dead men: I see a holy, spotless One — holy and spotless as ever He was — rising from the dead. I ask, Why is this? I hear the answer, Righteousness requires that that man who has glorified God in every way, whether in life or death, should be given the first place in the glory. Who is that man? It is Christ, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven. He of God is made unto us righteousness. God and man are linked together in one person, even in the person of the Christ. They were ever together from the incarnation, but in one man. There is no such place for us except in resurrection. (John 12:23.) On the cross I see the sinner's substitute- marvel of marvels — forsaken of God. The veil is rent, and access is given to every sinner who believes in Jesus, into the very holiest. The

believer’s position is now Christ before God. Thus God is for us, as revealed in His own acts in Christ. Faith appropriates it all, and gets Christ’s position before God. Is Christ dead? the believer is dead. Is Christ risen? the believer is risen. Is Christ the righteousness of God? the believer is made the righteousness of God in Him. With his heart he believes unto righteousness; with his mouth confession is made unto salvation. He believes, he is not ashamed; he calls on the name of the Lord, he is saved.

Salvation by Grace

An address on Luke 23:39-43

The occasion was unique. It was just the moment for God to make manifest His grace. Man’s iniquity was complete. And when all classes, the high and the low, were alike implicated in pouring scorn upon God and His Son, it was of no use to be drawing distinctions. To the Son of God it was due that His Father should show the efficacy of His blood for any - the immediate and abiding value of His blood.

The moment gave a striking opportunity; for there hung a man openly a sinner, a criminal, a malefactor, of the darkest dye. Indeed there were two; and we have no ground whatever for supposing that he who repented and believed was less a criminal than the man who died in impenitent rebellion against God. Still less is there any ground to suppose that the man who then confessed the Saviour had been under previous process, or that any deep work had been going on in his soul before he hung upon the cross. Scripture, as far as its speaks, is distinctly against such a thought. Matthew and Mark speak of the robbers railing upon Him, not of one only but of both. We know that men try to get rid of this, and would make out the one to be something not so bad as his fellow. A good deal has actually been made of the fact that they were not thieves, but robbers! Is it not extraordinary that men should think there was any difference to signify? A thief may be a sneaking robber, and a robber a bold thief; but one would think that when sin is weighed in the presence of God, it is not very much worth talking of the difference between them. For

one thing is very clear — that they were both suffering as robbers. That is, they were not merely dishonest men, purloining what was not their own, but they accompanied it as usual with boldness rather than treachery, with violence or even murder. Barabbas certainly did so; and these at any rate were both of them robbers.

The difference between them does not lie there at all; and they would have been no better or worse if they had been thieves and not robbers. We must not lose ourselves by letting slip the grand truth of the grace of God through Christ toward the lost. But there was an expression produced not merely in the feelings, but in the conscience, of one of these robbers; and we can well understand that the wonderful spectacle of the Holy Sufferer, which had impressed Pilate when He was not in the depth of His sufferings but only in the outer circle of them, should have deeply impressed the dying man. Even such a hardened soul as Pilate, accustomed to condemn so many to death, and historically known to have been a man of desperate character, and most unscrupulous — even he had his feelings, and shrank (I do not say with really righteous indignation) from the suggestion of the priests. He morally condemned them, and evidently felt how false they were, and hypocritical, and bloodthirsty. He wanted to let Jesus off, not wishing to add one more crime to the long list of his life's villainies.

But there was more than this, and quite different from it, dawning on one of the robbers; and what brought it out was the continued railing of his fellow. "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." The conviction evidently pierced the soul of the penitent robber that here was a

Man who differed not so much externally as morally and essentially.

No circumstances made such a difference. Education, religion — as people call it, or whatever they like — none of these things made the difference. The robber had heard Him, for faith cometh by hearing, not by seeing. It was not the sight of Jesus, for thousands saw the same thing that he saw; but he heard the Holy Victim for sin on the cross say, “Father, forgive them.” One may not say that these were the words to sink so deep into his soul; but how calculated they were to go right through the conscience of the man, and to act on his heart!

So it is written “There is forgiveness... that Thou mayest be feared.” Yes, “forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared!” (Ps. 130:4) not fear of being lost merely, that he knew. No Jew could be without more or less knowing the danger of ruin if a man die in his sins. But “there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” And here was that most solemn moment, when never were so many, not merely of the rabble but of the greatest in the land, and those that occupied officially the highest religious places, animated with one implacable desire for the destruction of this most holy Man! and this most holy Man uttered not one word of judgment, but at that awful crisis pleaded that His Father would forgive them! A new light dawned upon the dying robber. Samuel did not so pray, nor David, nor Solomon. Who ever before? You must wait for Christ that you may have such a prayer: then only is everything in perfection.

It was the proof of this perfection of the Lord Jesus, along with His wonderful words, His looking for and counting upon mercy for others, which touched the heart of the robber. Who could He be? There was but One Person conceivable. The woman of Samaria, although she was utterly dark and ignorant, knew quite well that “when the Messiah cometh, He will tell us all things.” Every Jew of course knew that. Now this poor crucified robber sits in judgment on himself, and wholly refuses the railing in which he had up to that moment himself participated.

“Dost not thou fear God?” said he. He feared God then. He is astonished at the other robber. He cannot tell why the words that had won his own soul to God had not won his fellow. “Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation?” They were all alike crucified but oh, how different each! The Messiah crucified, hardened, unbelieving, robbers crucified. But in one, as he hung upon the cross, there was such a new-born sense of grace that it produced “fear of God,” horror of sin, faithful dealing with it, reproving his fellow with whom he had joined, no more dreading a retort, nor afraid of being asked — “Who are you? what do you pretend to? Why, you have been railing too!” What then produced such an entire change of feeling in the man? Faith. Yes, it always produces repentance when it is itself genuine. Faith makes a man willing to see sin as he never saw it before, and makes him see it because God is revealed to him. We never can see sin, except through the cross of Christ, in the light of God. It was Christ crucified Who brought the light of God into the man’s conscience. How exceeding sinful must his sins be to bring down the Son of God to die for them!

The very effort to please God makes a conscientious renewed man feel his inability; and sin becomes increasingly sinful. There is nothing that brings out the hideousness of sin so deeply, and with such abhorrence, without destroying confidence before God, as the grace of Christ. Does law this in measure? Christ does it far better than law, as was the case with this poor robber. It was not law but Christ that made him thus judge himself, and form a sound estimate of the sin of his fellow. “Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly.” His conscience was purged. When a man has a purged conscience, he can afford to confess his sins. He can tell all out exactly now, even to men. He had been with God in the secret of his heart. It might be only just before, but he had been with God. No man is ever true before men that is not true before God; and truth before God must come previously to truth before men. It was the Lord Jesus that stripped him of all the disguises of his soul. It was His grace to the guilty that gave him confidence to make a clean breast to God, no longer hiding his sins, but assured that God would receive Him by the blood of Jesus.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven: whose sin is covered.” But he is not a blessed man who covers his own transgressions; and such is the way of the unbelieving man. The believer has God to cover him, and God covers his sins with the blood of His own Son. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from every sin.” Such was the real secret of this converted robber; and now he takes all the shame to himself. He owns his guilt, and says to his fellow, “And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man

hath done nothing amiss." Who told him so? He had never heard it from the lips of man. On the contrary, men had been condemning Christ; not least those who paid mock honour. Pilate would have let Him off. Herod found nothing to call for death. It was the chief priests — the High Priest of all — the religious heads of God's ancient people, who would crucify the Lord Jesus; and the voices of the crowd gave their loud approval. Had public opinion been his guide, had he listened to the great men of the nation, he would have come to a different conclusion. Just apply it to yourself. Are you not influenced by today's opinion? Are you not prejudiced by what great men think? Evidently, you must see, man does not change. The world is just the same world substantially as it was then. There may be superficial changes; but the world, as such, is the same.

It was in Jerusalem, in the city of solemnities, in the midst of the ancient people of God, of those who had the law and the prophets, where these events occurred. There was not then for Jews a single idol in Jerusalem. I dare say the Roman soldiers, as their manner was, worshipped their standards; they may have had some of their little gods in the castle or elsewhere. Ah! possibly you may have got some little idols in Montrose. At any rate they are to be found in most places throughout this country. What is worshipping a wafer? That is a little enough God, to be sure. Think of angels, saints, the Virgin, the crucifix, or any relic of that kind! It is of no use saying that people do not worship them. There is a great deal more worshipping of Mary than of the true God in the Roman Catholic body; and it is in vain to tell me that they are not professing Christians. They are;

and this makes it truly awful; real idolatry among professing Christians!

I do not wish to allow an unkind thought about them, and I have not one. There is no Roman Catholic in the world I would not serve as far as I could for God's glory, without the cheat of torturing or burning heretics, and calling it an act of faith and God's service. One could not be expected to join them in what he believes to be wrong: for why should one do wrong for any person under the sun? But to do good to them — or even for that matter to a Turk or a Jew — surely such is the business of a Christian man in this world; to magnify the Lord Jesus in well-doing to others, and in bringing the truth to bear upon them. But take care to do so in a loving way, and not so as to hinder the very truth you desire to commend to their consciences. Such was the way the Lord Jesus took with this poor man. For is it not absolutely certain that there is not a single sheep ever brought to God that the Lord Jesus does not personally pursue? does He not go after till He finds it? does He not lay it on His shoulders, and bring it home rejoicing?

Would you like to have the Lord Jesus laying you upon His shoulders, and bringing you home with joy? Why not now — this night? Why not have the blessed Saviour your Saviour, and know it? You may tell me Oh, but the man was in such danger! It was no wonder he turned to God. May I say that if you were crucified, you would not think it a nice time for conversion? You do not know what it is to be in the agonies of the cross. It was perhaps the most cruel and shameful form of torture, one reserved for slaves only. But then it was, while the man was suffering such agonies, that the Lord Jesus won his soul to God.

But this also let me point out to you; people of every sort think this quite an exceptional case. It is altogether a mistake. Granted that there is a grandeur and simplicity about it that exactly suits the cross of the Lord Jesus; but I maintain that the way whereby the man was brought to God is that in which you must be brought to Him: not of course by the outward agony, but by the word of the Lord; by the Holy Ghost applying the word to your conscience, and by your submission to it as “the grace of God that bringeth salvation.” It is no use to say it has not appeared to you. The grace that bringeth salvation hath appeared to “all men.” It is not meant that all men have seen it. A man may plunge his head into a dark cave and cannot see the sun shine; but the sun shines over the rest of the world for all that. There are men that do not see the sun. It may be that they are blind, and there is such a thing as moral blindness; and above all there may be a wilful turning away from God. But still the true light already shines.

The Lord Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man (or, everything). This does not mean that every one will be saved. But every man ought to have that grace presented to his soul. It is true that the church of God has not been faithful; that the servants of the Lord have not done their duty. Even very real Christians are too often content with doing a little now and again, instead of all living only and always for Christ.

The Lord’s charge was that the gospel should be preached to the whole creation. Thus nobody should be shut out from the bright light of the gospel — no class so bad that they are excepted. And just as there were these two men on either side of the Lord Jesus, so there are

always two classes in the world now — those who believe, and those who refuse. On which side are you? Have you been won to God through hearing the blessed word of Jesus? “He that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life eternal.” The law of Moses would not suffice. It could not give life. How could law set free? “He that heareth My word.” Now, this is what one poor robber did, as the other did not. Yet physically both heard. Externally one robber was just as near as the other. And you too have been just as near the gospel. Have you heard with your soul? Have you taken those words as good for you, sufficient and valid for salvation? The converted robber believed the word. He heard the word of Christ, he believed God that sent Him — gave Him credit for truth, as well as for love, in sending the Saviour of sinners; and he reaped the blessing.

And look at his testimony. He could give the lie to all the world; for all the world had said that Jesus was a malefactor, and treated Him as such in the most gross and shameless manner. Alas! we do not find that even the two robbers were hurried to death in the way that Jesus was. Then His trial was one of the most scandalous transactions of its kind. They rose early in the morning to do their bad work, and rushed it through as if their very salvation depended upon their injustice to that Blessed One. It was done by the Sanhedrim — the highest council in Israel. But what an awful thing this world is without Christ! Take care that you are not arrayed against Him, and on the side of the devil.

Has Satan insinuated into the heart of any of you to refuse the Saviour tonight? This is as great an insult as you can do Him. Now He is seeking to bless you. Now He is appealing to your souls. He wants you to rest upon

His precious blood, just as the poor robber did. Oh, beware of turning away from Him! Remember those solemn words of the Apostle Paul, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” One of the robbers did neglect, the other did not. Many a one has said he would not like to be with a robber in heaven. Would you prefer to be the other in hell? This is what it comes to. With one or other of the robbers you must be. Nobody can help that. If you were a king, you could not avoid it: but what folly of men to refuse to be saved on the only ground on which men can be saved — God’s absolute, sovereign, grace in Christ!

But it is not grace without righteousness. Where is the righteousness? It is God’s in Christ. In yourselves you are not righteous. I know few in this hall; but I do know this of every one of you, that there is no righteousness here that could stand in the presence of God. Where is it? In Christ Jesus only. Oh! to have the righteousness of God by faith of Christ, to have righteousness fit for the throne of God. That righteousness is ours if we believe in Him, for “God made to be sin for us Him who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Have you, then, got it, or are you content to live without it? Without it you must be judged; and if you are judged, you are lost for ever. Do you deserve to be saved? Dare you say so?

There are two things in Scripture — judgment and salvation. The people that are judged are not saved; and the people that are saved are not judged. It is not that these do not tell out all that they have done here below. Every person must do that — saved or lost. Every man must out with what he has done in the body, and out with it to one Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the

Judge, not God the Father. All judgment is committed to the Son. It was the Son who was insulted; it is the Son who is to judge. Men turned upon the Son of God because He became man; but He as man will judge all mankind. All emperors, kings, and commanders — all the mighty men that have ever lived — must bow down before that one Man. So must you; no man so obscure, no man so hidden in the crowd of this world, as to escape. If a man be buried in the deepest abyss of ocean, it must give him up — Hades give up his spirit, and the ocean give up his body. For we must all stand to tell out all our lives to the Saviour. But if you have not got Him as Saviour, you will meet Him as Judge.

Those who believe have Him now as a Saviour; and when they tell all out, they will do so to One who loves them with perfect love, to One who shows them the secrets of their heart, to One who explains every difficulty. We shall know then as we are known. We shall assuredly learn, from that wonderful transaction before the throne of the Lord Jesus, the depth of His love, the extent of His goodness toward us, and our own inexcusableness. We shall then see perfectly how nothing but His work could have saved us.

But if you refuse Him now as Saviour, then His unsparing judgment will fall upon your guilty heads — spirit, soul, and body. For every man has got all this complex being. It is a mistake to suppose that it is only believers who have got spirits as well as souls. All this is merely the description of a man. The believer has a new man, which is another thing. He has in Christ a new life, a divine nature. The spirit, the soul, the body, are characteristics of men, no matter where they are or what they are. And there is the solemnity of it. If man

had only a body of flesh and blood, or if he had only an animal soul, we could understand his carelessness; for a merely animal soul will never appear in the resurrection. Precisely, because MAN alone, of all animals on the earth, has got a reasonable soul, a soul that came from the inbreathing of God — therefore it is that he only is to rise, as his spirit returns to God who gave it. Brutes do not rise — man must. But those who are Christ's will rise in all His beauty and glory; and those that are not Christ's must rise to be judged, not merely to give account. The believer will have to give an account, but not as a criminal. A criminal has to give an account, no doubt, or at any rate an account is taken of what he has done; and he is judged. The believer is not judged. The words quoted show this, particularly as given in the Revised Version of John 5:24, as many knew it long before.

I refer to it now, not that I have a very high opinion of that revision, but it is often right. "He that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." Our old version had "condemnation;" and many of us used to say that it was not exact, and the Revisers imply so too. "He that heareth My word... cometh not into judgment." How blessed! There would be no sense in judging a man who is already saved. Till a man is saved, he is under judgment; and when he is saved, he is taken out of judgment. Only theologians talk of putting him into the dock again. The whole thought is a mistake. The believer is justified while in this world. Where is the sense of his being judged afterward? Would it not be a denial of his being now saved? The mistake arises from nature always denying grace.

Do you know how it is that, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, people are mistaken about the teaching of the Bible? It is because, being not right about the gospel, they are not sound as to the first foundation. Everybody knows that if a foundation is faulty, the building is sure to have cracks in it, and is not to be trusted anywhere. May grace keep one from fault-finding! But I do want Christians to understand how it is that they are not more happy. Is it not for the same reason that poor anxious souls are kept, for years, perhaps, in misery and doubt? It is for want of seeing the fulness of the grace of God that meets them in our Lord Jesus. Scripture knows no such thought as that people should wait for weeks, or months, or years before knowing themselves saved. You have only to read the Acts of the Apostles and see men that knew nothing at all before, who were saved the same hour. Look, for instance, at the gaoler at Philippi, or at the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace. It does not matter where you turn, to Jew or Greek, they were through faith blessed at once.

Why should it not be so now? Must there not be some strange barrier in your way? some hindrance of Satan, that keeps genuine souls from entering into peace for months, or even years? And the worst of it is, that when people do enter, they dread lest they should deceive themselves. It is curious enough that in the two hymns we sung to night I was really embarrassed; because they both take for granted that the Christian must die, that the tongue shall be silent in the grave. Both are assumptions, although the authors of them were excellent persons — John Newton the writer of the one, and W. Cowper of the other. They were both of them,

beyond a doubt, true saints of the Lord; but the truth should be dearer than either.

Now just look at the grave departure from Scripture. I ought never to assume, as a Christian, that I am going to die, but rather to be waiting for Christ. One may die, of course, as is perfectly true; but I ought not to speak as if I must die, as both hymns do. I was rather hard put to it to find a hymn one could sing; and I just refer to it to show how adulterated the truth is in reference to the question. Do you think people do not lose by it? Of course they do. What is the remedy? The grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the gospel. We know that many say this is dangerous! The truth of God dangerous! The grace of God dangerous! just reflect for a moment, and you will see how excessively false and evil such a notion is. Nay, it is rebellion against the grace of God, as God has revealed it in His word.

Look again at this man. I have shown the blessed testimony he bore to the Lord Jesus as the Holy One who had done nothing amiss. Surely he must have been more than man to have done nothing amiss. But then the dying robber does not rest there. He turns to our Lord, and strikingly pleads, “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom” — not exactly “into,” but “in Thy kingdom.” This is a remarkable point, because our Lord does not go into His kingdom there. He comes in His kingdom from heaven; He receives a kingdom from God and comes back. It is given Him by God before He comes, as is shown in the parable, where it is said that “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return.”

Is it not a marvellous thing that the robber should know the truth better than our authorised translators? They made the mistake of thinking He had come into this kingdom there. The robber knew more about the kingdom than they. He, no doubt, had heard the Prophets read — had heard of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, and all His angels with Him; and he asked to be remembered of the Lord. When you consider how the robber had lived up to that time, what a favour it was for him to ask of Christ "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom!" That the Lord Jesus in that august moment, when claims of the countless interests of the kingdom over all the earth rested upon Him, should remember the new-born one, the poor converted robber! For him personally to be remembered by the King of kings and Lord of lords at that moment, you would say, was a bold request. Yes, but the Lord Jesus loves the boldness that confides in Him. What you have to guard against is just the contrary — the bravado of unbelief. Oh, think of this!

People talk about the presumption of believers. It were wiser to warn them of the presumptuous sin of unbelief. Is it not truly presumptuous to think that they ever make a title to the skies, or a title to Christ's kingdom comparable with His grace? You never can have so good a title as the robber had unless you receive his title. There is but one title good. The title of grace is perfect; and this is Christ: Christ in all His worth, Christ in His perfection, Christ in all the power of His redemption. Is that your title? If so, blessed are you: you have got the same title as the converted robber; you cannot have a better; you may easily have a worse. All else is good for nothing. There are some Christians who consider it the

way of wisdom and prudence to mix a little bit of self with grace. The more they do so, the weaker they are, the less happy. And so they deserve; for they dishonour Christ, by marring grace, and darkening the truth.

What a deliverance to have done with self! What self-abandonment to have only grace, and nothing but grace, and all grace! Such was the case with this poor man. He saw he could look in the Lord's face, and say to Him, "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." And the Lord did not reply, "What! you talk about that. You may think yourself well off to be just the soul borne with, as it were, in heaven." The Lord will not have one in heaven save like Himself. He will not allow a person there with a single token of shame about him. They are to be resplendent every one in the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember seeing a curious mistake in a tract by one of our brethren; for you must not suppose we want to maintain that they do not make mistakes. "The Broken Crown" was the point of the tract. But seriously, in heaven there are no broken crowns — nothing of the sort. When Christ takes saints to heaven, they are crowned: no broken crowns are there, nor men in robes that are not the best robes. Yea, the best robe is given here. What is the best robe? Christ. Put on Christ, no robe so good as He. Be true to Christ. It is impossible to have Christ, and not have the best robe. This is the truth of the figure; and the man that had not on the wedding garment was one who dared to come in his own righteousness. So that, when the robber begged the Lord to remember him when He came in His kingdom, he was thoroughly within the just petitions to Christ. He was there, if I may so say, swimming in that blessed sea

of love in which he was made to find his true bliss. He was at home there, at ease there, breathing freely there. He was buoyed up and made strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; yea, he was as good as preaching from that cross to every creature, and showing what faith in it can do for a poor guilty sinner.

Is this to be your portion now? I call on you not to believe half the gospel, nor to seek and find a little something for your soul. I want you to see that Christ does not give in such fashion at all. It is not His way to give a little now and a little again. The crumbs that fall from His table are turned into richer and still richer blessing. He gives better than the whole loaf of man. He was asked, “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” What is the answer? It is in accordance with a blessed principle of God, that, whatever faith asks, grace gives yet more. The Lord knew well that the boldness of the man’s faith was to be eclipsed by the fulness of God’s grace. His grace must needs always be greater than any faith on man’s part. The man asked a very great thing — to be remembered when the Lord comes in His kingdom. His heart was filled with assurance that even at such a moment He would be able to remember him; but the Lord lets him know He was going to do far more. “Verily,” said Jesus unto him, “I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

This is surely more than to be remembered in the kingdom. You will not suspect me of running down the kingdom, or of willingness to depreciate the day of the Lord. You know that one loves often and publicly to insist on it, and on its great importance. You will not think, therefore, that slight of it is meant. But this I do say, that, great as may be the glory of the kingdom when

our Lord Jesus comes, to be with Christ in Paradise is even more and better. The two blessings go together, and therefore it is not at all a question of setting the one against the other. But there is this difference. The kingdom will be an outward display when the Lord will give five cities to one servant and ten to another. It will be a day of rewards for service, for fidelity, when every labourer shall receive according to his labour. But to be with Christ in Paradise means the fulness of grace; and beyond doubt, great as is the importance of the kingdom, the privilege to a sinner saved of being with Christ in the presence of God is one that nothing can exceed or equal.

Blessed be God, when the kingdom comes, we shall not lose our communion with Christ in Paradise. We shall eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God; and this will be in the days of the kingdom. We shall be remembered, not one forgotten, when Christ comes in His kingdom, and we shall reign with Him. It remains that Christ is Himself more precious than what He gives one, and that to be with Christ is even better than to sit upon a throne in His kingdom. This is all glorious; but to be with Christ, when we remember what Christ is, to be there the object of His love, to be able then perfectly to behold His glory, is a deeper privilege than to be crowned in the kingdom. Yet it was what the thief entered into that day. And what force there was in being there “today!” All the thoughts of gradual preparation here, all theory of waiting dimly in another world, every form of purgatory — I do not mean only of a Roman Catholic pattern, for many a Protestant has got a quasi-purgatory of his own — all these things are completely dissipated to the winds. Here was a man in himself black enough to be

kept out for ever doubtless: none the less was he to be with Christ that day in Paradise, perfectly purged by His blood for the intimate presence of God.

What a comfort this ought to be to any of you who have fears that you are not fit for heaven! For it is meant for you that believe as much as for the penitent on the cross. Have you not Christ too? Are you not resting on grace? Is it a different measure to you from what it was to the dying robber? If it be the same way of faith to you as to him, is it not really the same portion with Christ in Paradise? Hence death, when you look at it thus, is no longer to be regarded as an enemy. Assuredly death is the last enemy apart from Christ: is it really so to the man who possesses Christ? To him death is in truth only a servant to open the door, and let him in to be with Christ. Is this an enemy's work? Death is yours who believe, as all things are.

May God then bless His own word. May He bring home the testimony rendered to Christ and Christ's blood tonight; and may you see what a joy it is to wait for Christ to come in His kingdom, and, above all, what it is to have a portion with Christ by faith wholly superior to death, so that if Christ were to come to-morrow you would never die in any sense. For "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we the living that remain shall be caught up together with them in [the] clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." You see that "we" ought to be expecting Christ, not death. The "we" in that day ought,

and the “we” in this day ought, and the “we” in every day ought, to be so. If death comes when we are looking for Christ, that will not at all disappoint us. Death will only be our usher into the presence of the Lord; then instead of waiting for the Lord on earth, you will wait with the Lord in heaven which is far better. It is a good thing to be waiting for the Lord on the earth; but it is a better thing to be waiting with the Lord in heaven — to come when he comes — to reign when He reigns — but above all to be with Him now, or by and by, and for ever, in Paradise. Amen.

W.K.

Eternal Life: notes of a lecture

(B.T. Vol. N5, p. 61-62.)

To avoid personality both lecturer and publisher are not named. But it is due to the Lord and His own to warn against what is calculated in this tract to deceive the simple. If it were an honest recantation of the recent error, all would hail it; but it is a crafty effort to adopt as far as possible the language of those who can say that Christians have life eternal now, while denying that they have it in any real sense, and confounding it with Christ's raising us up at the last day when its result is made good for the body. The late defender of this false doctrine was candid, compared with, the new one; "It used to be commonly said, I know that I have got eternal life. Why? Because scripture says, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life.'" Alas! no reason could be better, if there were living faith too. But that defender openly at least avowed his unbelief, and thought he had persuaded people to think that no believer has the thing itself but only a promise, not the thing promised. The present defender of the same unbelief laboriously tries to make people believe that they can say and unsay, and think this is upright instead of being a cheat.

He starts with saying, "You must never confound the Gospel of John with the Epistle;" but he is all wrong himself. For not only does the Epistle speak of the eternal and only-begotten Son like the Gospel, but the Gospel is throughout the unfolding of the Person become Man on earth; and the Epistle as truly as the Gospel, though briefly, as a divine Person with the Father before His incarnation. Again both Gospel and Epistle alike

testify His present glorification. But as the Epistle followed the Gospel and supposes it known, so it even more subtly and beautifully identifies Christ with God, purposely passing from Him to God and from God to Him in a way which all false doctrine ignores, and which orthodox theology does not understand or enjoy.

As to confounding eternal life with everlasting existence, who does this but the grossly ignorant or heterodox men who talk of conditional immortality? Perhaps however those whom he addressed may have needed this elementary truth, Hence he turns to confounding the new birth with eternal life. But here he is again utterly wrong. The Lord did unfold life eternal in its Christian fulness as now revealed. It is a false inference that the O.T. saints in being born anew had not life in the Son, though they knew it not as we do, or ought to do. What is this life but eternal, as no one ever questioned till of late? Those must be ill-instructed indeed, who are "accustomed to think of life as only the vital spark."

Our Lord Himself, in John's Gospel (John 6:35-40, John 10:10) makes it certain that the use found here of John 5:24, John 17:3, or any other text is mere human reasoning to oppose the truth, if "involves" means that the believer could not have life eternal till the new creation (John 4:9, 10). So does the Epistle refute the thought. He that ate of the living bread, that is, Himself incarnate, had life eternal; and if it were a work of the Spirit, he went on to eat His flesh and drink His blood (51-59), when he was also assured of having that life, instead of its being annexed to Christ's ascension (63) where it is not said, as there was no need to say it. But this system, if true, ought to have it exclusively there. Hence also the absurdity of saying, "' That which was

from the beginning' supposes the first man set aside," save in God's mind. It was Christ incarnate, before the work was done, or Himself the risen man in glory. Is it not impudent, and misleading for such a defender to speak thus, "you say you have eternal life: no one disputes it for a moment;" when he knows well, that this is the very truth which was not only disputed but denied? Alas! it is what one has seen before: when the truth is lost, untruthfulness follows; especially where the desire is to shirk a plain profession of what has been exposed and discredited.

Nevertheless this defender does here and often contradict his late leader. For he utterly denied eternal life as a present possession for any: it "is God's purpose for you" — "mine in title, but to say that I have it is another matter." This is given up by the lecturer, who dares to say that "no one disputes for a moment" what exactly contradicted it. Think of another glaring contradiction. It was then taught that "eternal life refers to earth (!) I don't think we should talk about eternal life in heaven"(!!) with the wild talk about a sphere. Here on the contrary the change is complete, and heaven is insisted on as "the sphere, or home, of eternal life."

In p. 10 the cloven foot appears. Even for the believer now to be born again is severed from life eternal, and has it not yet till redemption, and the Spirit's gift. It is quite true that no one is indwelt by the Spirit till he is by faith washed from his sins in Christ's blood. But to say that eternal life and the Holy Ghost go together is the system, and unscriptural. Where does Scripture couple them thus? In Scripture faith in Christ is associated with eternal life, and in the most immediate way "hath," and not merely shall have. But the gift of the Spirit is

consequent on faith in Christ's work, His blood or redemption, not on life eternal; for it is allowed that even John 4:14 looks on to the glorious result, whatever the intermediate joy.

Again, it seems a pity that one who used to be a fervent evangelist should, in setting up for a teacher, alas! be a false teacher, and extremely inconsistent too with the system he was supposed to defend. For the system ostensibly expounded, and never repudiated, was, that "there is a gulf between you and it [eternal life], and you have to pass over that gulf," and again that "there is no truth in the assertion that eternal life was communicated this side of the bridge," and that "the gift of the Holy Ghost" is what is communicated, not life eternal, but He the well of water springing up to eternal life. What wretched cloaking, and tinkering, and concealing the change in most important respects, while still pretending to be the same!

Take further the lecturer, with his "objective and subjective," which he either misunderstands or misapplies. If we have life in the Son, it is not objective but subjective. It is our new being and a divine nature we never had before; and it is or ought to be in exercise throughout our life. "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live I, but Christ liveth in me," etc. This is not called life eternal as it was from Paul's pen; but it is what is so called by the apostle John, to whom this great truth was given to make known. It is also a mere blunder to say that the indwelling Spirit (and this is the question) is subjective; for though He has a subjective place like Christ even in life, He is regularly and truly revealed as a real objective Person, witnessing with our spirit, helping our infirmity, interceding for us according

to God, guiding into all the truth, and thus glorifying Christ in every way as regards us.

The remarks on 1 John 5:13 seem only brought in apparently to support his leader, while on the contrary they really oppose. What then is the meaning of “it says so,” and in italics? The notion that “knowing” there is objective, as first conveyed to faith, is merely an error, whoever “said so.” It is on the contrary inward and conscious, which the apostle desired for the family of God. But the system, here revised and altered by its defender, denied any possible inward consciousness, because it did not allow but refused any real present possession for the soul.

So far one may hail a rent in this flag of unbelief, though totally without the candour to acknowledge its departure from the system. It is partial homage to the truth; yet its apparent design is to deceive the simple folk who think that there is no change. It is to be hoped that the lecturer is not so far gone as to follow his leader in holding that Christ became (instead of was) the Word, the Eternal Word, or that, in becoming man, He became an incomplete and imperfect man (if He had no soul), but had His personality in the divine Word or Son: Monotheistic heterodoxy without doubt and never yet purged out, but hidden leaven still at work.

Present Salvation

A Letter To A Friend, In Review Of A Sermon By The Rev. G. Salmon (Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Dublin)

My dear brother,

Have you seen a sermon on John 3:36 by the Dublin Regius Professor of Divinity, preached in the chapel of Trinity College toward the close of last year?

There is this inconvenience in noticing it that one does not, cannot, sympathize with the preachers objected to, if they are fairly represented by their censor. What can be more offensive or dangerous than crying up grace without righteousness, faith without repentance, pardon without life? The Professor may be assured that there are those who, preaching salvation as an actual state, hold quite as firmly as himself the importance of viewing salvation as future also. But they deny that the formularies he seeks to justify express the truth as it is revealed.

It is rather unhappy however that Professor Salmon's second paragraph, the opening of the case, exhibits reasoning and criticism far from exceptionable. For no intelligent Christian doubts that the New Testament speaks of salvation in these two senses, present or future, not to speak of others. But there is neither confusion of the two, nor uncertainty how each is used In general the line of truth pursued by an inspired writer in a particular book excludes one or other, though there are subjects, and hence books containing them, which admit of both; but in no case is there vagueness for a

mind imbued with revealed truth. Thus in Ephesians salvation is viewed exclusively as a thing complete and now enjoyed by the Christian; in Hebrews it is regarded as going on and only consummated in resurrection-glory when Christ appears to those that look for Him. Does Dr. S. make this distinction? or the Prayer-book?

Again, scripture speaks of eternal life both as a present possession, and as a future privilege in glory: but are they ever confounded? The believer has remission of sins, and yet was taught to ask forgiveness: but are they the same? The Prayer-book jumbles both, whereas scripture discriminates. What is the worth of an argument then from scripture to the Prayer-book?

Now the grounds of objection I press are far deeper than questions as to any words or forms employed in the Book of Common Prayer; and I wholly disapprove of every effort to overthrow the National Establishment in England any more than in Ireland, regarding politics as at best beneath a Christian, and these changes as playing into the hands of infidels or papists, though most of the godly dissenters seem to be beguiled into them.

But in plain straightforwardness it seems indisputable that the petitions, “O God, make speed to save us,” “O Lord, save thy people,” “Show thy mercy upon us, and grant us thy salvation,” being drawn from the Old Testament, express the hopes of Israel before the work of redemption and the distinctions it maintains could even exist. The want of seeing this involved the Reformers, not to speak of the Fathers and the mediaeval writers, in great darkness. Has Dr. S. emerged into light, as far as this momentous matter is

concerned, more than his predecessors or his neighbours?

Till Christ died and rose and went to heaven, it could not be said of any, as in Ephesians 2:4-10, “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where. with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might Show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Nor could Isaiah or Malachi have said of the Jew as Paul (2 Tim. 1) of Christians, that God “hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought light and immortality [incorruption] to light through the gospel.” So the same apostle adds to Titus, “according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

In the Psalms and the Prophets we hear the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of prophecy, stimulating and guiding the cry of the saints of old before the cross of Christ. It

could not be otherwise. They were petitions in due season. To have spoken as St. Paul did later would have been presumptuous and false. The basis was not yet laid, the Saviour not even come. To adopt the language as to this of David or Jeremiah now is ignorance and unbelief; for it is to blot out the infinite work of the Son of God, it is to slight the witness the Spirit of grace is now rendering to its value in God's sight — its efficacy as a present fact for the believer, who cannot worship as he ought unless he know and enjoy it.

It is not only want of knowledge to confound distinctions so well defined, which the accomplishment of atonement has necessarily brought in; but I ask, Is it really meant that we are saved and not saved in the same sense? If this be rejected as absurd, the question is, Do the Anglican formularies, does Dr. S., truly draw the distinction according to the New Testament? I should rejoice to believe that they did: but both appear to be self-evidently at fault here. Dr. S. seeks to justify the Prayer-book's use of these petitions on the ground that they are the words of scripture found in the Psalms. (Page 5.) Such a defence is the best proof that, as the framers of the prayers did not know the real difference introduced by redemption in Christ, so neither has Dr. S. learnt it to this day.

Indeed it is the lamentable state of Christendom generally. They are like the virgins who, weary of going out to meet the bridegroom, have gone in somewhere to slumber. Instead of going forth to Christ bearing His reproach, they go or keep within the camp. Scripture accurately employs the term "save" or "salvation," for soul and for body, for past, present, and future; the Prayer-book confounds all together, so as to impair if not

destroy the enjoyment of peace with God, leading believers to perplexity and producing false hopes in unbelievers: the former never receiving the true, simple, constant fact of salvation, while waiting for its complement at Christ's coming; the latter using the same language for their condition, fearing yet hoping, without any adequate sense of utter present ruin or divinely given faith in Christ. What loss to the believer! what danger for the unbeliever!

Dr. S. cites Acts 15:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Romans 8:241 (ἐσώθημεν would be curious for the future), and Romans 5:9, 10. One can give another from the same Epistle (Rom. 13:11, 12), which may help the reader to understand these all the better: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Now I ask any competent man, any Christian: Is it just to mix up New Testament texts which speak of salvation in glory by-and-by (which no Christian questions), with the use men have made of Old Testament passages which merge soul and body together, as all must have done till Christ died? Is it not increasingly plain that Dr. S. defends the liturgy because be is himself in a confusion akin to that of its compilers? He is not entitled to say as he does, "I will not delay to examine the correctness of a theory, according to which the Christian Church has been wrong from its first foundation to the present day, in supposing that whether in its public worship or in the private devotions of generation after generation of its most saintly members, it could find in the Psalms of David adequate expression for its deepest feelings." (Page 5.) "Wrong from its first foundation!" nay, but since the enemy contrived to Judaize it.

Nor do I think that any Romanist need ask more than Dr. S. here concedes, to land alike Episcopalians and Presbyterians in the darkness of his own superstition; being fully assured that such an use or rather abuse of the Psalms of David, as the “adequate expression for the deepest feelings” of the church or the Christian, if not derived from Romanism, is traceable to that scarcely better catholic system which preceded the ambitions politics of the papacy. Not one clause in one psalm, I am bold to affirm, expresses the proper and peculiar feelings of the Christian or of the church. There is not a single cry of Abba Father; nor a hint of drawing within the veil; nor an unequivocal expression of membership of Christ; still less of the distinctive love of Christ for the church as His body for which He gave Himself.

Further, I maintain that the Psalms abound with expressions just and proper for Israel of old, and for Israel in the last days, but utterly incongruous and unsuited and improper on any fair interpretation for the Christian or the church ever since its first foundation till now. Does Dr. S. soberly pray that our foot may be dipped in the blood of our enemies, and the tongue of our dogs in the same? Is it the “deepest feeling” of the Christian that God should persecute our enemies with His tempest, that they should be confounded and troubled for ever, yea, perish? Would he be happy to take and dash the little ones of Babylon against the stones? Certainly be ought, without scruple or limit, if the christian church can find in the Psalms of David adequate expression for its deepest feelings.

Not for a moment are those expressions impugned in themselves. They are righteous altogether; and they will express the feelings of the Jewish saints adequately in

that day when Jehovah is Himself judging the earth and the quick upon it. But now God is showing the riches of grace and long-suffering, not yet judging the habitable world in righteousness; and we are called to speak to ourselves and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, that is, not in the Psalms, but in christian compositions of these various characters; as indeed believers are constantly found to do so, and did from the first.

But an opening criticism of Dr. S. was referred to, which must now be noticed. Speaking of the Prayerbook, he says, “It contains the prayer, ‘O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace,’ whereas it is said [by the preachers he is chastising], St. Paul teaches us, that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now it is clear that, if the Prayer-book mean the same peace, it is at issue with Romans 5, and indeed the general teaching of the New Testament. Does Dr. S. seriously deny that the Epistles contemplate the Christian as having peace with God? Can he say that the Prayer-book does?

I only notice by the way the fact that the liturgies of Rome and England misquote scripture gravely in their reference to John 1:29, which speaks of “sin,” not sins; and the difference of force is great to anyone familiar with God’s word: so great that, while the, Gospel expresses perfect truth, the Anglican or other misquotations would imply, if true, that there was nothing more against the world, its sins being gone. Logically they seem to warrant the destructive lie of universalism, or to annul Christ’s work.

Another point notable is the following: “I may remark in passing that this very text (Rom. 5:1), which is one of the main pillars of the system of doctrine which I am considering, is now given by the principal critical editors, in the form, ‘Let us have peace,’ according to which reading the text changes sides, and makes St. Paul guilty of the same error which is reprehended in our church, namely, exhorting his converts to a peace which they had already. I mention this various reading, not that I myself prefer them altered reading, but as the immense preponderance of ancient witnesses, whether manuscripts or early citations, is in favour of it, the example shows how very precarious is the deduction of a doctrine from a single text,” etc. (Page 4.) Does it not Show rather how precarious is such a critical judgment? For the question between o and ω is precisely one of that class as to which the ancient manuscripts are least reliable. Whether we can best account for their frequent lapses in the interchange of these letters by ignorant copyists deceived by the ear may be a question; but the fact that the most ancient and best cannot be depended on in such cases is certain. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:49,2 Hebrews 12:28. This explains why the reading of several of the oldest MSS. may be merely a clerical blunder. If Tischendorf is gone over to ἔχωμεν with the uncorrected text of the Sinai, with Vat., Alex., etc., Lachmann abandoned it for ἔχομεν in his maturer edition. There is no deficiency whatever in external authority, for the majority of uncials, and cursives, supports ἔχομεν. The criterion for a spiritual mind under such circumstances is the bearing of the context: and, if so, I have not a doubt that this reading and not ἔχωμεν is required by the scope of the verse and the argument generally. But the odd thing is that Dr. S. himself accepts

the reading ἔχομεν, “we have.” If he does so on solid grounds, why is it precarious to use it? If he have no solid grounds, why “prefer” it?

Rom. 1:3, 21, 32; Rom. 2:14; Rom. 3:8, 9, 22, 28, 31; Rom. 4:25; Rom. 5:3, 10, 11, 17; Rom. 6:1, 2, 8, 15; Rom. 7:4, 9; Rom. 8:2, 17, 22, 26; Rom. 9:16. 17, 31; Rom. 10:14 (thrice), 15; Rom. 11:15, 27; Rom. 12:9, 21; Rom. 13:13; Rom. 14:8 (thrice), 13, 19, Rom. 15:4, 13, 15, 20, 24, 33;

1 Cor. 1:31; 1 Cor. 2:7, 11; 1 Cor. 3:9, 14, 21; 1 Cor. 4:2, 4, 8, 19; 1 Cor. 5:8; 1 Cor. 9:11, 16, 23, 27; 1 Cor. 10:8, 9; 1 Cor. 11:19, 34; 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 Cor. 14:14, 15, 24; 1 Cor. 15:29, 32, 51; 1 Cor. 16:3, 6:

Heb. 2:3, 9; Heb. 3:18; Heb. 4:3, 11, 16; Heb. 5:3; Heb. 6:1, 3, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19; Heb. 7:3, 11, 12, 14,15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26; Heb. 8:1, 6, 11, 12; Heb. 9:5, 10, 11, 20; Heb. 10:8, 22, 23, 25; Heb. 11:25, 27; Heb. 12:1, 9, 10; Heb. 13:10, 11, 13, 15, will be evidence enough from these three epistles alone elsewhere to show the tendency there was similarly to confound these letters on almost every occurrence of either letter where such an error was possible; and this, observe, even in MSS. otherwise of the highest character. In many of these verses the itacism is found twice.

It is not contended then by any man sound or instructed in the faith, that it is improper to speak of salvation as a future thing. But future salvation in scripture is the close of present temptation, up to the redemption of the body at Christ’s coming again. Does this justify the unbelief which overspreads the confessions and theologians of Christendom in their attenuation of that which grace has already given the Christian? or the

effort to cover over the consequent ignorance of our actual privileges in Christ, prevalent not merely in the greater national systems but among dissenters generally? An appeal to the Psalms of David seems to be a plain and conclusive proof that this charge is just: where Christ's light is enjoyed, who could doubt it? Again, texts like 2 Thessalonians 3:16, or Romans 15:13, do not warrant Christians in asking for peace in the sense of Romans 5:1, which they are supposed to have already. Distinguish the nature of the peace, and the argument is powerless; for it assumes the identity of what is quite distinct. Peace with God, founded on our soul's submission to His righteousness in Christ, is a wholly different thing from practical peace in the midst of the questions apt to agitate believers, then especially so when the association of Jews and Gentiles, for the first time in the history of God's dealings with man, brought up many serious occasions of discord. If those who has peace with God needed (as they surely did and do) peace from Him in these and all other trials, we have the truth of scripture as to this, but no real apology for the feeble and indeed false teaching of the Prayerbook, which habitually (though I am sure most unwittingly) tends to hinder and deny peace with God. The reasoning, criticism, and use of scripture by the Professor in page 6 are far from exact.3 The Bible does not speak of the very admission into the christian church as an act of salvation; nor does it interchange the terms of being saved and "being added to the church;" nor does τοὺς σωζομένους mean those that were then being saved, but the class destined to salvation, which is fairly enough rendered in our version. There were οἱ σωξέμενοι in Israel before; now the Lord, instead of leaving them there, was adding them ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (if, as

seems required by the best evidence, we omit τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ). But this is in no way to speak interchangeably of their salvation and of their addition together; still less does it speak of their admission as an act of salvation. It rather distinguishes the two things, and makes their being the class destined to salvation the ground for putting them in the new position. Those who believed in Christ were henceforth to form an assemblage apart; in Acts 4:23, called “their own company;” in Acts 5:11 (if not in Acts 2:47), styled “the church” or assembly, according to our Lord’s words in Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:17.

As to the stress laid on the participle, it is certainly a mistake; for, though such a form of the word is in itself capable of being so used, it is quite wrong to, infer that it necessarily so means. For the participle is equally susceptible of an abstract signification, which expresses simply that the persons are objects of the operation in question without reference to present or past time. For, if the point were the present time, such persons could not be said to be σωθέντες or σεσωσμένοι, both of which terms are used or implied of Christians in this life as to salvation, no, less than σωζόμενοι. They are used of the godly Jews expressly in the Septuagint, σωζόμενοι being the character, σωθέντες the fact, and σεσωσμένοι the present result of what is past. It is evidently therefore not a question here of a fact or date; for, if it were,, it would be impossible consistently to employ about them the other terms, all referring to the same salvation in a similar sense. For manifestly, if οἱ σωζόμενοι meant those in actual process of salvation, they could not also be described as οἱ σωθέντες, by which nevertheless the same translators describe them

in the same book of Isaiah. (Compare Isa. 10:20; Isa. 37:32; Isa. 66:19 in the LXX,) The conclusion therefore is irresistible that οἱ σωζόμενοι must have been technically employed in its abstract application of a character and class, and not of time present as Professor S. conceived.

Again, a somewhat similar reasoning applies to his use of 1 Peter 3:21. Baptism unquestionably is the well known initiatory sign, the figure of salvation by Christ's death and resurrection; but this is abused, if used, as apparently it is, to weaken the grand truth that according to His mercy He saved (ἔσωσεν) us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The present tense is frequently used, as here, for a moral fact irrespective of time: else, if present were emphatic, ἔσωσεν could not be applied to the Christian now. Nor does 2 Peter 2:21 modify that truth; for it speaks of the ruinous turning away of those who had once confessed Christ, but it carefully avoids all idea that they bad ever gone beyond knowledge, nor hints that they had at any time, possessed life in Christ. Thus theology has misled Dr. S., and the desire to extenuate the forms of his own religious connection not only fails but throws him, as far as it works, outside the limits of scripture.

Dr. S. justly feels that God's gospel is inseparable from holiness of walk, in contrast with heathenism (p. 7) which allowed of sin alike in the false gods and in their votaries; as does priestcraft now and of old in Christendom: witness any system of penance, indulgence, and the confessional. The mere revelation of a future life had not of itself, as he says, the power to bring morality and religion into closer union. And no

doubt it is delusive to flatter oneself that thinking rightly about God, or paying Him due honour, will stand without practical righteousness (p. 8). “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness,, and the unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness.” Thus, whatever the self-deceiving thoughts of the Newmans now (p. 9), or of the Jeromes of old, if there be a difference as there surely is in judgment, their unrighteousness is to Him most offensive, who know most or are most orthodox, for they hold fast the truth in unrighteousness. God is not mocked: as men sow, they reap. Nor is antinomianism confined to Romanists, but as widely found as the unrenewed heart when it adopts a form of godliness. Most freely and fully do I grant that God holds to His principles immutably, as the apostle elaborately insists in the earlier half of Romans 2. In fine, Christ being life as well as righteousness, the believer has both in Him, and thus holiness is secured no less than justification.

But is it not strange for any one who knows the truth of the gospel to deduce from the fact of God’s moral government, however certain and important it may be, the doctrine of salvation, present, future, or any other? “Future happiness is represented, not as coming by an arbitrary decree on certain favourites of heaven, but as following in strict conformity with the laws God has ordained. ‘Be not deceived,’ says St. Paul; (Gal. 6:7); ‘God is not mocked,’ etc.... From this doctrine that what a man soweth he must reap, that future happiness or misery is the natural fruit, according to God’s appointed order, of the character that is formed in us here, the doctrine of present salvation necessarily follows.”... “Only embrace that salvation, only join yourself to Christ

now, only strive to be like Him through the aid of that Holy Spirit whom He has promised to give you, and you will not have to wait for a future life in order to taste the happiness which is the portion of His people" (pp. 10, 11). Is this Dr. S.'s gospel? It might suit those not too infirm who could step down after the angel's visit into the pool of Bethesda; but how for the lost, for the dead in trespasses and sins? Does he recognize the need of quickening? not merely of a new walk but of a new and divine life? yea, of deliverance from the law of sin, and not only of remission of sins? There is no adequate statement of these truths here or anywhere else in the sermon, though it is a discourse on "present salvation." Nay, what is said seems scarcely consistent with the truth. Salvation is by grace, not by moral government, however God may vindicate His grace in justifying the ungodly by the fruit of righteousness which is by Jesus Christ to His glory and praise in the result: Scripture is urgent and express that it was not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to His own mercy He saved us.

On the other hand it may be granted to Dr. S. that there is need to warn souls against self-delusion, for a man's own favourable opinion about his condition in the sight of God must be false, if he rest not on Christ and His work; and it is a wicked and dangerous absurdity to teach that, if a man pronounces himself saved, he is saved (p. 12). But is it really believed that God justifies freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus? that to him who worketh not but believeth on Him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness? that David was inspired to tell us of the blessedness of the man to whom God reckons

righteousness without works? It is the Master who says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24.) It is an inspired servant who says, “Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.” But why should Dr. S. add (p. 12), “No matter into what sins he may afterwards fall, his acceptance with God remains unshaken, for he has once for all passed from death unto life?”

The doctrine for which I contend puts no arbitrary break between our future portion and our present life: for the Christ we shall have in glory is the Christ we have now in grace. No doctrine so excludes any gap whatever as our Lord’s words, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of nay hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29.) I complain of Dr. S.’s language, not for its strength but for its weakness. How different the words of St. Paul, with death and judgment before him, when speaking of the power of life in Christ possessed by Christians! “Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we [it is nothing peculiar, but the common expression of christian feeling] are always confident.” (2 Cor. 5.)

Entirely do I accept the statement that faith is in Christ, not in ourselves.4 True faith sets to its seal that God is true, not that my hopes about my acceptance are well founded. But it is a painful descent from faith, to silence

doubts by “those rules of practical probability which are the very guide of our present life” (p.14). Do we not read that “whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world”? “And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” But it is hard to conceive how on Dr. S.’s showing a young believer, or an upright old one, could have unbroken confidence. His gospel seems to be partly Christ, partly the believer’s conviction that he is saved in detail from sins in practice.

“I too, brethren, would ask each of you the question — Are you saved? But saved from what? Are you saved from sin? Are you saved from anger, bitterness, uncharitableness, untruthfulness? Are you saved from sloth and frivolousness? Are you saved from impurity, from unclean thoughts and words and deeds? Are you saved from selfishness in all its manifestations? Ask these questions to yourselves, ask them of any one who tells you he is saved. If you have learned to mortify these works of your earthly members, bless God for it; and be confident that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. But if you dream that you can be saved from the punishment of sin without being saved from sin itself, Christ has commissioned me to preach no such gospel to you. It is not true that you can; and if it were true, a miserable gospel it would be” (pp. 15, 16).

Does not this teaching tend to make your hope depend on your feelings, thoughts, words, ways, on yourself in short, instead of looking only to Christ? Does it not savour of “faith in ourselves” quite as much as what is objected to? It is not Paul’s gospel.

For my part I see in scripture a much richer salvation than that poor evangelicalism which is apparently the object of Dr. S.'s attack.5 His own statement too seems to be just is meagre and otherwise as objectionable. The written word declares that God sent His 'Son into the world that we might live through Him, and that He might be the propitiation for our sins. Without life in the Son we could not enjoy God; without His expiation we could not be purged so as to have no more conscience of sin. Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we have not redemption only but the Spirit of His Son sent into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. We believe in His death for us, and we know that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. We have died to sin and live no longer therein. Thus we have, by grace not remission of sins only but deliverance from sin — a privilege virtually (I do not say ignored merely but) denied by the Prayer-book. For I am compelled to go farther than the Professor, and am assured that it is a most "miserable" system of theology, which represents the Christian as still tied and bound by the chain of his sins — a dark and enslaving tradition, which ignorantly abuses the latter part of Romans 7 (the parenthetic discussion of a soul in bondage to the power of sin) to set aside the liberty wherewith the law of the Spirit of life in Christ sets one free, as in Romans 8. For we cannot rightly be under both husbands, as this unhappy and unholy scheme supposes (and Dr. S. tells us, p. 14, that holiness and happiness are one); but dead to the law by the body of Christ we are married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

None of our heavenly privileges is here touched on so that I am not going into what might seem deep. But what sort of theology is it which blinds men even to the meaning of baptism as set forth in Romans 6? Assuredly young evangelists are often superficial, are old theologians much better? Is it not ominous that both have to learn what their baptism means? and that the wildest Irish evangelist is not so far from this elementary truth as is the Anglican Office for Baptism or its apologists?

May it please the Lord to recall His own to the living and abiding word of God.

Ever yours, affectionately in Him, W. K.

1 No one doubts that “hope” distinctively looks at the future; but there is neither uncertainty nor a weakening of the actual present blessing in Scripture. The redemption of our body is wholly future; and therefore, the apostle says, were we saved in hope. It is not seen yet.

2 Professor Tischendorf in his eighth edition of the New Testament reads φορέσωμεν on the authority of, A, C, D, E, F, G, K, L, P, the great mass of cursives, It. Vulg. Go. Cop. and many Fathers Greek and Latin. In his seventh he had followed B. 46, and perhaps a few others with some Fathers in giving φορέσομεν, which seems to me beyond doubt the true meaning. The form ἔχωμεν is rejected by R, K, P, 17. 31. 37. 73. and at least twenty-five cursives more, not to speak of several old versions and Fathers. So also λατρεύμεν appears in yet more of the ancient authorities. Yet who can doubt that the, subjunctive mood is right?

3 “The Bible speaks of the very admission into the Christian church as an act of salvation. In the account of the miracle of the day of Pentecost, ‘being saved’ and being added to the church are spoken of interchangeably.... And subsequently the Lord added daily, not as our version has it, those that were afterwards to be saved, but τοὺς σωζομένους, those that were then being saved. And in remarkable conformity. with this, St. Peter in his Epistle, speaks of baptism saying us (1 Peter 3:21;) but yet it would be unscriptural if baptism were represented as anything more than the first step in the Christian’s life, and in the 2nd Epistle of Peter (2 Peter 2:21), it is said” etc.

4 “The cure for such apprehensions is faith; but by faith I mean, as the New Testament teaches, faith in Christ, not, as some modern teachers would have it, faith in ourselves.... Nothing is more unscriptural than any teaching which makes your hope depend on your looking into yourself, instead of looking unto Christ” (p. 13).

5 “If the gospel be, what some would reduce it to, a mere contrivance for quieting men’s fears of hell, it would have been simpler if such fears had never been excited” (p. 13). Most godly minds will not accept so slighting a sentence on those who alarm sinners with the just judgment of their sins before the great white throne, and in the lake of fire, in order to drive them to the Saviour and Him crucified. Such preaching may be in some sort imperfect; but there is more truth in it, and more fruit from it, and, I venture to think, it will have more honour from the Lord another day, than the calmer essays of an erudite pulpit which please the world now.

Law and Grace

Ex. 34; 2 Cor. 3

It is important to see that there were two distinct occasions in which we find tables of stone, according to God's command, committed, though in a different way, to man. On the first occasion, as we know, there was total ruin; and when God uttered His commands then, afterwards written down, there was no shining of the face whatever; there was no Moses transfigured by the power of glory. Law, pure and simple, never made the face of man to shine; it is not the intention of law; nor is it the result of law. Law, simply as such, is characterized by darkness and tempest, by thunder and lightning, by the voice of God dealing with the guilty — more tremendous than all together. And so it was on the first occasion when the law was announced by God Himself, and the tables were broken (before ever they reached man) by the indignant law-giver.

On the second occasion what a difference! The lawgiver was called into the presence of God, who thereon was pleased to give a mingling of mercy along with law. There was a covenant expressly made of this combined composite character. It was not law alone, and not grace alone, but rather the mingling of grace along with law. For it would have been perfectly impossible for God to have carried on dealings with Israel, or to have brought them even into the land, unless there had been this mingling of grace and mercy with law. Consequently on this occasion the law was still committed to man; but it was shut up in the ark, not displayed with all its terrors

before the eyes of men; it was enclosed, as we know, in the testimony.

Now, there are many even of God's children who think that such is exactly the tenor of the dealings of God with us now; that is, law and grace mingled — grace hindering the action of law; the law bringing us in guilty, but grace interposing to screen the guilty according to the words we read in the early part of Ex. 34. There Jehovah proclaims Himself in the character of lawgiver, though he declares His longsuffering and mercy, as it is said, "Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." But it is also added, "And that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Now you will observe that while such is the principle of God's dealings — that it is not law alone, nor grace alone, but the two together — while this is the case, whenever the mediator comes forward to speak to the people he has to put a veil upon his face. When he goes into the presence of God, the veil was taken off; in glory, in the presence of glory, there is no veil. But as long as man had to do with the law, even though there was mercy and grace mingled with it, the veil must be put on when he spoke with the people.

Now, the remarkable thing that I would call your attention to is this, that our position is in contrast with both. Our position is neither having to do with law alone, nor with law mingled with grace; we are in presence of grace and glory without the law at all. This is precisely what the apostle shows in 2 Cor. 3. Here he does not refer to the contrast of Ex. 19 or 20, but solely to the

occasion of mingled law and grace in Ex. 34; and he lets us see that the ministration on that day was one of death and condemnation. The reason is this, that if the law enters at all, if I have to do with it as that which governs me, and under which I am, the more mercy that is shown, the more guilty am I, and He will by no means clear the guilty.

Now, that all-condemning character did not come out while God was dealing with men before Christ; but when Christ came, God stood to His principles with the utmost nicety and all His authority. The reason is, that there was One come who could solve all difficulties, meet all need, and deliver from all distress and danger. It was because the Son of God was now become the Son of man, and the Son of man was willing to suffer on the cross, not yet about to administer the glory.

Hence it is that our position is put in distinct and positive contrast. The apostle says, “If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” He does not put us in the place of the children of Israel, but takes care to show that it is after the type of Moses drawing near into the presence of God, where he takes off the veil. This is the sign of our position now, and not the children of Israel. In short it is not the man veiled, and the children of Israel afraid of him because of the glory of his countenance, which they could not look upon; but the man unveiled in the

presence of God, when he turns, not to the people with a veil upon his face, but to God in glory without the veil.

Such is our position now; such the position of all Christians, if they only knew it. This comes out fully in the last verse. He says, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” “We all” is in contrast with the one man Moses. The position of the Christian is typified by Moses in the presence of God, and not by the children of Israel in the presence of Moses veiled. “We all,” for God makes not the smallest difference in this respect; the weakest Christian has exactly the same position before God. Whenever it is a question of position, of the simple effect or result of what the Lord Jesus has accomplished and given to us by grace, there is no difference whatever. When it is a question of spiritual power, there is a difference, and all possible room for variety. Just as in the first Adam there is no difference in the general fact that all have sinned; yet, when you come to look at the extent to which people have gone in sin, there are degrees of difference.

Precisely so with the Second man, the last Adam. He has brought all who belong to Him now into this common place of blessing. We all with open, or unveiled, face (for this is the true force of it) beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. This was what Moses saw, and only Moses, and he merely for a moment; whereas it is our constant position. A Christian, all the time he is here below, is, as far as the work of Christ is concerned, one entitled to draw near to God, to look up into the glory, and to be there himself; the veil gone, Christ without a veil. There was a veil but it is rent. Now there is none —

none on the heart of the believer, none on the face of Christ or on ours; it is completely gone. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

What the Holy Ghost now ministers to us is not merely a Saviour who came down into our woe and misery to bear our iniquities and sins, but that same Saviour after the work of grace is done when He is gone up as the witness of its perfectness into the presence of God; and we are invited by the Holy Ghost to keep our eye fixed upon Him there, glorified according to the excellency of redemption. That will not make His grace in coming down here to be less precious; nor will it make redemption to be less prized, but much more. It will also imprint a heavenly character upon all our ways; and this, and nothing less, is our place. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly”; and, “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Then it will be perfect; now it is only partial, and according to the measure in which self is judged.

What hinders the practical effect, the heavenly power being reflected from us, is the unjudged activity of our nature. Do we not know it? When is it we do wrong? When is it we form mistaken judgments, and become careless and worldly? Just in proportion as our eye is off Christ as He is now in glory. I grant you that Christ anywhere before the soul is a preserving means. Nevertheless, there is no such power for overcoming the seductions of the world; and that which looks fair and religious in the world; nothing will do it thoroughly but Christ in glory. As far as leading out our souls in love

and devotedness is concerned, Christ here below will do it. But Christ in glory puts out the light of earth's best religion, and makes it appear pale and tawdry by the side of its surpassing brightness. We are invited, we are called upon as Christians, to behold Him in that glory continually now. The Lord give us so to walk, and we shall find the fruit of it, "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

One word more. There is nothing so dangerous as to trifle with the truth; nothing more ruinous than for men to use the brightest truth, and to be careless about the matters of every-day life. I beseech of you to remember this. There is something even of a disgusting character about it when we fail in ordinary duties, and yet are at the same time talking about resurrection and glory — life and all the special blessedness of the Christian position. I beseech you, my brethren and sisters, especially those of you who are young (though indeed it is a snare for old as well as young), think seriously of this. It is the natural snare of those who are accustomed to an atmosphere of truth, where the words of God are, so to speak, a common household bread. None are in such danger; but it is a danger because the eye and heart are not on Jesus. There will be power where there is simplicity with self-judgment; nowhere else.

W. K.

The Salvation of God

As typified in the Red Sea and the Jordan

Part 1 - The Red Sea

Exodus 14

We are all too apt to settle down with that which merely stays the craving of the conscience, and satisfies our own sense of what our sins deserve from God's hand; and this to the great impairing, not only of His glory, but also of our peace, instead of endeavouring to rise to the enjoyment of the full portion we have given us in the gospel.

This appears always in every part of the truth of God, and it will be made manifest here, I trust clearly, to the children of God, by that which certainly ought to be the known portion of all belonging to Christ. For I am not now going to speak of what might be safely unknown by any Christian. I am only going to treat of the common heritage of all that belong to Christ. I propose to speak, not of the whole even that by grace pertains to us from the very starting-place of our career, but of that part of our blessing which God has given us in redemption, by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians are too apt to settle down with this — that they have been awakened and feel their sins, and that they have found a blessed refuge and resource in the blood of Christ.

They are quite right as far as they go. God forbid that one should enfeeble the sense of the preciousness of Christ's blood. To enter into our full portion enhances

the value of His blood, and brings out the grace of God in its own fulness, not in any way shadowing even that which souls are apt to make their goal, but giving them to enjoy it richly, which they are too apt to content themselves without.

In general you will find that what souls are content to rest in is the answer in the New Testament to the type of the Passover.

No soul that is awakened of the Holy Ghost could find the smallest possible hope for his guilty soul save in the blood of the Lord Jesus. To Him pointed, as we know, the Passover lamb that was killed, the blood of which was sprinkled on the doorposts of Israel in the land of Egypt. It is plain that all Gods children must necessarily be sooner or later driven to find their shelter within the blood-sprinkled doors; there alone they are safely sheltered from judgment.

But they are apt to satisfy themselves with something short of what God has given. The paschal lamb's blood is not really all that God has given to us, even from the starting-place of the Christian.

The children of Israel, as you may see by the historical circumstances, were not yet redeemed out of Egypt, even after the blood was sprinkled. There was another need and a different action of God, following up the first, no doubt, but still another dealing of grace necessary to show the deliverance that Christ has really secured for the believer.

The truth of death and resurrection alone gives the believer the measure of the blessing which Christ has really procured; just as in the circumstances here, the

Red Sea itself was necessary to give the Israelite his deliverance from the house of bondage.

The New Testament fully teaches this. Take for instance, the First Epistle of Peter. There we find that we "are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,.... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"; but that is not all. The Spirit of God shows that by Him we believe in God, who raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

There you have our Red Sea. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus — the putting the people through the Red Sea answering to it as the type in the Old Testament — was necessary to complete the deliverance which God pledged the blood of the lamb to perform.

And so you find it also in the Epistle to the Romans. In Rom. 3 we have the blood of Jesus; in Rom. 4 we have the death and resurrection: the Red Sea being the type of the latter, as the Passover is of the former. We have Jesus shedding His blood in Rom. 3; Jesus raised again for our justification in Rom. 4; and then in the commencement of Rom. 5, we read — "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Holy Ghost does not say we have peace until we have the result of the death and resurrection of Christ, as well as of His blood, applied to our souls. I am not in the least denying that a soul may be filled with great joy without such knowledge. The attractive grace of Christ continually wins souls, leading them to rejoice before God; but joy and peace are very different things.

You never can have solid peace without knowing that all that is against you is judged of God. He would have me to look at what I have done and to feel what I am; nay, He would use means to bring a due sense of sin, and not only of my sins, before my soul — to judge self both in what I have done, and in what I am.

In the face of all, then, have you perfect peace? What could give you this? Not merely the blood of Christ. Without that precious blood there could be no peace; but the blood of Christ, whilst of infinite price, does not give the full measure of the blessing into which your soul is brought, even as a groundwork before God. He has made peace through the blood of His cross, no doubt; but still the way He brings me into the enjoyment of it is by showing Himself raised from the dead for our justification; and more than this, by showing us ourselves, dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Accordingly, then, we have this fully discussed in the Epistle to the Romans, and upon this I must dwell for a little.

First of all the apostle looks at our guilt in the sight of God — our actual sins; and, after this has been fully discussed, the other question which so often troubles the believer is taken up. I have been pardoned, and may be happy in redemption. I am enabled to look to God with a certainty that I am reconciled to Him; but there remains this that so shocks me — to find that, in spite of all, I have pride, foolishness, carnality, self- will, and a continual tendency to turn away from Him. All this surprises me so much the more that God has shown me such exceeding favour. Is there nothing to meet it? What is God's way of dealing with this sense of evil within, that we feel the more deeply because we are brought to

God? Are we merely to comfort ourselves with the thought of Christ's love, or that He shed His blood? Nay, there is more. Accordingly the apostle Paul deals with this more particularly in chapters 6, 7, 8 of Romans.

In Romans 6 the point is sin and our continuing in sin. Now he shows that this is altogether judged and met by the nature of the blessing that God has brought us into. It is not merely that I am to be consistent, or that I have got a motive in either the love or the blood of Christ. That is not all. What he says is, "How shall we that died to sin live any longer therein?" It is not "How shall we that are living now?" or "How shall we that have been brought to believe in Christ?" Not so. Quite another thought. Neither is it because we are washed with His blood, but "How shall we that died to sin live any longer therein?"

There is many a soul in this world striving to be dead to sin, and there is hardly anything that more tries Christian people. They are not surprised, before they are converted to God, that they should have sin; but, after they have been brought to Him, to feel within them the workings of sin alarms them indeed.

He does not meet this by turning them back to look at the cross, and by showing them the blood of Christ that was shed for them. The blood of Christ effaces the sins, but it does not meet the question of sin that is working in the believer after he is brought to God. What does? You died to sin, with Christ; and you ought to know and act on it.

There are a great many who do not know this; and an immense loss it is to them, because the effect of one's

not knowing this is, that he strives to become dead, instead of believing that he is.

This is at the bottom of all the legal efforts you find yourself and so many making. Ignorance of it led to nunneries, monasteries, and other similar devices in early days as now. But the same thing is found among Protestants. I do not mean they use these precise methods, but efforts to the same end. This led to all the schools of mystics and pietists, because the same condition is found amongst all until they get hold of the great truth that the Christian is dead with Christ.

Don't you know your baptism? He says (in Romans 6). Don't you know what God gave you at the beginning of your career? Don't you know what was meant in that first rite? Of course it is not the sign that could give a real blessing. Now, baptism with water is not at all the sign of the bloodshedding of Christ; therefore we hear nothing about it in chapter 3. It means a great deal more than bloodshedding. It sets forth our death to sin, and not merely that Christ died for our sins. In short, it sets forth the Red Sea, and not the Passover. That is, it shows me Christ's death applied to my nature — a condition that is so often the stumbling-block to the children of God, and the means of harassing them. Satan knows well how to work by it for the purpose of producing despair on the one hand, or of tempting to license on the other.

Christianity denies both. It dispels despair and delivers from license. It is the application of what God has wrought in the Lord Jesus to all of us — not merely to our sins, but to our sin, to that root of evil within; and just as He has shown me the blood blotting out my sins,

so He brings me to see that I am dead to sin. If He had not given me this, I were equally lost. It was true from the first, and accordingly in the very baptism of a Christian the Scripture sets forth this great fact. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto his death?"

Such is what baptism signifies. It is not the sign of life-giving but of death-giving so to speak — that is to say, it brings the believer into this place of death with Christ. It is the outward expression that if I have got Christ at all, the Christ I have is a Christ that died and rose again; and when I am baptized, I am "baptized unto his death."

This is immense comfort. "So many of us as were baptized unto Christ Jesus were baptized unto his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also [in the likeness] of [his] resurrection."

Now the reason why we look onward to this is, because we know "that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Why? "For he that died is freed (or, "justified," as the margin says,) from sin." It is not a question of being justified from sins, but from sin. It means that you in that very act confessed what has brought you out of your condition, out of that death where you lay as a sinful child of Adam. "He that died is justified from sin."

Then we have the present consequence: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,

but alive unto God, in (or, through) Christ Jesus." And then comes a practical consequence, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." That is, the sin is supposed to be there, but it is not to reign: and the reason is, because I am dead to sin. To every Christian, to every person to whom his baptism is a sign of a great reality by and with Christ, this is so.

It is not therefore a question of striving to be different, or seeking to feel this or that, but of believing what God has done for me in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we look at the Red Sea, we can understand how this applies.

After the Passover the children of Israel came into the greatest pressure of trouble. All they felt in Egypt was a little thing compared with what stared them in the face. They had left that land after the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled on their doors, but so hard pressed were they that there was nothing but death before their eyes. They had never, so far as their feelings were concerned, been so shut up to death as then.

On all sides there were obstacles they could not surmount. Behind them the army of their foes, and before them only more certain death. But that which seemed to them merely the waters of death was precisely what God was about to make the path of life; and Moses, at the word of God, lifted up his rod — that same rod of God which had brought judgment upon the Egyptians, which had plagued them often before. That rod was lifted up over the sea, and at once the waters of death rise up on either side as walls, and the children of Israel passed through protected; so much the more because it was evident that God was for them.

Not so on the night of the Passover. God, no doubt, did not permit the destroyer to touch them, but the blood of the lamb, instead of showing God for them, was merely a protection that God should not be against them.

It was not yet God for them. There was no communion. He was outside of where they were. The blood interposed between Him and them. How could a soul be at ease and at peace with God when that is the case? What I want is to be able to look up into the face of my God. What I want is that He should be with me, and that I should rest in His presence. But merely to have that which comes between myself and God would never give me solid comfort before God, and, indeed, it ought not. Accordingly the subsequent circumstances proved the condition into which the children of Israel had fallen — a condition of anxiety, and dread, and danger, worse than they had ever known before.

And it is frequently so with the Christian. After the soul has been directed to Christ, there is often a coming into deeper waters than ever, and a deeper realisation of one's own sinfulness than ever. The sense of sin after we have looked to Christ is far more acute and intense than when we fled for refuge at the beginning. There was then a path of life through death. God was for them; but that was not all, He was against the Egyptians. And so when the Israelites had passed over, the Red Sea closes upon their enemies and all are dead; then Israel was saved, and it is remarkable that here for the first time God uses the term salvation. He does not say salvation on the night of the paschal lamb, but when they have passed through the sea. Salvation is a great deal more than being kept safe. Salvation means that complete clearance from all our foes — that bringing us out of the

house of bondage, and setting us free and clean before God, to be His manifest people in the world. It was only pronounced when God brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness; it was when their foes were completely judged, and when they were so saved as never to pass under that kind of dread again.

Is it so with the Christian? Yes, surely. For what was the question then? The point then was, the prince of this world seeking to use and to turn God's righteous judgment against His own people — the prince of this world seeking to retain the people of God because of their sins; and what God shows is the complete judgment of their enemies — the destruction that fell upon all claim as against the people of God. God Himself publicly espoused their cause and acted on their behalf, so that they never returned to the house of bondage.

At the Red Sea it was the rod of judgment that was lifted up over the waters — it was that rod that smote the Egyptians with all plagues. So it is in the Epistle to the Romans. It is always righteousness. It is a question of turning righteousness against the people of God; but Christ has come, and by His blood He has cleansed them, and by death and resurrection He has brought them out of the place over which judgment hung — completely outside. There is no judgment any more. They see their sin, as well as their sins, completely gone in consequence of Christ's having undergone God's judgment. Therefore chapter 6 of Romans is the first place where sin in our walk is discussed; and in dealing with this question the apostle shows that we died to sin, and that the gift of God now is eternal life. Sin cannot touch the believer, for he is dead to it.

The next point is law. That, he shows, cannot touch the believer either, and for this reason, that I have "been made dead to the law." So in Romans 7, "we have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ" It is not some fresh means, but it is the application of that which is true already, to the law, even supposing I had been a Jew. That is, it is the death of Christ, applied to both sin and law, that gives the believer his clearance. And now we are "married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." So it is as wrong for a believer still to have a thought of being "under the law" as for a woman to have two husbands at once. We are dead to the law that we should belong to another.

In Romans 8 we have it very fully. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And he explains this in two ways. How could you condemn them? "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." How could you condemn what is perfectly good? That which God has given me in the Spirit of life in Christ. But there is another reason. God has condemned sin already. There is a reason founded upon the character of the new life, that God will never condemn what is good. But, moreover, God has condemned the bad life already: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." He has already judged my nature. It is not a question of forgiveness. I do not want my nature to be forgiven; I do not forgive it myself.

It is a great comfort that God in the Lord Jesus Christ has dealt with sin in the flesh. It was not enough that Christ by His own perfect purity condemned sin in the

flesh, for that would have made me worse than ever; but after Christ in His life showed me a pattern of all purity, He became a sacrifice for sin, and then God condemned sin in the flesh — this nature that troubled me. Accordingly, if God has given me a new nature found in Christ risen from the dead, and also has condemned my old nature, it is very evident there can be no condemnation to those in Christ. You see in every point of view there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus. Their walking after the Spirit is the consequence — the effect — of it; and the more I know I am delivered, the more happy my soul will be, and the stronger I will be in walking after the Spirit.

Although the believer is supposed to be perfectly brought out of this state of condemnation — out of the evil condition in which he was — yet for all that, he is in the wilderness; and so truly is this the case, that in this eighth of Romans, however happy, he is groaning, he is only "saved in hope." He is still in the wilderness, and so completely is this the case, that the Holy Ghost becomes the power of his groaning in the wilderness. So the analogy is perfect between the Christian and the Israelites, who were brought out of Egypt, but who never returned to it.

After they came out, they raise the song of triumph. There is no singing in Egypt. Here we find them singing on the other side of the Red Sea; but for all that, they are travelling through the wilderness — they are only going on to the rest of God — they are still toiling through the scene of trial, where, if there is not dependence on God, they perish. I speak now, of course, not in application to the Christian as a question of eternal life, but of practical experience. The wilderness

is the place where flesh dies, and where all hangs on the simplicity of dependence on the love of God.

Part 2 - The Jordan

Joshua 3, 4

It is evident that the Jordan is a type similar in its character to that of the Red Sea. I need not say that, whether in the type of the Red Sea or the Jordan, it is what grace has given the believer.

But then there is a most sensible difference, at the Jordan there is no such thing as a rod. It is another symbol altogether. The ark of the covenant of Jehovah, borne by the priests, goes right down into the Jordan; and from the moment the priests' feet approach the water, the waters fail on one side and rise up in a heap on the other; and so, while the ark remains in the bed of the river, the children of Israel pass clean over.

And when all is done, we find another remarkable point; that is to say, we have a memorial. It is not Egyptians destroyed. There is no question of judgment. The point is neither the justification of the people of God on the one hand, nor the judgment of enemies on the other. This is the great question of the Red Sea. At the Jordan God was bringing forth His people into His own land. Accordingly it sets forth One, a divine Person, who goes down into the waters of death and there alone stayed the proud waters till thus the people are brought through.

How does this apply to Christ? I answer, The Jordan finds its counterpart not in Romans but in Ephesians. In Ephesians, accordingly, there is no discussion of justification. Search it through and through, and you will

fail to find in it the righteousness of God. If God accomplishes the great work that was before His mind (even before there was a world to be spoiled), if He intended to have a people who should have a nature capable of communion with Himself, a nature that never could be satisfied without being in heaven, that delights in His mind and love; if God intended, I say, to have such a people, and to have them, too, in the nearest possible relation to Himself, to have them as His own children in His own presence, how could justifying come in there? It is evident God does not need to justify such a work as this. I can understand when a person has got wrong, or when we think of the ungodly, that this should be told us. It is an infinite mercy that God has His own blessed way of justifying the ungodly; but there is no notion of justifying that which is perfectly according to God.

Hence in the Epistle to the Ephesians we never have the subject of justification. It is not that the apostle does not look into the state into which those that are the objects of God's mercy had got; for the second chapter is as plain as Romans 3 about the dreadful condition of those that were brought into that relationship. But in Romans we have, in the fullest manner, their sins proved and brought home to the conscience. We have their evil ways all traced fully, and yet God justifies. We have also their evil condition; and yet God takes them out of that condition, and gives them a new place. In Ephesians it is another aspect. The first thought the apostle dwells on is the purpose of God.

It is God's righteousness that justifies, as in Romans; not His mercy. There is not the smallest hint, therefore, of straining a point.

We know a king may, in order to forgive, pardon a person altogether guilty. I do not say the temper of the world would admit it, still less do I say that man is capable of using such a prerogative as God's grace. But it remains equally true, that it is not merely mercy, but righteousness which justifies, and the believer is the only one that owns his unworthiness and feels his sins according to God.

But in Ephesians another thing appears; God is there purposing from Himself and for Himself; it is God that delights in His own counsel. He means not to be alone in heaven. He means to surround Himself with men thoroughly happy. He means to give them that which would be capable of answering to His own mind and ways, and accordingly in a relationship suitable to it. This is what He does. But what, after all, is their state, when taken up by grace? Dead in trespasses and sins. And this makes it the more remarkable, that there is not a word about justification. But Christ goes down into that death where they lay, goes down underneath their condition, so to speak; and this is the only way in which it is handled in Ephesians. He by grace went down there, and God raised Him up, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. The point in Jordan is, not bringing the people out of slavery, but bringing them into the land, "into heavenly places in Christ."

Will you say, That is when we die? When Israel crossed the Jordan, they entered on a scene of conflict, I ask, When we die and go to heaven shall we have to fight there? No. Well then, if so, it is wrong to make it our dying and going to heaven. The passing of the Jordan means, the bringing the believer into "heavenly places" in such a way that he shall fight and win the victory too.

This is the meaning of it. How can a Christian be brought into heavenly places while here? This is what the Epistle to the Ephesians tells us.

You will see how different this is from what was found in crossing the Red Sea. Hence the style of doctrine in Ephesians is different from that of Romans; that is the reason why in Ephesians, it is "heavenly places" that are spoken of. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

Yet all this is true to faith now. Of course when we actually go to heaven we shall not lose this place of blessing, but the point that Paul insists on is, that God has already blessed us thus and there in Christ.

The end of the first chapter shows that God raised up Christ from the dead, and set Him in heavenly places; and the beginning of the second chapter shows that in doing this God laid the foundation for our being put in the very same place before God. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, quickened us together with Christ,.... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." We have already then crossed the Jordan. It is not that we are to cross it, but that we have crossed it now.

Is Christ "in the heavenly places"? Am I united to Christ now, or am I only going to be united when I die? Am I now in this very place before God, raised up together with Christ, and so "in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus?" It is quite evident that the doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians is, that we are so; it is notorious that

the doctrine of most Christians is, that we cannot be so till we die.

Now, why is it that people do not enter into this truth? The reason is, you cannot be both a prosperous earthly man, entering into that which occupies men here below, and a heavenly man too; but the natural mind would like to make the best of this world, and the best of the next too. The truth is, I must cross the Jordan now as a Christian; nay, I have crossed it in Christ, if I am a Christian. So you will observe I am not going to point out to you what you have to do, but I wish to make plain what God has done for you, if you are Christians. How blessed it is that Christianity does not hold out what I must attain to in order to be saved, but is a revelation of what God has given me in Christ!

God gives me, and you that believe, a salvation so full, that it not only means that we have been brought across the Red Sea (thus made pilgrims and strangers), but that we have been brought across the Jordan into heavenly places, and blessed with all spiritual blessings there. You say, perhaps, it is mysticism. No such thing. It is the very negation of mysticism. For this turns the eye to Christ, and God's work in Christ; whereas mysticism occupies the heart with its feelings about Him. If Christ is my life, and Christ is seated there, it is evident that I have, by the Spirit of God who dwells in me, and who has been sent by that Christ, a divine link with Him who has entered in there. It is thus that God speaks of us according to that which is true of Christ. That is, Christ being there and He being the life of the believer, and the Holy Spirit the power of that life, we are spoken of according to the place that Christ has entered.

The grand point of the Red Sea is what Christ brings us out of, and that of the Jordan is what Christ brings us into. It is quite evident that what God sets forth by this type is the sweet and blessed truth, that Christ having entered into the very place where God means the Christian to be, God would form us according to Him in that which is to be our true home. Our proper home is not this world, nay, not even in the millennial state. Our hope is not any change that will ever take place in this world, but the "Father's house," where Christ is dwelling. God means that where He is we shall be. It is not merely that Christ will come and bless us where we are (like Israel by and by), but that He will come and take us to where He is; this is what we are waiting for; but meanwhile we are viewed and treated as one with Him to whom we are united there.

I do not mean that we can do without the Epistle to the Romans. The Christian who gets so full of Ephesian truth that he can do without Romans (or, I would add, Hebrews), is on dangerous ground; while he that thinks he can do without Ephesians is flying in the face of God, and the glory of His grace. If He has given us a full cup of blessing in Christ, our wisdom is to seek to understand what our portion is; and the great practical business of the Christian is to live according to the place wherein he is set by God.

If God has brought me out of the house of bondage, He has also put me in heavenly places in Christ. It is not a question of what I see or feel. It is all very well we should appreciate what we are, but we must believe first; and when we take in the completeness of the deliverance out of Egypt, then we see in type what we are delivered from; and when we believe our portion in

heavenly places, what can we do but bless Him who has so blessed us?

The First Epistle to the Corinthians, though by no means so full of this as that to the Ephesians, brings before us the principle of this truth: "As is the heavenly such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The first thought is, that we are heavenly now; and the second is, that though we are heavenly, we do not yet bear the image of the heavenly, but we shall. What a deliverance from mysticism! Mysticism is merely the craving of the heart to feel within what it would desire to have; but faith avoids this occupation with self, and enters into the truth of God. It may be a mystery; but it is one unveiled, and which God makes to be most real and intelligible by the power of the Holy Ghost, for God, of His own grace, has counselled, done, and given it all to us in Christ.

Thus you see the passage of the Jordan differs essentially from the crossing of the Red Sea. Even for the children of Israel at the Red Sea, there was the rod, the judicial rod of power; which for the Egyptians brought destruction. Besides, there was no lasting memorial set up. When you come to the Jordan, there was a double memorial. Twelve stones were placed in the bed of the river, where the feet of the priests rested; and other twelve were taken out of it and were brought to Gilgal.

This reminds me of another fact that gives us a beautiful link with the Epistle to the Colossians. When Israel passed through the Red Sea, circumcision was not practised — there was no sign of the mortification of the

flesh — but when they passed through the Jordan they submitted to it. Circumcision means the mortification of the flesh. This furnishes another reason why the common doctrine on this point cannot be true; for when we are dead and gone to heaven there is no flesh to be mortified. Alas! it explains also why self-judgment is so feeble in the mass of those who love the Lord. They know the Lamb and His sprinkled blood; they freely realise their deliverance from Egypt into the wilderness, but not at all their position in Him above, nor consequently do they know Gilgal, where the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from the circumcised.

When the children of Israel crossed the Jordan they placed two memorials — one of death and one of resurrection, showing that in every sense death is gone. But more than that, flesh now is mortified. And there is nothing that gives the soul the sense of the end of the flesh, its being judged thoroughly, and the comfort of it, so much as the consciousness of death and resurrection as bringing us into our true place before God.

Hence, in Colossians, the Holy Ghost speaks not only of a baptism, but also says, "in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in the putting off of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11).

In the next chapter we read "Mortify, therefore, your members which are on the earth." So there is this double application. According to the book of Joshua they were first circumcised; and, let them move where they might, they come back to Gilgal. This is a call to continual mortification of the flesh, on the ground that we have been once for all circumcised. Our circumcision

was God's dealing with our nature in the death of Christ; but on the ground of this we have to mortify our members. If God has already judged the flesh, what I as a Christian am called to do is to take God's side against my own evil nature. I am called to cherish direct communion with God in condemning any and everything that is unlike Him. This type, you see, is full of direct instruction to the soul, and so far from being a mere theory is eminently practical. I have no doubt this is the reason why people shrink from the types of both the Red Sea and the Jordan. Many would like to know that they shall be protected from judgment, but God would put them in association with His own objects. He gives me a heavenly title that I should have my mind set on things above; for He would have my mind formed by these new and heavenly objects that are where Christ is.

And oh, beloved brethren, what a relief it is that in the common business of this world one can have one's mind and heart set upon what will never perish! Let us have our hearts occupied with what is precious in God's eyes. We can take up other things as matters of duty; but the moment we make them objects, we altogether miss the mind of God. It does not matter what the thing may be. Suppose a person at any business; it makes all the difference possible whether he is simply doing it to God as that which He has given him to do, or whether it is what he likes and takes pleasure in, his object being to be great or rich by it. Where this is the case, I am practically making this world to be the scene of my enjoyment. I am not even treating it as a wilderness, still less am I acting as associated with Christ in heavenly places. On the other hand, if I hold firmly, as from God, that even now I am a heavenly man, still, if God has

given me anything to do, I do it — no matter what it may be.

Accordingly, in Ephesians 5 and Ephesians 6, you find all these earthly ties which may rightly be the relationships of heavenly men and women and children; but the only true power of walking well on earth is to remember that I am a heavenly man. It is not only that I am a delivered man, but I am put in present association with heavenly associations in Christ; and unless I bear this in mind, how can I behave myself suitably to the position I am in?

Suppose you take the case of a member of the royal family that for a time goes incognito to some other country. Though he hides his glory, he carries the sense of it in his heart. The Queen of England might travel on the continent by the title of the Duchess of Kent, yet would she have the secret consciousness that she was Sovereign of an empire on which the sun never sets. So with the Christian: the world does not know his title. The world would think it downright fanaticism to be talking about heavenly persons when here below; but we know not merely this, but that the world is under the judgment of the Lord, and it is only the breath of His mouth that is between it and everlasting judgment. We know that the Lord Jesus Christ is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Oh, on what a hair hangs the judgment of this world! but as to us who believe, judgment has passed for ever; — I mean judgment as against us on God's part. I do not mean that we shall not have all our ways manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall all appear, but shall never appear as criminals there. If Christ has

brought us now into the favour of God we are not going to lose it when we are risen and glorified.

I beseech of you to hold fast this precious truth. You have passed across the Jordan as truly as you have marched through the Red Sea. You are not only to remember that you are pilgrims, but that you have a living link with heaven; be sure you regard it as your own proper home. The wilderness is merely a place of sojourn; but the heavenly places are our only abiding place. God's purpose to have us in heaven was made before the world was. The world has become sinful, and so has become a wilderness, for there would be no wilderness if there was not sin; but God has delivered us in grace from our sins, and has also brought us in spirit through the wilderness. As a matter of fact, indeed, we have sin, and are passing through the wilderness; but in title, and as united to Christ, we are clear from both. May God in His grace give us to enter more into this truth, and to live in the power of it!

W.K.

Life Eternal

With F.E.R.'S Heterodoxy As To It, Other Divine Truths And Above All Christ's Person This immense privilege given to the believer let us weigh as scripture presents it. Always of the deepest moment, the assertion of its truth is more than ever called for, as will appear to faithful men before this paper closes. The spirit of error boldly opposes the Spirit of truth. Christ Himself is not only imperilled but misrepresented and undermined by the error; and error against the Son is of all things hateful to the Father. How dear to the Christian should be the truth!

For Christ is revealed to be, not only the true God, but life eternal (1 John 5:20). The Father raises the dead and quickens (John 5:21); and so does the Holy Spirit, as Rom. 8 shows variously; but it is emphatically said of Him who is image of the invisible God and object of faith to man. He, the eternal Word, became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth. For of His fulness we all received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, He declared [Him] (John 1:14-18). Hence the apostle (2 Tim. 1:10) lays it down that Christ annulled death and brought to light life and incorruption through the gospel. Only then and thus were they revealed in Him personally, through His work and by words He spoke, spirit and life to His own.

In the O.T. the light as to this shone dimly, the expressions were comparatively vague, yet enough to

convey a real sense of a blessed state of future being for those who truly received the testimony of God. This is certain from the Synoptists as well as John's Gospel: Matt. 19:16, Mark 10:30; also Luke 10:25, and John 5:39. Abel's faith testifies the death of another for the need of his soul. Was it lost on others? The translation of Enoch bore witness to a life in heaven, as he had walked in that life on earth before God took him. Was this too without help as to life for saints after him? When Abraham said to God, O, that Ishmael might live before thee! we can hardly imagine that he thought only of the earth and present things. Certainly "Thou wilt make known to me the path of life" conveyed far more (Psalm 16:11), and such words as "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

The direct source of what even Jews owned in our Lord's day was presumably such scriptures as the last verse of Psalm 133. "life for evermore," and the exact phrase in Dan. 12:2, as has often been remarked. Nor ought we to doubt that the revelation of grace which man heard at the fall itself gave assurance to repentant hearts, from the outset of his sad history, that the coming Seed of the woman would not only crush the mischievous power of evil but bless saints who looked to God through him with a new life victorious over death and capable of enjoying Himself in peace. Abraham exulted that he should see Christ's day; and he saw and rejoiced. The resurrection of the just was before Job (Job 19:25-27), no less than of the unjust (Job 14:10-12); the one connected with the Kinsman Redeemer's standing up on the last day on this earth of dust, as the other is with even the heavens being no more.

Thus from the O.T. we gather that life everlasting by psalm and prophet was bound up with Messianic days of power and glory. The Lord in Matt. 25:46 enlarged the Jewish expectation so as to embrace equally those saints of all the nations who receive the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom at the end of the age. Said generally of Israel, it is expressly applied to the believers of the ten tribes so long sleeping in the dust, and to those of the nations who believe at that time. It seemed needless to say it of the God-fearing Jewish remnant.

All this remains true; but it is not all the truth. Now comes that which is distinctive of Christianity. Here we find a rich part of the “better thing” God foresaw for us. It was reserved for Him Who was worthy, Whose personal dignity it suited, through Whom grace and truth assumed subsistence and shape, to make known present life, in the Gospel which starts with the Son unknown to the world and rejected by His own people. To Nicodemus, as far as revelation speaks, it was first divulged, and this when he was but an enquirer, stirred in conscience but not yet born anew. The Lord, correcting his ignorance in view of what the Jewish teacher ought to have known from the ancient oracles for the earthly things of the kingdom, presents Himself come in flesh as the sole way to the Father by faith. How adequate a Witness was He who says of Himself that no one has gone up to heaven save He who came down out of it, the Son of man that is (not that “was” merely) in heaven! “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that every one that believeth on him may have life eternal: For God so loved the world that he gave his only-

begotten Son, that every one that believeth on him may not perish but have life eternal" (John 3:14-16). Thus the positive blessing is the gift of life eternal, followed up by the assurance of "not perishing" and being "saved" (ver. 17), as flowing from divine grace. The believer was brought in Christ to receive known life, a life eternal capable of knowing and enjoying God Himself.

If John 4:14 speaks of the Holy Spirit as given the believer to be "in him a fountain of water, springing up unto life eternal" (inward power rising up to its fulness), John 5 opens the source. It is not healing sin-sick man wants, but life. Angelic visitation is quite insufficient; He was present Who is Son of God and Son of man. Jesus gives life in communion with the Father. He, received as Son of God, quickens; if rejected, He solely judges by-and-by as Son of man. Thus is there also a twofold resurrection to come: one of life for those who practised good (the issue of divine life); the other of judgment for those that did evil (as dead in trespasses and sins). If they believed not on the Son of God, they cannot escape Him when He executes judgment as Son of man. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word and believeth Him that sent me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (ver. 24). Here revelation is explicit that the believer on Christ has life eternal. It is not future only, but his present possession. It is not surer that he does not come into judgment than that he has passed out of death into life eternal. Verse 25 is precise with the same solemn asseveration. "Verily, verily, I say to you, An hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard shall live." Hearing Him and consequently "now" is pointedly

distinguished from His voice afterwards calling from the tombs specifically, first those who share the first resurrection, and next such as are raised for judgment or the second death. How solemn a word for such as searched the scriptures, thinking that in them they had life eternal! In fact the scriptures bore witness concerning Jesus; yet would the Jews not come to Him that they might have life. For in Him, not in them, was life; and the life is the light of men.

John 6 appropriately follows, setting aside, not only every other object, but even for the present His own Messianic glory according to promise and prophecy. Jesus is shown to be the true bread which the Father gives out of heaven. It is Himself incarnate, the bread of life; so that every one that beholds the Son and believes on Him should have life eternal, and as a distinct but sure consequence, be raised up by Him at the last day. This elicits the deepening unbelief of the Jews, and the Lord again solemnly affirms “Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth hath life eternal.” But He goes on to the gift of His flesh, not for Israel only, but for the life of the world. As the Jews contended yet more, He said, “Verily, verily, I say to you, Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk His blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day.” The possession of life eternal is most real now, the result for the body no less sure and glorious, as the full victory of life in Christ over death.

It should be borne in mind however that John speaks also of life eternal in the final sense, as in John 4:14, John 5:39, John 6:27, John 12:25.

Knowing in Himself that not Jews only but His disciples were murmuring at a word so foreign to Jewish thought, Jesus said, “Does this offend you? If then ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?” It is Himself again, not incarnate only, nor in death, but going up to heaven; a move traversing all Jewish expectation, once Messiah was here. But it is the characteristic of Christianity there to know Him, though given to another apostle to develop as connected with the mystery concerning Christ and the church. Here the great truth is the Son of man, not as Judge of quick and dead, but meanwhile the food of Christian faith, and the means of having eternal life now, while awaiting its crown at the last day, and without loss of either for a single soul that believed, in bright contrast with the present ruin of Messianic hopes so withering to Jewish hearts. To receive the incarnate Son rejected by the Jews was to have life eternal. Yet He must die to glorify God and deliver sinful man; and so faith eats His flesh and drinks His blood. Unbelief might seem to welcome Him incarnate, but betrays its opposition to God and its rest in humanitarianism by stumbling at the still deeper grace, even expiation, and judgment of sin in order to bring in a new state, of which the possession of life eternal now is the pledge, and that completed state the blessed and sure result. His words are indeed spirit and are life.

In John 7 as in chap. 4 we hear not of “life” exactly, but of “living water” which is more, being the Spirit in power: the one as a fountain within springing up, power for worship, the other as rivers flowing out, power for testimony to Him who, refused by the Jews, is already glorified at God’s right hand.

In John 8 and John 9 the Lord is fully revealed and rejected, first in His word and so in His divine nature and His Person; secondly in His work when become flesh, and so operating that those confident and proud of their sight are blinded judicially, and that those who saw not, being born blind, see clearly according to God. Here we have in both chapters Christ the light of the world, with the blessed effect, for him that follows Him, of having “the light of life” (John 8:12). It is not only knowing Christ but having Him as his life, the light of men. Now is the great need of it, and here in this world of darkness, whatever may be soon for the fulness of bright enjoyment on high. But the subject called for no more than, “Verily, verily, I say to you, If any one shall keep my word he shall never behold (or, taste) death” (John 8:51, 52). Figurative terms he employs, but in the strongest way He claims to give a life superior to death through His word kept, as Satan murders through his lie. Christ is the light of life.

John 10 is more simple and definite. “The thief cometh not but that he may steal and kill and destroy; I came that they might have life and might have [it] abundantly” (ver. 10). Incarnate, He was life, and gave it to the believer; but when He died and rose, it was His life in resurrection power, with all the offences forgiven (Col. 2:13). Truly it was life abundantly, and marked on the resurrection day by His breathing on His own, as He is never shown to do before (John 20:22). As in all previous cases, the birth is said to be not only of the word (typified by water) but the Spirit, so now He said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit, for indeed such was its character, though the Paraclete was not yet given to dwell in them in personal power. And there the non-

imputation of sin is impressively implied by His investing them with the administrative function of remitting or retaining the sins of others, as the occasion might require in God's service. It is an important accession, and here distinctly announced, as well as significantly fulfilled, as we have seen. His Person and His work are the key.

In a further discourse of the same chapter our Lord explains to the Jews why they refused all evidence and witness. "But ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give to them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. My Father who hath given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to seize out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (vers. 26-30). Here indefeasible security is assured: neither inner failure nor outer force could jeopardise their life; it is maintained by the Father and the Son, who were not more truly one in divine nature than in loving care for the sheep.

In John 11:25 Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life." Of this the resurrection of Lazarus, dead and buried, was a bright testimony. If it be said that this raising up was but to natural life, His words that follow look forward beyond doubt to its final perfection. "He that believeth on me, though he have died, shall live; and everyone that liveth and believeth on me shall never die." So will it be at His coming. The dead believer shall be raised, and so live as to the body evermore; the living believer shall not die, but have mortality swallowed up of life. The phrase "eternal life" is not here used; but this it is, and in full conformity to Himself even bodily, for heavenly and everlasting glory. Again, in John 12:50

says the Lord, “I know that His (the Father’s) commandment is life eternal.” This the Father gave Him, what He should say and speak. Eternal life, not providential care nor governmental dealings, was the blessed subject-matter of the Father’s injunction and of the Son’s gracious declaration. If He and His words in grace so rich were not received by any, that word which He spoke should judge him at the last day.

The Lord in John 14:6 says to Thomas words divinely suited to banish his gloom and readiness to stick at difficulties, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” In seeing the Son they had seen the Father whom He declared and made known. Thus then He Himself was the way to the Father, as He was the living word or the truth, and also the life, the divine nature which alone knows and enjoys Him as God and Father. And this is so true, as the Holy Spirit when given would enable the disciples fully to apprehend, that Christ does not hesitate to say in vers. 19, 20, “because I live, ye also shall live.” How truly is He our life! “In that day ye shall know (γν.) that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” Their beholding Jesus in that day would be in no way a physical fact, such as the Jews will have of the Messiah, but in the Spirit; and so is their life, and such is their knowledge as Christians, that Christ is in the Father, they in Him (as is marked in the Epistle to the Ephesian saints),1 and He in them (equally so in that to the Colossians):2 the true and distinctive knowledge, and privilege of the Christian.

If John 15 opens with fruit-bearing as due to the Father and flowing from our abiding in Christ, and is followed by preparing the disciples for the world’s hatred, yet to be strengthened by the Spirit’s witness whom Christ

should send from the Father, in addition to what they heard and saw from the beginning, John 16 dwells on the action of the present Spirit toward the world and in the saints. But in John 17:2, 3 we have the Son, the Second man, with authority given Him by the Father, and the special object of giving life eternal to all those given to Him. “And this is the eternal life, that they should know (γιν.) thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send.” His work, like His glorifying His Father on the earth follows and is distinct; His giving eternal life precedes as attaching to faith in His Person, whatever the added power when He rose from the dead.

Here too it is objectively presented, though generally applied to our subjective state. For the Lord speaks of what forms and characterises it to our faith in its full Christian import. Those have the eternal life now who receive the wondrous revelation, in manifest contrast with Jewish thoughts of Jehovah and His Anointed. As yet He had dwelt in the thick darkness. Not till the Father was revealed in the Son whom He sent as man was the true God known. And He is thus to be known as the Lord had already shown by the power of the Spirit to be sent forth. Higher, deeper, nearer than this (when the Lord adds His going on high after the work was completed) God Himself, be it said reverently, could not go; and this now constitutes to us life eternal as objective revelation. Heavenly counsels in their immense scope were left for the Spirit to reveal by the apostle chosen in sovereign grace, when redemption would fit the believers to receive what they could not then bear. But here the Lord concentrates His teaching into a few simple words of marvellous depth, as bringing His own

into the communion of the Father and of the Son which transcends all other relations, about to be definitely made theirs on His resurrection day (John 20:17).

Here it is not only life eternal such as Christ gave when souls believed on Him in the days of His flesh, but in its full development for the Christian. In no case is it natural life but supernatural, not of man but of God, nor a restoration of the life which Adam had unfallen, but life in the Son, the life of the Second man, not the first. Every saint that ever lived to God had this life, for none ever lived to God save of the life the Son gave, He object of the faith of all the faithful, though only when come revealed as the Son of the living God, the Only-begotten Son of the Father. The life that it was in Him which quickened those who believe could and did through Him in communion with the Father acquire its highest character, when He was manifested in flesh, and, we may add looking to His glorification, not simply on the ground of His Person but on that of His work which avails for us as well as every other purpose of God. Hence the emphasis laid here on “the eternal life,” and its declared character as giving the knowledge of the Father, and His Son whom He sent, Jesus Christ.

The knowledge of the Father and of His Son Jesus already sent is in effect the possession of life eternal; they are inseparable. But it was not throughout the O. T. so characterised, nor could be till the Son of God was come and had given us an understanding to know Him that is true, as is implied in the verse before us. Yet none the less were all saints born of God; only if now, Christ gave this title to those that believe on His name (John 1:12, 13). Yet Himself laid down (Luke 20:35, 36) that all saints “are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection”

i.e. from out of dead men, the “first” and “better” resurrection of life. They were born of the Spirit and thus had life as truly as we, though they understood it not. But God was pleased to mark it as life eternal when Christ was received in His rejection, and yet more in His ascension glory. But it was life eternal all through, though suitably so designated according to the new revelation. And Christ gives it now in this present character and fulness. The gospel brought it to light and in power through resurrection; but it was ever in the Son, and believers had it in Him, in unbroken connection with its source.

A few words more may be cited from John (John 20:31), the apostle’s comment on the selected signs, rather than many others not written, which the Lord did before His disciples. “But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name.” Scripture is all the more perfect, because God’s design excludes what is not needed to render His mind clear, no matter how excellent might be any other deeds or words. An unneeded addition, however in itself excellent, would have been really a defect. Nor is the best of men capable of carrying out the design save as inspired of God to write. But here the aim as to the readers is plainly stated. The first of all divine claims is to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; the first of all blessed issues is to have life in His name. It is the eternal life, or life everlasting, as the Lord called it often not only in John 17:2, 3, but in 3, 5, 6, 10, 12. It was always such substantially, though wise and fitting to reserve the known gift of it now for the rejected Christ. He imparts this new, everlasting and divine being; and the believer

receives it, in virtue of which he is to be glorified with Christ. But even now He is a life-giving Spirit. The glorious result for the body awaits His coming again.

In the two short Epistles of John love and truth are applied in divine wisdom, and set forth richly in his First Epistle where life eternal is found afresh, the governing principle throughout. As wisdom in Prov. 8 points to Christ, so does the life eternal in the grand introduction here. “What was from [the] beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and report to you the eternal life, the which was with the Father and was manifested to us): what we have seen and heard we report to you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea and our fellowship [is] with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we to you that your joy may be full.” (1 John 1:1-4) The manifestation of the life in the fullest degree was to the apostles, though not restricted to them, that they might report to others, who taught in faith have fulness of joy in sharing their fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus on the basis of eternal life, the same life which, he declared, was with the Father before the manifestation, and then unrestricted in time; for He was eternal.

The statement is not abstract as in John 5:26 (“the Father hath life in himself”), but personal (“with the Father” πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα); it cannot be truthfully denied. Walking in the light indispensably accomplishes such a fellowship as this. The rest of the chapter lays down to us the divine message, judging every false profession, while the true one enjoys the grace that

cleanses from every sin through the blood of Jesus His Son. Provision for failure is in the advocacy of the Righteous One with the Father (in 1 John 2:1, 2), as He too is propitiation in all its abiding value, and widest application.

Then from 1 John 2:3 follows practical application to those that bear His name: obedience first in 3-6; love next in 7-11; the necessary traits and exercises of the life in Christians, contrasted with spurious professors. There succeeds a most instructive and interesting digression on the family of God, and its differences in 12-28, all being addressed in these extremes, each class (fathers, young men, and little children or babes) in the intervening verses. The only express reference to the eternal life is in 25, where its promise before the world is meant, not that it remains a promise unaccomplished now.

Then in renewing the theme of practical righteousness, as the proof of being born of Him Who is righteous, is a parenthesis of grace in 1 John 3:1-3 to strengthen the warning against lawlessness. Thereon he resumes the thread, but presents Christ as the clean opposite, Who not only took away our sins, and had no sin, but gives a nature like Himself, and this in love as well as righteousness. The world on the contrary hates; and as we know that we have passed out of death to life because we love the brethren, so to hate one's brother is to be a murderer; and no murderer, we know, has life eternal abiding in him, like the believer.

We may now however omit a glance at the rest and the precious 1 John 4, for the next direct occurrence is in 1 John 5:1, etc. "Every one that believeth that Jesus is the

Christ is begotten (or, born) of God; and every one that loveth him that begot loveth him also that is begotten of him... For every thing that is begotten of God overcometh the world." Only a perverse will could question that one spiritually born of God has divine life in His Son, who in no way treats "life eternal" as a higher or a future life; for in John 6:40, 47 He in terms predicates it of the result of faith in Him incarnate no less than of faith in giving His flesh to eat and His blood to drink in ver. 54, that is, faith in His death. Again, who can avoid seeing in vers. 11, 12 of our context that "life eternal" and "life" are interchangeable in this sense, though the one may be more fully expressed than the other in divine wisdom? But they mean the self-same life of Christ. No less truly were the O.T. saints begotten of God, and instinct with that life, though it could not be said that they believed in our Lord Jesus, but had rather a living hope in Him that was to come. Such was necessarily the character of their faith, but faith it surely was, the faith of God's elect in their day. No intelligent saint doubts their good portion through divine grace, which we, for whom God provided some better thing, should be the last to doubt or disparage. Nor was it a small part of the greater blessing to believe on Jesus, revealed by the Father as the Son of God (the living God), on Him too that came by water and blood with the Spirit bearing witness as well as the water and the blood.

"And this is the witness that God gave us life eternal, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." (1 John 5:11, 12) To us it is made known, as it could not be to an O.T. saint, and we therefore know it as they could

not. This is fully warranted to us by the next verse (13): “These things I write [the epist. aor., or, I wrote] to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know (εἰδ.) that ye have life eternal.” This conscious knowledge of it, what a privilege and to us essentially characteristic of Christianity! Nor does the Epistle close without reminding us that, among other things consciously known by us, this is one, “that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we should know (γιν.) him that is true; and we are in the true One, in his Son Jesus Christ: he is the true God, and life eternal.” How establishing and endearing to us! What a safeguard against every idol!

It was not the apostle Paul’s work to dwell on the present gift of life eternal to the believers. The righteousness and the counsels of God are fully treated in his Epistles with Christ’s work the basis, His resurrection and ascension to give them heavenly character, and His coming to crown all. Hence He speaks of life eternal at the end (Rom. 2:7, Rom. 5:21, Rom. 6:22). He does however speak, not only of reigning in life but of justification of life (Rom. 5:17, 18): a remarkable phrase, and a blessed privilege which the Christian is meant to enjoy now. It is not “eternal” only but in risen form and power. Justified by His blood meets our sins, justified in His risen life goes farther and meets sin, sin in the flesh, not what we did evilly but our evil self, in Him dead and risen. Hence we are called Rom. 6:4 to “walk in newness of life.” This assuredly does not refer to walking with Christ in white when in glory, but to present walk here below. But this implies the life of Christ ours now as truly as then, when all is complete. It is none other than life eternal. And as Christ, being

raised, lives to God, so are we to count ourselves dead indeed to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus. Such is the virtue of His death and resurrection, as Rom. 7 states, that, had we been Hebrews of Hebrews, we were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that we should belong to another that was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God: an impossible result without life, life eternal. So in Rom. 8:2 the law, not of Moses, but "of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (compare John 20:22) made me free from the law of sin and death, the communication of Christ's risen life, the form in which He now gives life eternal to every Christian. The co-operation of the Holy Spirit in this life is clearly marked, and that which is now as clearly distinguished as the completion of His work when the body is raised (10, 11).

In 1 Cor. 9, 10 we have the danger of power without life written for our admonition; indeed it runs throughout this Epistle. In the Second it is yet plainer, as in 2 Cor. 2:16, and 3:6. Take again 10, 11, where we are exhorted always to bear about "in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body; for we that live are ever delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh." Can language express more explicitly that the believer now has His life, eternal life, mortal though our body still is, while waiting to be raised, not merely "through" but "with" Jesus by-and-by (14)? This triumph is attested as superior to death ("mortality swallowed up of life" in 2 Cor. 5:4). And what life is meant (2 Cor. 5:15) "in those that live," in contrast with "all dead"? Is it not life eternal and abundantly? and is it not now and here below? "So if any one [is] in Christ, [there is] a new

creation.” What can be stronger, unless one were hardy enough to deny this a present application, because it is going to be complete at Christ’s coming? or doubt that “we have this treasure” (2 Cor. 4:7), because it is “in earthen vessels”?

The Epistle to the Galatians speaks no otherwise. In what way was God’s Son revealed in Saul of Tarsus when called (Gal. 1:16) but as life, Christ our life? So in Galatians 2:20 the apostle says, “I have been and am crucified with Christ, and no longer live I, but Christ liveth in me, and what I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of (or, in) the Son of God, that loved me and gave himself up for me.” Can any Christian doubt that this living was of life eternal? In Galatians 5:25 the word is “if we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.” Can any one be so rash as to separate this from Christ, or deny that it is life eternal now?

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we are seen blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. Have we now (Eph. 1:4, 5) no new nature, holy and blameless in love according to God’s purpose? is the predestined sonship, or adoption, only future? or can either exist without life eternal? Eph. 2 utterly refutes such thoughts, and declares that God rich in mercy and of His great love to us quickened us, once dead in our offences and sins — quickened us together with Christ, and raised together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). What can transcend this life, a clearly present privilege, which could not be said of O.T. saints, any more than it is of the millennial saints? It is life eternal, but much more. It is the Pauline truth given him by the inspiring Spirit of Christ, not only as quickening which John treats so fully

as a real thing now, but of Christ raised from the dead and the believer already quickened and raised together with Him, and seated in Him, waiting as we know from elsewhere to sit with Him when changed at His coming. “One new man” (Eph. 2:15) supposes life now and a status most excellent.

So does Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3), and spiritual intelligence, and His love known, though surpassing knowledge; so does the exhortation to walk worthily of God’s calling us after so marvellous a sort (Eph. 4), not only together but individually, we having put on the new man as well as put off the old. Hence in Eph. 5 it is to imitate God as children beloved, and to walk in love as Christ loved us, and as children of light (life being supposed throughout), and not as unwise but as wise, understanding what is the will of the Lord.

To the Philippians the apostle dwelt on Christian practice. “For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die gain” (Phil. 1:21). How possibly live Christ without having Christ as our life, and this beyond controversy life eternal? As believing on Him was the means, so their completeness as to the fruit of righteousness (ver. 11) and suffering for Him (ver. 29) could not be without the existing reality. Preaching Christ even of envy and strife might easily be without life, but not holding forth its word as lowly and blameless children of God, nor glorying in Christ in self-renunciation, nor learning, in whatsoever state, therein to be content.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, if not on the surface, life in Christ is everywhere the under stratum. He did not cease praying for our walking worthily of the Lord to all pleasing, bearing fruit and growing: surely not without

life. Hence thanksgiving to the Father who qualified us for sharing the portion of the saints in light (Col. 1). But in Col. 2 it is yet more precise. How walk in Christ (6), already received, without the life of Christ? When dead in the offences and the uncircumcision of our flesh, God quickened us together with Christ, having forgiven us all our offences, and raised us up together. It was not only life eternal but having His life in the highest form and the closest association with Him. Hence in Col. 3 if risen together with Christ, they were to seek the things above, and not have their mind on the things upon the earth. "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." But He is our life as truly now, though not so completely as then.

It is needless to gather similar evidence from the letters to the Thessalonians, and the Hebrews, to Timothy, Titus and Philemon; yet everywhere is it taken for granted as possessed by all save empty professors. Yet let us in no way strain the exhortation in 1 Tim. 6:12 "lay hold on the eternal life," or in ver. 19, "that which is really life," in contrast with present things desirable to the flesh. The glorious end is in view. But such as have not Christ as their life will become weary of well-doing, if they do not openly draw back, dead while they live. But 2 Tim. 1:1 does appear to touch John's presentation of life in Christ now brought to light through the gospel. We may compare Titus 1:2, Titus 3:7 as distinguishing the Christian from the Jewish expectation.

As addressed to "the twelve tribes that are in the dispersion," the letter of James resumes in general "the word of the beginning of Christ" (Heb. 6:1), and insists, not on redemption but on the life communicated from

the Father of lights, who of His own will brought forth, or begot, us by word of truth. Nothing less than this new nature satisfies him; no one else can from his works show his faith as in chap. 2. The faith that has no suited works is barren and dead. “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” The word quickens by revealing Christ to the soul, and fruit follows by abiding in Christ; for the new life lives by dependence on Him. This Epistle looks at the practical and righteous side, judging by a law of liberty in consistency of way, word, and heart, and the friendship of the world is enmity with God, but patience is to be till the coming of the Lord.

The life abundantly is disclosed as the present portion of the Christian Jews whom Peter in his First Epistle addresses. “Blessed the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to his much mercy begot us again unto a living hope through resurrection of Jesus Christ out of the dead,” etc. At the close, as at the beginning, the new life of grace and truth is shown clearly, and as it is by the word of God that we are thus born, so are we nourished (1 Peter 2). Husbands and wives among them are exhorted as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. Without this now they could not rightly dwell together for an hour or a moment. The Second Epistle addressed to the same puts the same truth strongly in 2 Peter 1:3, 4; for it affirms the partaking of a divine nature, and not a merely moral change. If it were no more than this, he shows the utter ruin of turning back after having escaped. Only life eternal abides. Otherwise one is but a dog still, and a washed sow: they were never born of God.

Jude indicates the more awful case of apostasy, rather than of the unrighteousness Peter denounced, though both might be in the same person. But he writes to saints without restriction as “called, beloved in God the Father and kept by (or, for) Jesus Christ” in view of the perishing of Christendom and the Lord’s judgment of all the ungodly at His coming amidst His holy myriads. The beloved, meanwhile, building themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, were to keep themselves in God’s love, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto life eternal. This is “the end” doubtless; but there had been no beginning of grace without believing on Him and receiving life in His name, to walk after God’s will in the last time of mockers walking after their own ungodly lusts.

Life Eternal Denied As A Present Possession.

Of this fundamental truth in its Christian form and present reality the deliberate denial is most clearly avowed by “Notes of Readings and Addresses” in the United States and Canada. The responsibility of the production is acknowledged; for the work appears as “revised by F. E. R.”

If we pass by a cloud of other errors, and some of moment, in page 54 is a plain statement of direct opposition to divine truth. “It used to be commonly said, I know that I have got eternal life. Why? Because the scripture says, ‘He that believeth hath everlasting life.’ I say you have thus the faith of eternal life; but that does not prove that you have the thing itself (!). Many a person has had a promise, but not the thing promised, that [sic] was the case largely with the Old Testament saints. They embraced the promises; but they had not

the things promised. Christianity is not only that you have the faith of the things proposed, but that you have the consciousness of the things that you believe." "Scripture says" this; "I say" that! But even what he says of Christianity virtually contradicts his aim.

Can any sober Christian question that the truly blessed confession of Brethren from the greatest to the least for seventy years is here abandoned? yea, that the word of the Lord Himself is undermined? How awful to hear one frittering away the plain meaning of "He that believeth hath everlasting life!" This is not a promise, but a revealed fact. The Lord did not say, he that has the faith of eternal life shall have this life by-and-by. To confound His present assurance with O.T. prophecy is to abjure the gospel for the law. The truth in question is distinct from promise, and contrasted with not having the thing promised. Nor does the Lord here speak of having "the consciousness of the things that you believe" (whatever this may or can mean on the speaker's hypothesis), but simply if not solely of now possessing life eternal.

Equally evident in page 56 is the perversion of scripture, even if we omit the misleading talk in the preceding page. "Eternal life is there, and it is God's mind for you to be in it, but there is a gulf between you and it, and you have to pass over that gulf." This is what "I say." Let us hear what the Lord says. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is [hath] passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). F. E. R contradicts the gospel. The believer's privilege now, this gift of grace, he denies. A gulf may be between the unbeliever, and eternal life. Yet Christ is, not even a bridge over the gulf, but eternal life immediately to him

that believes. His word has so explicitly declared the present gift of that life, that it can only be a lie of Satan to teach, as F. E. R. does, any gulf at all for the believer to pass. The Lord declares that he “has passed” out of death into life. F. E. R s. voice is not the Shepherd’s but a mere stranger’s, an “idea” in open contempt of the Saviour’s final decision by grace which flesh never trusts.

What follows is hardly less evil. For in reply to one who says, “It has been stated that eternal life was communicated to us this side of the bridge,” F. E. R. dares to answer, “There is no truth in it; what is communicated to you on this side of the bridge is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and He is the well of water in us springing up to eternal life. Unless you have the Holy Spirit you will never get divine teaching, but it is by divine teaching [!] that you get over the bridge.” This is no passing mistake or blunder. Is it not utter effrontery? That we have life eternal now he excludes. Yet the gift of the Holy Spirit supposes eternal life given, and redemption rested on by faith previously (Acts 5:32, Gal. 4:4-6, Eph. 1:13). If there were any propriety in the figure of the gulf and the bridge, Christ crossed it to meet the sinner; and the believer has already the life eternal, comes not into judgment, and has passed out of death into life. The gift of the Spirit is to know and enjoy the grace and truth thus come in the power of the known relationships, to live Christ in accordant ways, and to worship in spirit and truth.

The “teaching” here is flatly opposed to our Lord’s, and as it is a departure from what even its propagandist long and uniformly professed, who but those in the evil or bent on compromise can hesitate to pronounce it

“devilish,” not “divine”? Think of a believer without eternal life receiving the Holy Ghost! It is a quasi-incarnation of God’s Spirit. This unscriptural and profane dream “divine teaching” forsooth! Nay, it is the sheerest impossibility if judged on scriptural principles, and the wanton guesswork of impiety. No wonder not a word of scripture is cited for it.

Again, we read in the next page 57, “In the third chapter of the epistle [1 John] you come to children of God, but not yet to eternal life [!!]. Children brings in the thought of Father — God is Father to us as children in the world.” In page 58 “sons of God brings in the thought of eternal counsel and of heavenly places. The close of the epistle lands you in what Paul speaks of, and that is, ‘God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.’“ Does such evident confusion, such incoherent trash, need exposure? The truth revealed in the Epistle as in the Gospel is that every believer has life eternal and is a child of God; to which the apostle Paul adds that he is a “son” as well as a child, and the end everlasting life, but of either “the epistle” says not one word.

Again, Rom. 8 in the central part of that instructive chapter disproves the rash assertion that “sons of God brings in the thought of eternal counsel and of heavenly places”; for therein the apostle speaks of us, alike as “sons” and as “children,” but is silent about “eternal counsel and of heavenly places.” Children is opposed to strangers; sons, to slaves; and thus sons may be adopted for a position of dignity. But we are of God’s family also, and hence children in respect of true and intimate relationship. Both terms are well suited and actually employed in view of the glory to be revealed (Rom. 8:19 and 21). — Gal. 3:26 again refers to present Christian

standing, “God’s sons,” not children, by faith in Christ Jesus; but in no way does it in itself bring in the thought of eternal counsel and heavenlies. This is not Spirit-led exposition, but random and reckless misinterpretation to the pain and shame of all who honour God’s word.

In p. 59 we read, “I think the mistake has been made of confounding the idea of children with eternal life. I have fallen into that too much myself; the thoughts are, I judge, quite distinct. Sonship is connected with eternal life; that puts you outside the death-scene.” Did one ever read such empty and self-complacent drivelling? The connection of “children” is really nearer, than that of “sons,” to life eternal. For the scriptures which most fully treat of children treat also of eternal life, predicate both of the same persons, and that, not outside but now and here, where all else is under the power of death. They are in truth intimately and inseparably associated privileges. “And the witness is this that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” so says the apostle of all addressed. 1 John 5:13 goes farther still: “These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have [not at all, that ye shall have] eternal life.” It was now and here where death reigns, yet according to F. E. R.’s wild reckoning “the highest platform,” after having greeted them (1 John 3:1-3) in the most glowing terms as “children of God” from “now” till manifested in glory like Christ. Could scripture more pointedly write folly on this elaborate and persistent effort to say something new, which is after all wholly untrue?

In the pages that follow are strange conceits as to life eternal. Take 66 for example. “If you fail to enter into the reality of eternal life [who ever failed more

egregiously than himself?], it proves that you don't understand what it is to be identified with the minister of the sanctuary." Can the most friendly eye discern a grain of sense, to say nothing of truth, in this jumble? Heb. 8 has its own divine force; but why drag in here failure "to enter into the reality of eternal life"? Even if one have eternal life, one may fail to appreciate, exercise, or manifest it; but how do any such failures prove that you do not understand what it is to be identified with the Minister of the Sanctuary? The language, the logic, and the exegesis are alike perverse. One comprehends failure in faith, or fidelity, or intelligence. But nothing can "prove," and nobody can understand (it seems to me), what it is to be identified with the Minister of the Sanctuary, because it is neither intelligible in itself nor true of any one. To be "all of one" is not identification with Him, which is not taught in this Epistle. Such teaching, far from being "divine," is not decently human, but a farrago of presumptuous impertinence and falsehood transparent to all that are not blinded.

On the allusions to eternal life in pp. 74, 75 one need not speak, as they refer to "the end "; and this all admit. Such too may be that in p. 94, though vaguely expressed. But we come to egregious trifling, as well as abandonment of the truth, in pp. 107, 108, to omit the page before.

"G. F. Would you say a believer then had eternal life in a certain sense?

F. E. R. I answer it in a very simple (!) way, he has eternal life if he has it.

R. S. S. It is not a very bad way to ask those people who say they have eternal life, what they have got.

F. E. R. If I came across any one who asserted it at the present time, I would be disposed to say, ‘If you have got it, let us have some account of it.’ Our difficulty in England was that nobody could give any account of eternal life. If there had been anybody who could have given an account of it, the difficulty would have been much less. One person said it was one thing, and another said it was another. One old brother who affected a good many people, said that eternal life was obedience. He took up a verse in John 12 [sic], ‘And I know that His commandment is life everlasting,’ and argued from that that it was obedience. It shows you in what a muddle the whole thing was. Everybody claimed to have it, but nobody could give an account of it. Another brother asked me, ‘Have you got eternal life?’ I did not know how to answer it exactly because he simply meant resting on a statement of scripture. [Yes, this is what F.E.R.’s followers must avoid!]

G. F. Would you not define eternal life?

F. E. R. I do not think that we have any definition of it. You can speak of what is characteristic of it, and scripture gives you that, but surely if you claim to have eternal life you can give some account of it. If a man has a possession he can give me some account of what he possesses. Otherwise I doubt if he has it. I don’t say he has not title to it.

R. S. S. Or the enjoyment of it.

F. E. R. I think thousands have title to it who are not in the good of it. Eternal life is God’s purpose for you; God gave His Son to that end. I have the light of this, and

hence it is mine in title, but to say that I have it is another matter."

Could the unbelief of a professing Christian go farther? Over and over again is the present possession of life eternal denied. According to F. E. R. it is "God's purpose"; and the believer has a "title to it," but in no way has he that life himself. "To say that I have it is another matter." Yet he knows as well as anyone, that the Lord with most marked solemnity ruled that He gives, not will give, life eternal, and that the believer "has" it, not merely is to have it. Simple title or God's purpose is excluded. Christ's meaning is made the more definite and indubitable (except to will under Satan's power), because He also says that the believer has passed from death into life. F. E. R. stands here in open antagonism to the word of the Lord on this vital matter. To quibble away His plain authority for it is to sap divine truth.

Again, how sad is the levity of the oracular platitude in answer to "G.F.! Would you say a believer then had eternal life in a certain sense?

F. E. R. I answer it in a very simple way, he has eternal life if he has it."

Any upright mind must feel that such a come-off is, if not Jesuitical evasion, anything but "simple," being just incredulous banter and a cheat.

All but the most ignorant know that life in itself, and of every form in nature, is difficult to explain, especially to a caviller. Yet who questions its reality but a materialist? With such F. E. R. here "lands himself" as to life eternal, however clearly revealed. On the highest authority the simplest Christian is divinely assured that he has this

life eternal, not its mere title or promise. He expects indeed its certain completion in his body when Christ comes again; but he has no less certainty of possessing it now in his inner man. This F. E. R. denies emphatically, unequivocally, and constantly. Yet the scheme defrauds every Christian of his primary blessedness, dishonours the Lord in His grace and truth, and perverts His words of spirit and life into a willy-nilly of dark unbelief.

Is it true that in England “nobody” among the companions of this misguided man “could give any account of eternal life”? How deplorable if it were really as he says! I dare not allow that all have accepted the lie for the truth they once seemed to hold firmly and universally. Every intelligent saint, on the contrary, is able to explain that, just as he has by nature the sin-tainted life of the first man, so has he by grace, on believing, the holy life of the Second man. Who could expect our spiritual life to be outwardly cognisable more than our natural life? Yet even sceptics do not go so far as to deny it absolutely as a present thing, though they do its everlasting permanence.

It is almost needless to say that life eternal attests its presence by a newly given faith in Christ, by prayerful dependence on God, by delight in His word, by holy ways and walk, by a broken and self-distrusting spirit, by sympathies and antipathies upward and around and within, never displayed before. Besides these subjective qualities, the objective side is at least as marvellous and real: Christ sent from above, and the only true God, the Father, made known as only then in the gracious working of the Spirit by the word. Surely this, and it might be largely increased, is “some account of it,” and

familiar to the family of God. What does this incredulous talker want or mean? He is blinded by self- will and vanity against the truth. But what of the many who know better, yet hold their peace? Are they swamping truth for a unity worthless without it? Is this what they owe Christ the Lord? Do they keep His word, or do they deny His name?

The passage is really a tissue of extreme unbelief, a gross exaggeration of the condition of his companions, and withal vulgar mockery, to support a lie of the enemy. The “muddle” is in F. E. R. and his dupes, through defection from the truth which no doubt he long preached and taught, if he never in heart believed it. It is of comparatively recent years that a doubt was breathed, only to be sternly reproved and scouted as wholly unsound. Even mere Jews, as is allowed, had “the idea of it.” But whatever may be judged of those in O.T. times, the error before us is the formal repudiation of life eternal as actually attaching to the Christian, though the Lord explicitly assigns it as a present inward reality. Even if a believer were so strangely ignorant through bad teaching as to be unable to explain the matter to an adversary, he might have the fullest conviction that he has life eternal and enjoy its effects in obedience, love, righteousness, patience and hope, as he never did before his setting to his seal that God is true. Does anyone but an idiot or a philosopher doubt he is alive, because he cannot give “some account” of life — cannot even explain why his movements answer his volition? Who questions “time,” or “space”, because he finds it hard if not impossible to give a ready interpretation of either?

“The idea of eternal life” which Jews had is quite different from the believer’s present and known possession of it. This did await Christ’s coming. It is a crude and confusing statement that “It was the same thing referred to all along” (page 108). Could any say or accept this save an unbeliever in the Christian’s privilege, which did depend on the Son of God? Before He came, the saints had life in Him, but they were ignorant as to it; when He came, He gave them understanding of this and much more. It was greatly increased when He rose and the Spirit was given. But it is untrue that “all depended on that.” And the error affects still higher truth.

Think of a person presuming to teach yet so dense as to say that in the opening of John’s Gospel “the apostle is, I judge, speaking from his standpoint, not from God’s!” Such a judgment might fall from a natural man: Luke 1:2 gives not the slightest warrant for it. It is the kind of slip-shod comment by which Unitarians and other adversaries of the faith seek to undermine Christ. John 5:26 is not the expression of Christ’s divine right, but of the subject place He took when He became man, and received everything from God. Otherwise His deity is taken from the Lord.

Take another example. The alleged difference between “the Son” and “the Son of God” is rash and wrong, being even refuted by the text itself. That “Son of God” is (in Ps. 2 and elsewhere as John 1:49, as well as Luke 1:35) said of Christ as the King of Israel is true; yet the generalisation made in page 109 is a dangerous falsehood, as is made certain by such texts as 1 John 3:8, 1 John 4:10, 14, 1 John 5:5, 9, 10, 20. But if one desire a single distinct disproof of its folly, one could not have a

more decisive one than 1 John 5:12: “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” In this case the emphasis is rather the opposite way, as every spiritual mind must feel.

Similar lack of insight and subjection to scripture is at the bottom of page 113. God’s calling is not “sonship” as such, nor is it synonymous with “eternal life.” Take Eph. 1 where His calling stands richly; but not a word is said of “eternal life,” as indeed page 119 admits. Take the Gospel and the First Epistle of John where “life eternal” is most fully treated; yet we have absolute silence about sonship. And what means the desire in page 116 to exclude “eternal life” from heaven, making it refer to earth? One might have expected a tyro to have profited better by the Lord’s words to Nicodemus. A “teacher of Israel” ought to have known that to be born anew was needed for earthly things of God’s kingdom; whereas the cross and eternal life suit the higher things of heaven, as made known by Him Who came down from heaven and would return thither, the Son of man who is in heaven.

The conversation on “the sphere” (116,117) is a characteristic specimen of unintelligent pretension. Of old the term “sphere” had been rightly used to designate the heavenly source whence He came Who was the eternal life and went back into the glory He had left, where we behold Him now and look to be, conformed to Him in body at His coming. We while on earth are given life eternal; but we have it in Him Who is above, and hence for that sphere where we are not yet, however assured by His grace. This morally becomes of the highest importance to act on our faith and love as well as hope according to Paul no less than John. What bewilderment, not to say darkness, of mind to refer to

Rom. 5:21, Dan. 12:2, and John 17:3, the last being said to “describe the sphere!” Was ever more pitiable hallucination, if it were not bound up with spiritual guilt of a black dye?

Contrast to death is the lowest and shallowest possible “idea” of life eternal. If we simply and truly believed Christ to be our life, could we fail to apprehend that this eternal life is our newly but truly given spiritual being, capable of communion even now with the Father and with the Son Whom He sent? Why this incessant and fruitless beating about the bush, ending in absolute denial of its present possession, the very thing on which the Lord most sedulously insists?

Remark too how far the reduction of life eternal to the contrast with death carries away this sciolist. “I think eternal life refers to earth. I don’t think we should talk about eternal life in heaven... I don’t think the term will have much force there... I don’t see much sense in connecting the idea of eternal life with heaven.” To one who pleaded his understanding “that it is connected with heaven also,” F.E.R. answers, “I don’t know the connection. The point of eternal life is that it comes in where death was. I think it stands in scripture in contrast to death.” The expressions that follow might imply getting life here and now. But this he elsewhere so pointedly repudiates that we are obliged to believe that it is only “in anticipation now,” not as actually possessed. But this novel jargon is as unmeaning as the strange dictum, “If you don’t apprehend a sphere, you have no idea of eternal life”!! It is self-evident that he does not apprehend a sphere, simple as it is, but mystifies it.

On the “proportion” of deliverance here taught (page 106), it is enough to say that it is not so that scripture teaches. There is also no sense of correlation in saying, “I think the Father orders the world” (page 110) (for scripture testifies the contrast between these two), and in thinking that worship addresses itself to the Father, because the thought of God is presented to us in the Father (111). Now, John 4 is express in distinguishing the worship of “God” as such from that of “the Father,” as any one may see in comparing verse 23 with 24. Spiritual perception is wholly lacking; and most sects have a peculiar style, or lingua franca, of their own. Could any one match the strange absurdity that John 17:3 describes the “sphere”? His friend J. S. A. (who writes the introduction) indulges in the dream that where his leader is deeply astray, he is “correcting defective or erroneous use of terms!” Where could be shown infatuation more complete? And the worst is that not only are the terms defective and erroneous to an extraordinary degree, but the vital truth of scripture is misrepresented and lost, whilst empty falsehood takes its place.

The true sphere of eternal life was for the Word, the Son, with the Father (John 1:4,1 John 1:2) till the Incarnation. Then on earth in due time He said, “I came that they [the sheep] might have life, and that they might have it abundantly” (John 10:10). They believed and had life eternal in the days of His flesh, and in yet greater power when He died and rose (John 5:25, John 6:33- 50, 51-58, John 20:22). Finally He returns to heaven and is glorified above with the Father’s own self, with the glory which He had along with the Father before the world was. This is the “sphere” proper to the

eternal life in its fullest character as we know it. But it is of the essence of the truth when revealed that we, Christians, have it now, and were to live because He lives, Christ living in each Christian, not merely in a future and risen state, but as to the life which each now lives in the flesh.

There will be, as no instructed saint doubts, life eternal for Israel and the nations in the world to come; but it will be in a way quite inferior to our privilege. For as it is our characteristic portion to know Christ with the Father in heavenly glory, we now have it in Him there but have also Him in us here. Were it otherwise, what incalculable loss! But it is not so; we cannot have the one without the other. The N. T. which alone reveals the full character of the life eternal in no way points us to "the world to come," which is its earthly display, but to the Son on high. Then shall we, and not we only, reign in life by the One, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17); and this is not limited by "the world" and "age" to come, but will be true for ever, an everlasting and a far higher enjoyment of life eternal than Israel or the nations enjoy in "the world to come." Nor can there be a more senseless view of life eternal than to look for the earth at that period as our sphere of its display. It is systematic error from ignorance of scripture, a repugnance to dispensational light through the word, and a falsification of what life eternal is. Here judaising too plainly ousts Christianity and its better hope. What a blind leader of the blind is he who would exclude "heaven" from the completion of life eternal, or from the Christian's enjoyment of His association with Christ there even now I See the trumpery too of treating "sonship" as greater than eternal life in page 119.

As to “the world to come,” most astounding the departure from the truth. “What thoughtful person could say that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life now? I do not think it does yet. I do not think that grace is manifestly set in the ascendant” (p. 136). Not yet in the ascendant manifestly when Christ sits on God’s throne! when grace triumphs in the power of the Spirit sent forth! It is the most deplorable ignorance of the world to come; for “righteousness” shall reign then, not “grace” as now. Christianity is ignored for the Jewish hope. This profound error is repeated and applies throughout; yet he says, “I do not doubt at all that what I have indicated to you is the line of divine teaching!!” Did ever fancy’s fondness for its offspring more deceive itself? But where is God’s word and Spirit in all this assumption? It is apostasy from what was once loved as the truth, now alas! trodden down under unclean feet, or at least by animals which do not ruminate. Rom. 5:21 applies now, as will Isa. 32:1 to the world to come.

Though my immediate duty be to vindicate the Christian truth of life eternal and to expose its frightful and pernicious denial now propagated, I cannot refrain from pointing out how the revealed testimony of Christ here suffers eclipse, and little remains but a morass of mud and vapour. Who but F.E.R. would say that we get in Ex. 15 figuratively “an idea” of the Kingdom? No one denies that as to this it goes no farther than anticipating the everlasting reign of Jehovah (Ex. 15:18) at the end. But the true aim is the celebrating of the people’s redemption by power as well as blood, and the destruction of the enemy’s force for salvation accomplished. In no way is it the Kingdom come, which

in this series of types is the figuration in Ex. 18. Hence here as elsewhere all is confusion worse confounded.

Indeed the like destructive vagueness characterises the volume from the first address at Quebec and its first page (8): “The Kingdom was coming in in connection with the Lord Jesus, who was the expression of the grace of God.” Could any one of spiritual discernment thus put together Luke 10:21- 42 etc. with John 1:17? Indisputable that the Kingdom of God came in Christ and was proved by His casting out demons in virtue of God’s Spirit (Matt. 12:27); equally so that it was in their midst then, instead of coming with observation as in the days when the Son of man is revealed. But it is olla podrida to mix up as here grace and salvation with God’s Kingdom even in its present moral aspect, which scripture declares to be “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

But a greater contrast can scarce be found between the Kingdom as presented in scripture, and as it is travestied in these “Notes,” save elsewhere in this deceptive and unsavoury volume on the various topics discussed. In scripture there is a most distinctive object in God’s Kingdom, the display, or at least morally speaking the reality, of divine power and government. By F.E.R. this is spoilt and smothered in “that sway of God which has to be established in the soul of every man; if God is have to say to man otherwise than in judgment, the Kingdom of God must be established in man. Every Christian must know the Kingdom in himself” (p. 25). J.S.A, singular to say, comments on “the vague kind of idea that many of us had,” that is, before the new lamp shed its light of death, “that the Kingdom was heaven or something of that kind, something you get into by-and-

by instead of an actual present thing in the soul." How can he be blind to the fact, that his chief has misled them with himself into a moral platitude, which might content a Scottish Moderate of the past or a German Rationalist of the present day? They might all stand together under the capacious shade of "the moral sway of grace" (26).

Assuredly Abel, Enoch, Noah, and all the elders of the Old Testament who obtained testimony by faith came fully under that "sway," if one may use for once their language? Yet the Kingdom of God was for some not at hand for thousands of years; and the great type was a long while after in David and Solomon. But here all is a fallacious dissolving view, to reduce the full-grown into babyhood and worse; for in the next page (27) F.E.R. is so benighted as to say that "the Kingdom means salvation." It never does. One had hoped that all brothers (so called) were well aware that, however they may be connected, the Kingdom and salvation are each as essentially distinct as the church or assembly is from both. This man's mission is not from the Holy Spirit, but from an opposing and evil spirit to seduce unwary souls from the truth they once seemed to know and enjoy into a whirlpool of confusion and corrupting error. Honest ignorance we ought not to snub but to compassionate; but it is an imperative obligation to expose and unsparingly denounce ungrateful and rebellious departure from the truth of God.

It is in the Toronto reading (pages 23-34) that the vagaries about the Kingdom come out so grotesquely. Matt. 18 is spoken of as very important, notably for the condition of entrance, but "at the close the great principle of the Kingdom i.e., grace reigning through

righteousness." Now every person of real intelligence must know that the closing parable gives a totally different teaching; not in the least grace reigning through righteousness, but after pardon was proclaimed, the one who proved alien from its spirit consigned to condign torment. Can we conceive an archer more thoroughly missing the mark? No wonder he and his friends regard dispensational bearing with disfavour. "This is the rock on which many have split" (26) says the wrecker.

Nor is this specimen of "divine teaching" all the error here. In p. 32 we read that David's throne is really the throne of God! the very thing which the apostle contradicts in Acts 2. For David both died and was buried, and his monument was among the Jews unto that day; but being a prophet he testified of Messiah's resurrection; and to Ps. 16 we can add Ps. 110 where he tells us of His Son sitting at God's right hand, on His throne above, where none ever set or ever can sit but Himself. "You could not understand this well from the Old Testament, but in the New find that David's throne is God's throne!!" Was there ever a more perverse as well as pretentious blunderer? The O.T. does speak of Solomon chosen to sit upon the throne of Jehovah (1 Chr. 28:5), which, as it is differently expressed, has quite another import. "But in the New" you do not "find that David's throne is God's throne." Not only is it a confusion but a falsehood. The Son of God, the anointed of Jehovah, shall sit on David's throne. But every decently taught Christian knows that this will not be till He appears in glory: and we have always treated such an identification as the ignorance and even folly of adversaries.

In contrast with sitting as King on Zion by and by, Christ sits now on God's throne, His Father's throne. This is not mere ignorance in F.E.R. It is shameless abandonment of the truth which he long confessed. Yet not one of his fellows moved the wing, or opened the mouth even to chirp. They seem spell-bound and won over to invincible darkness. Can one be surprised that these unworthy retrogradists allowed it to pass that "ecclesiasticism! standing!! ground! and such ideas!! have almost ruined us" (34). Brethren, how have such insults to God's precious truth been heard or read without rebuke and repudiation? Truly "all have not faith": if men have only "ideas," they must come to ruin; yea, some seem ruined already.

"The New Covenant and Reconciliation" (35-47) abounds in judaising and the like confusion as before. What F.E.R. means, by saying in page 38 that "you get two things in this chapter (Col. 1), viz. the new covenant and reconciliation," is just a proof of his total incapacity to expound scripture. Where is a trace of the new covenant in the Epistle to the Colossians? Apparently he, for one statement, alleges "In Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell", but this immense truth goes far beyond, and wholly differs from, the new covenant; and, for the other statement, "by Him to reconcile all things to Himself" is a purpose wholly future. "In the cross" says he, "there was the removal of the old man to the glory of God: but where that man was removed, the love of God was expressed. The latter gives you the covenant! and the former reconciliation!" Can one imbued with scriptural truth imagine greater imbecility, letting pass the phraseology employed? For according to scripture the love of God was pre-eminently expressed in His Son's

mission, that we might live through Him, and that He might die as propitiation for our sins. Only F.E.R., not scripture, connects it with “the removal” of the old man. Nor does scripture but F.E.R. say, that “where that man was removed the love of God was expressed,” but that “love hath been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4). This we could not be if we had not now eternal life, propitiation, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a power far beyond the new covenant or the reconciliation, as Israel are to know under Messiah.

The new creation is a distinct truth, super-added to reconciliation and never in scripture confounded. No divine teaching is clearer on it than Rom. 5:10, 11; which closes the question of God’s righteousness in view of our sins, before the supplement which treats the annulling of our old man, a special Christian privilege for faith but not without the need of learning it experimentally.

As to the new covenant the apostle cites Jeremiah’s words for days to come of blessing on all Israel; but thence for the Christian he turns to the beautiful shadows of heavenly things which the Mediator’s death brought in, “God having foreseen some better thing for us.” This never seems to enter the mind of these interlocutors. Yet is it the express truth which God opens in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a hope that enters within the veil, of which the new covenant in itself knows nothing, and never will. Have these sorry labourers forgotten what used to cheer and gladden the hearts of true men in days that are past, and of some by grace still? Let them read and learn what follows in Heb. 9, 10

where the Christian is shown to be put into living relation with the true holies, ourselves not only sanctified but perfected in perpetuity. Israel even under Messiah and the new covenant will have no such spiritual portion, but Levitical priests, and the sons of Zadok, material sacrifices, and an earthly temple with doors. How fallen from divine teaching are those who once seemed to enjoy it, forsaking the fountain of living water for broken cisterns which can hold no water! And what are others who sit quiet and dumb in the face of such enormous corruption? For there are not a few spiritual men who value heavenly truth, I feel sure, and who groan at this spurious substitute.

Is it by the way worth noticing the absurd change (p. 121) from the plain and certain force of Gal. 3:26? The only error in the A.V. is in "the children," where all agree it should be "sons," of God. Thus "W.M. Do you read that passage in Galatians 'ye are all the sons of God in Christ Jesus by faith?' F. E. R. I do." This seems drawn from the R.V. which by its strange punctuation comes to the same sense, or from an English scholar who followed two or three Germans, and, being himself learned, had great weight with the Revisers in misleading them too often. But learning carries none safely through Scripture. The present instance is a distortion of the sentence, and the issue a truly unnatural abortion. No scholar would so twist a classic. Where is there anything in the N. T. to warrant "sons" any more than "children" in Christ Jesus? Either would be out of harmony with God's word. It is due to sonship on the brain of one who has no title to pose as the least authority in such a question, despising here as elsewhere an honoured

servant of God who really had the fullest claim to respect. [FER N.S. Vol. 18 p. 136ff.]

In pp. 125, 126 are found remarks derogatory to scripture which are natural enough in a system of unbridled imagination. When J.C. went so low down as to claim that “the word of God is in the scriptures, F.E.R. answered “Christ is the word of God. The scriptures are more the record of it than the thing itself”. How unlike the Lord when tempted by the devil! how like Quakers of old, and rationalists in our day! And when W.M. dutifully chimes in, “Then a Bible student is not much after all,” F.E.R. rejoins, “I have said that if I had to live over again I would study scripture less and pray more. The great thing for a Christian is to get into his closet and pray. Prayer and meditation.” Had he not forgotten that Luke 10:38-42 precedes 11:1-13? Has he not taken as his model not Christ but the Jew in “much speaking” or the eastern monk? Certainly he does not profit by 2 Tim. 3 “Every scripture (not “the sacred writings” of the Old Testament only, but “every scripture” of the New too, written or to be written) “is God-breathed, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline which is in righteousness.” Prayer is of the utmost value on that basis, but is of none without it; for God’s word is left out, which He has magnified above all His name, as Christ beyond all others exemplified here below. Even when 2 Tim. 3 was referred to, the effort was to reduce all to its “disciplinary value.” But this is expressly only a part, and when R. S. S. “was wondering if, in Luke 11, where the Lord teaches His disciples to pray,” it is that He first reveals God to us, the answer goes off to His giving the Spirit that they may pray. But our Lord says nothing whatever of this end, but of their

asking the Father and of His surely giving Him. The Spirit was given for every need and every privilege, not merely for prayer and meditation, very notably to guide into all the truth in glorifying Christ.

What again can be more empty and divergent from the true scope of Rom. 4:23 to end of 5 than the “four great thoughts” of F.E.R. in pages 128,129 of his Chicago Address on the Principles of the world to come” fraudulently imported into the passage? The apostle here shows neither the Kingdom of God, nor the Covenant in its bearing on teaching; but that even as to the inheritance of Abraham, it is neither by law nor circumcision but by promise and therefore to faith, that it might be according to grace. In the verse with which F.E.R. begins, the Spirit goes farther and contrasts our faith in the gospel with Abraham’s in his being fully persuaded that what God promised He is able also to perform; whereas the Christian rests, not on promise however sure, but on His work already accomplished in raising from the dead our Lord Jesus, who was given up for our offences and raised for our justification. This is the truth, not mere thoughts great or small. Indeed they are unfounded in themselves and quite outside the scripture alleged for them. They are not the line of the Spirit’s teaching. It is false to say so. We may leave aside what is irrelevant and dragged in by force for many pages.

But let us turn to page 148 which led to this retrospect. There we find contradiction of himself as well as of his betters. To the question of the difference between the Kingdom “of God” and “of Heaven,” the absurd answer is given that the latter is analogous to what God did at the beginning: [For it was on the fourth day] He set a

great light in the heavens to rule the day. Surely any old woman might furnish one with more sense, and any Christian child with more truth. But his explanation of the former is darker still. “The Kingdom of God, on the other hand, is connected with the presence of the Holy Ghost down here.” Now he had already acknowledged, as all know, that the Kingdom of God was here before His presence at Pentecost. Again, to one who asked, what was once universally owned, whether the Kingdom of God is a more inclusive term, says F. E. R. “I don’t think so.” Yet when another remarked that “the Kingdom was really set up when Christ took His place on high,” his answer was, “Yes, the Kingdom of Heaven.” Yet he adds what contradicts himself, that “the Kingdom of God was present when Christ was on earth;” for this conclusively proves the latter to be the “more inclusive term,” and before the Spirit’s presence at Pentecost.

But what means the thought (page 150) that the robber “got salvation by his death”? “the death of Christ took him to paradise, but his own death was salvation”! “He was never baptized to the death of Christ, but he got salvation by death; that is, through it he got complete emancipation from the power of evil. We get salvation by death in a sense, but by the death of Christ we get heaven.” One knows not what the saints beguiled into sanction or sufferance of this strange doctrine think of the new appendix — our death as a supplement to Christ’s death for salvation. But it does seem a worthy appendage to the denial of eternal life as a present possession that “we get salvation by death in a sense.” Is not F.E.R.’s “sense” sheer nonsense? is not our death given an unscriptural value when put as a partner with

Christ's death? But can we be surprised where the scriptures lose their place as the divine standard for us?

Who can wonder that one who dispenses such "ideas" says in the same page "I think a great point in connection with the Kingdom is to get away from dispensational ideas. We have been greatly hindered by taking things up dispensationally"! Think of so bold a revolt from the fullest chapter God ever inspired on the Kingdom! For Matt. 13 (and it is far from being alone) for the most part sets forth dispensational teaching, though not this only. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear" said the Lord. F.E.R. says on the contrary, "Get away from dispensational ideas." "Have ye understood all these things?" the Lord asked. F.E.R. is not afraid to gainsay Him: "We have been greatly hindered by taking things up dispensationally." Exactly so think the uninstructed leaders of Christendom. Extremes meet. Yet here samples only are noticed by the way, by no means all that deserves severe castigation as well as entire rejection; that those who love the truth may see how far-reaching is the departure which once would have been felt intolerable and without excuse.

Think too of such erratic teaching in the same short paragraph (154, 155), "for the moment the Kingdom is hid at the right hand of God," compared with the quotation of the future day when "the angels shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend," etc. Had it been said that "the King" is hid, one could understand; but "the Kingdom" has no sense. It is the fruit of sneering at dispensational truth and cultivating a crop of moral vanities. "In a day of confusion" (153) scripture is the divine resource, not mere moral views, which without it only mislead. But what can Christians

think when to one who asked the difference between the Father's Kingdom and that of the Son, the answer was, "They refer to the same point"? And to another on the same page he maintained that Christ has "received the kingdom!" and cited for his error, "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour!!" It is to be hoped that all who heard knew the gross mistake of both answers. Heb. 2:9 is no more proof of Christ's reception of the Kingdom than Rev. 4, 5 proves that the heavenly saints then reign. It is His present exaltation when we do not yet see all things put under Him. When He comes to reign, He wears many diadems and is not merely crowned. Who can fathom this disgraceful ignorance? or the dense delusion which accepts it as fresh light and truth? It really annuls the sure witness hitherto rendered by all taught of God as to the future within brethren or without.

When one even before this asked, "Could a person enter into the moral sway of the kingdom not having life?" there is evasion. For to be "born anew" is life from God; and this life is in the Son of God. Why start off into "receiving" the Kingdom of God, which is by that faith which is inseparable from being born anew, as the Gospel of John so strongly insists? The truth is not only evaded but distorted and denied for the foolish dream which will have life eternal only at the end, instead of bowing to God's testimony that it is also given immediately on believing.

In p. 164 (the Minneapolis reading on the Sanctuary) we come again to the old strange doctrine. "You don't begin with eternal life," says an accommodating disciple.

F.E.R. You end with it, at least if scripture is right, “The end everlasting life.’

W.E. And that scripture does not mean then that you die?

F.E.R. I don’t think so. A man gets to eternal life on earth. He may not get it until resurrection, but get it he will. Every believer will certainly get it.

W.H.F. Before he leaves earth?

F.E.R. Yes.

W.H.F. You don’t enter into it now, but in resurrection?

F. E. R. You will be put into it then; you will not enter into it.” The meaning of this utterance seems to be eternal life given only at Christ’s coming when we shall not all sleep, but all be changed. But this is to efface the Lord’s giving it to believers now, as a known and present possession, for mortality swallowed up of life at His coming, with which he confounds it. Scripture is as plain about the beginning as about the end. F.E.R. denies it for the believer when he most needs life eternal to know God, follow the Lord, enjoy the heavenly things at God’s right hand, overcome the world, and resist the devil. He is doing the enemy’s work and corrupting the temple of God.

Then in page 166 we have the arrant stuff so often repeated about the covenant. In page 129 “covenant on the part of God really means teaching to us”! Here “it is God’s disposition toward you, and that is love. That is His covenant”!! Was there ever so downright a muddle with such pretension to “divine teaching”? Covenant means neither teaching nor love, though the new one flows from grace and ensures conscious knowledge of

Jehovah, with sins and iniquities remembered no more. But it means, not God's disposition but, His order established for ever, in this case with His people according to His unchanging mercy.

Passing over wild statements about reconciliation, in page 171 as often before we have that phrase, so offensive to a spiritual mind, "you touch life"; "You touch His life now because you have accepted His death." Among other outlandish expressions (p. 172) we read, "The moment you love God, you are in the life of Christ." Scripture puts the truth in quite the opposite way: Herein was the love of God manifested, that God in our case hath sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Never is it written or meant that when we love Him, we are that moment in the life of Christ, unscriptural as the language is. That life is from God's love, not from ours. But the constant error is pretending to be in the life of Christ, whilst we have not life eternal; for His life exclusively is that life eternal, and He gives no other. Had Christ two lives to give, a life of His now that is not eternal, and another life at His coming which is eternal? Whatever is meant, it is a detestable lie of the enemy, incompatible with scripture, and contradictory to it.

What can one say of an assertion so preposterous in page 173 as that the reconciliation we have now through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:11) means that we "have another head?" "There is the sense of change from Adam to Christ. That is the point realized in reconciliation." Think of one who often heard the truth calmly drawing so untenable an inference from the passage! It is wholly alien from the mind of the Spirit. The context forbids it to anyone of the least spiritual

judgment. When another asked (175), Does reconciled bring out the difference between the first and second man? the answer is “If you accept reconciliation you don’t go in for (!) the comeliness of the first man.” Now, leaving this slang of the race-course or the prize ring, one may be astonished at ignorance of the reconciliation so deplorable. Yet it goes on to the end; for we read with the emphasis of italics in 178, “In reconciliation Christ gets His place with us as Head.” But everyone of intelligence knows that the verse closes the apostolic discussion of our sins; then the next verse begins the further truth of the two heads, in order to treat aright the new subject of deliverance from sin. Does F.E.R. flatter himself that he can overthrow the conviction of instructed saints for more than half-a-century? But why speak of any such conviction? The scripture is perfectly clear. Alas! he is a mere trifler with God’s word; and those who, knowing better tolerated his folly ought to hide their heads for very shame.

The same page is disfigured with a truly scandalous comment on 2 Cor. 5:20 (“We beseech in Christ’s stead be reconciled to God”). “F.E.R. I think it is practical (!!); the Corinthians had not left Adam for Christ. They were practically very much in Adam”(!!!). This quite benighted man who sets up to teach had never learnt, or utterly forgotten, the very elementary lesson that the apostle is here giving the gospel message in his brief formula, as it were a specimen “word of reconciliation.” Practical indeed for the Corinthian saints! Had not God already reconciled them (ver. 18), as He does for all who believe? Compare Col. 1:21, 22. It is a divine work done once for all through Christ’s death, and in itself distinct from His headship, however truly this is superadded.

But “practical,” as it is here made for saints in a bad state, is anti-scriptural; so that it raises the question whether one who so teaches has read his Bible to any profit, or can ever have submitted to the word of truth. This is not a gratuitous anxiety. Not the smallest reference is here to practice, in which the Corinthians were indeed low and inconsistent. Reconciliation has nowhere an aspect to saints. It is really the word of reconciliation in the gospel message: we are told how to address the world of sinners. Reconciliation, like justification, is a work absolute, and does not admit of degrees.

Suffice it to say that on Reconciliation his teaching, if so it is to be styled, is as thorough and vague make-believe as on the Kingdom; nor does Covenant ever mean in scripture what he affirms it to be, “the disposition of God towards His people.” In divine things it means an order established by God and made known to the men concerned, according to which He forms relations with them, and they walk before Him. The first covenant wholly broke down because it depended on the obedience of a rebellious and wicked people. The second depends on the faithful mercy of Jehovah by the intervention of Messiah and His work to divine glory and their blessing; and this is everlasting. But that either one or other means “God’s disposition, in F.E.R.’s sense of His gracious affection, is a dream. God’s disposition, like His nature, His ways and His purpose, was ever good and worthy of Him Who is light and love. But the sinner must learn his sinfulness, ruin and powerlessness. Sin too must be judged to glorify Him morally and in a work efficacious to deal with it, fruit and branch and root, for all that believe. In such there is

an inward work of return to divine order and peaceful enjoyment of God, based on the work wrought in the body of Christ's flesh through death. This is reconciliation; as the new covenant with both houses of Israel will be Jehovah's undertaking to secure their full and changeless blessing, the principle of which the Lord and the apostle apply to the Christian.

What impresses one's soul in reviewing these dreary talks and effusions ("readings" and teachings they are not, save by euphemism), is that Christ is lost, not being held in faith. Hence the truth sinks into a chaos, partly of traditional ignorance as on the Kingdom and the world to come, and partly of hazy "ideas" as on the new covenant and reconciliation even beneath old puritanism. On the Kingdom enough has been said, however briefly. But a fairly sober Christian has only to confront the "readings revised" with the Epistle to the Hebrews, to convince himself how manifestly these speculations stop short of the "divine teaching" vouchsafed to us in holy writ. They are no more than the inanities of an active yet feeble mind, which has broken away from subjection to scripture. In 2 Cor. 3 care is taken to guard against "letter" instead of "spirit"; for though the foundation is laid in the blood of Jesus, the terms and fulfilment of the new covenant can only be for the houses of Israel and Judah. We have only that of it which is compatible with a heavenly calling, yet enough to help greatly the Christian remnant of Jews to whom the Epistle was addressed.

Think too of the strange "idea" in 182 that "The only way in which you escape from the wilderness is in your own house. I don't think one's own house is exactly the wilderness, for it is a circle which God owns. The

moment you are outside of your own house, you are in the wilderness"!!! Was there ever such puerility in a Christ-given teacher, or even a sane man? Who does not know that if typically we pass through the wilderness, which the world is to the new man, tents are an essential part of it, and that these become the pilgrim rather than the settled houses of Egypt? But what a conglomerate of thought, or at least of words and figures, to claim for "our own house" so favoured a circle! Would to God, our homes were more pilgrim-like, and more redolent of Christ!

But we come to more serious and systematic development of error in the use made of some later types in the book of Numbers (183, 184).

"G. R. Does the brazen serpent answer to Rom. 8:3?

"F. E. R. Quite so...

"J. S. A. And I suppose that although a person might be out of Egypt through the Red Sea, and brought to God in that sense, he cannot enter into the purpose of God unless he apprehends the brazen serpent.

"F. E. R. No, the Spirit is the real beginning of life in the believer, 'The Spirit is life' (184).. God goes back to Adam (!) and the serpent, and sin is condemned in the flesh in the sacrifice of Christ, in order that God might impart the Spirit as life to man. You get the Lord's own expression of this in John 3."

These heterogeneous "ideas" may please souls immature in the truth; but they indicate a mind caught by appearance, and at sea with a compass wholly out of order. For the book of Exodus furnishes the shadows of redemption and its consequences, up to God's dwelling

in the midst. There we have not only the sacrifice of Christ in the Passover but God's action in power for His people in the passage of the Red Sea, Christ dead and risen. "The purpose of God" had been before them in Ex. 3:17, and Ex. 6:4, 8; as they all celebrated it in the song, Ex. 15:13-17. In figure they were truly and fully brought to God. Then come lessons of grace by the way and conspicuous among them the Bread of life come down from heaven marking out the true rest, and the gift of the Spirit in the living waters from the smitten rock fitting for conflict, though victory depend on the Mediator's intercession on high.

Is it not therefore certainly and manifestly in contradiction of scripture that one could not enter into God's purpose without the serpent of brass? For its object as the emblem of Christ crucified was to annul the power of Satan through the fiery serpents which bit those that loathed "this light bread." And it was an absolute and immediate remedy to the look of faith, Aaron being dead just before: for those concerned seem not such apostates as Jude speaks of, but souls who had not come out of Egypt nor passed through the Red Sea. They were a fresh generation requiring a new enumeration soon after, who have God's intervention for them against the enemy within and without. Hence they too receive the Spirit's refreshing, as they had the emblem of Christ made sin for them just before. It was meet that God should grant all this for the generation about to leave the wilderness; as He had done in previous figures for those who left Egypt for the wilderness.

But what a hodge-podge is made of "divine teaching" by these ill-assorted ingredients from Exodus and Numbers

boiled together for a witch's cauldron of poison! Yet not a soul among his British companions or his American friends raised a note of warning! If the progress of audacious error is alarming, the silence of men in the party who must see more or less through Satan's deceits seems more distressing still.

The human invention of the believer's life by the Spirit, which is not a present reality in Christ or life eternal, explains much said hitherto, and is distinctly taught in "The Wilderness and the Land." "You have not yet got to eternal life, but it is life Godward in the wilderness" (185). The truth is that life in Christ, life eternal, is at the starting-point; as is taught in John 3:15, etc., John 5:24, 25, John 6:40, and very clearly in 1 John 4:9 compared with 10, unless you say that this life is not eternal life. It is unmistakably false doctrine that "John 3 carries you farther than Romans 8": a total misconception of that Gospel, which tells of the Son come down from heaven, Who is withal in heaven, light come into the world then manifesting God on earth. This is not less "the wilderness" than anything in the Epistle to the Romans; and "the thought of God" is as truly in both Rom. 5 and Rom. 8 as in John 3. In short the teaching is a string of discreditable and mischievous blunders. It is owing to the thought of only the end, life everlasting.

Hence "perishing" is said to be in the wilderness (181), yet it means to "apostatize" like Judas, a lot so exceptional, that there is another string also to the bow. It really expresses the everlasting perdition (whatever its shape) which befalls every unbeliever. And what, even before that, more inept than the comparison (180) of Rom. 8 with 5 — "what we are for God in the Spirit?"

Surely if Rom. 5 is God fully known in grace superior to our sins, Rom. 8 is our place in Christ, superior to law, sin, and every other difficulty. But this book drags souls from divine truth to self habitually, instead of ministering Him Who alone acts on us in the power of grace by the Spirit.

If we turn to the fuller light of the N. T., the violence done to revelation is extreme. For a twofold reason is given in the opening of Rom. 8 why there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, itself a wondrous expression of divine favour. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me from the law of sin and death.” This was not only life eternal but in its risen power: God could not condemn one so liberated. But there is more. “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us that walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit.” As God already in Christ’s cross condemned sin in the flesh — not merely sins but sin, He is not satisfied only (as the old divines were wont to put it) but glorified therein. Thus on neither score can condemnation fall. The sins of the believer are forgiven in virtue of Christ’s bearing them on the tree; and the sin in the nature also has already been condemned there to God’s glory. The believer in both respects stands clear, in order to righteous practice in loving God and man, as he walks in that life which he has in Christ according to which the Spirit enables him.

No Christian doubts the part played by the Holy Spirit in new birth: but how can anyone overlook the plain truth

that, when the apostle discusses the further working of grace in the verses which immediately follow, not a word here teaches that “the Spirit is the real beginning of life for God in the believer, ‘the Spirit of life”‘? For F. E. R.’s aim is to deny that Christ now gives life, life eternal, and here in resurrection power, to the believer. This he deliberately discards as the beginning or indeed at any time in our actual existence till He comes. “Life eternal” he believes to be only given in “the end” — an end of glory which can never come without its beginning in grace now. The apostle shows that it is no question of duty only, but of a new nature with its spiritual affections quite opposed to the flesh and its lusts which are enmity against God. The believer’s relationship to God is in the Spirit, but grounded on having Christ for life and on being in Him. This is made clear even by ver. 10: “But if Christ [be] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin, and the Spirit life because of righteousness.” Christ already in him as life warrants him to disallow the body as a guiding power, that the Spirit may act in that life and be life practically. For thus only is sin excluded and righteousness produced.

But this is power in Christian practice, quite distinct from and subsequent to the gift of life eternal in believing. As no Christian doubts that the Son quickens in communion with the Father, so he holds that one is thus also born of the Spirit. God in the fulness of His being acts in this operation of His grace. Thus here we learn how the Spirit is the immediate energy in the inner man all through. But to pervert it (as heterodoxy usually avails itself of a scripture difficult to many) in order to deny Christ as the present giver of eternal life, O what a

sore grief to Him who is sent here to glorify Christ, and should receive of His to report accordingly!

Is it not blindness to say as in p. 185, after Rom. 5, and 8:3 which is said to answer to the brazen serpent, that "you have not yet got to eternal life, but it is life Godward in the wilderness?" As we have seen, the very verse (Rom 8:10) abused to put forward the Spirit, in exclusion of Christ's gift of life eternal, refutes the unbelief, and makes "Christ in us" the antecedent to the Spirit's power in making it good in our practice. But more: the Lord's application in John 3 proves that the life given forthwith to such as looked on the serpent of brass answers to "eternal life," and not to an imaginary different and inferior life meanwhile. Scripture never speaks of Christ giving the believer any life but His own life eternal. F. E. R.'s doctrine is a fraud of dangerous consequence from every point of view. Can a faithful man doubt that the Holy Spirit, far from accepting F.E.R.'s error in pretended honour to Himself, resents it as a profane slight on the Son of God and on God's own love?

If it were really meant that the life we have in Christ may in some disclose little beyond a pilgrim character, whilst they ought to have a heavenly character also as occupied with Christ glorified on high, one would accept its truth as long confessed and prized. This however is in no way his "idea." He fancies life eternal to mean neither the one nor the other; he asserts it to be "a purpose of God," and "a promise" to the believer, but in no case his present and known reality, and less still admits it to be the life of which all Christians live. His notion that "the Spirit is life," to the exclusion of eternal life in Christ now given, is a wretched falsehood, and

beneath not only every Christian teacher, but any Christian whatsoever. He confounds the new being at the start with power for practice on deliverance. It is possible indeed that he was beguiled by his own misapprehension of the difference between the heavenly life and the earthly (or pilgrim) life in a practical sense, whether of Christ or of the Christian. Such a misunderstanding of one truly taught of God may have been the enemy's snare into his own systematized error. But if any one a dozen years ago doubted what he meant, there can be no real excuse now. The reader of this volume has abundant and decisive proof. Who with the fear of God can now say that there has been no false system, nor false doctrine at root? To deny it at this time of day would be party-spirited will and obstinacy unworthy of Christ.

No doubt mistake on the side of these who were right in the main weakened their testimony and gave a seeming aid to the adversary. For all ought to have seen that there are two principles and directions for the life Christ communicated, figuratively the wilderness, and Canaan. The heavenly ways and the wilderness walk are quite distinct. It was so even for Christ, where all was perfection. But this raises no uncertainty as to the unity of His life, any more than as to the life eternal now given to us. It affords no real cloak for the error, which positively denies the communication here and now of eternal life, and only admits the gift of the Spirit (56 et passim). For it is foolish and evil perversion of Rom. 8:10 to exclude our having at present eternal life in the Son, under the plea that without it "the Spirit is life." Even verse 2 had clearly joined Christ with the Spirit, like the verse tortured into the contrary. For what means "the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," if not that? What God joined together, let not man venture to sever.

Further, what Christian taught of God does not see that in Rom. 8 it is a question, first in 2, of delivering power in the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and, next in 10, of the Spirit as power inwardly in order to walking in the Spirit? Think of confounding all this with being born of the Spirit, or with the gift of the Spirit! Yet this is a root-error throughout the volume; as if one could be born of the Spirit without life, or have life imparted to the believer which was other than life in the Son, life eternal. What a return to old ignorance, if one conceive that the experience of Rom. 7 could be that of a soul not born of God! Yet as clearly it is one without the Spirit of liberty. But F. E. R. is on every side wrong; and the worst is, that it is a departure from light into darkness on the foundation as well as the privileges of Christianity.

It would be tedious to analyse "The things before God" (pages 198-207). But there is the like confusion, instead of the truth, in what is fantastically entitled "the world to come" (pages 208-225) and its continuation (226-242), the submerging of Christianity under Jewish expectations, just as in the denial of life eternal as a known and present reality for our souls in Christ. Take the statement that "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has properly reference to the world to come" (208, 9). Now where is the Christian of spiritual intelligence and candour who can fail to discern that this is no casual slip but error down to the foundation of revealed truth? It is the surest self-evidence that he who holds and utters such a view was not taught of God as to either the present or the future; and this in what is and must be the innermost of all, the true relation of God to

each according to His word. “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” has no proper reference to “the world to come.” His only reference properly, if we bow to the word, is now to the saints and faithful in Jesus Christ, though of course they will enjoy Him for ever. The error is complete on both sides. The proper title of God in reference to the world is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, but Jehovah, El-Elyon or the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, according to the beauteous type of Abraham and Melchisedek in Genesis 14, and so predicted in the Psalms as well as the Prophets.

Nowhere does scripture warrant the faintest hint that God’s relation to the world will be “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;” which is His exclusively given relation even now to those who compose the church. No Papist, no Protestant, within the scope of my reading, ever erred so scandalously, not even B.W.N. in his Thoughts on the Apocalypse or in any other of his most erroneous writings, though he shared the common ignorance that all saints from the beginning to the end compose the church. F.E.R. learnt better through Brethren; and therefore his error is the less excusable, because it is the more inconsistent. Alas! what makes it hopeless, as it is, is his consistency, rather than his inconsistency. He dares, after professing the truth in both respects, to contradict revelation in both; he robs the Christian now of his most cherished relationship shared with his risen and ascended Lord, and bestows it improperly and with reckless ignorance on “the world to come.” All the effort of J.S.A. or J.P. to palliate it (209) is

in vain. None ventured to expose or even oppose the twofold lie against the truth.

Again, weigh the words in page 210: “Every thought enumerated in chapters 1-10 [Heb. 1 - 10] connects itself with the world to come.” Now had it been said that there are points of connection through the Epistle to the Hebrews with “the world to come” (beyond the text in chapter 2 which openly speaks of it), no one could fairly dispute it. But the grand central truth, which governs its teaching through more than those ten chapters, turns those bold words into dust and ashes. Christ’s session at God’s right hand after having made for Himself (if not also “by Himself “) purification of our sins is from first to last characteristic for the Christian now, and does not connect itself with the world to come. Any one versed in the truth could disprove it in detail from each one of these ten chapters and indeed from all. But, not to heap up counter evidence, it suffices to allege the indisputable fact of the teaching throughout, that sacrifices are now consummated and closed for us Christians in His one offering. Hence even every tyro in prophecy knows that it will not be so for “the world to come;” as for example Ezekiel (Ezek. 43-46) proves for Israel, and Malachi (Mal. 1:11) for the Gentiles.

In these revised notes, after ample time for reflection, there is the issue to every eye of what deliberately and systematically reverses apostolic teaching of a fundamental kind. For in the Epistle from which it is sought to show that “all is viewed in relation to it with the world to come,” the wilderness with the tabernacle and its antitype is ever the ground, not Canaan and the temple as then and there according to the prophets. Our position as Christians ever looking on as sufferers in full

assurance of hope is the express aim of its teaching; not "the world to come" but the holiest relationship [not union here] with Christ in heaven itself which contrasts with that world. It is the better light of God's presence on high, the "heavenly" soon to be our actual portion. We are Christians, not Jews anticipatively, or the Israel of God as Christendom fancies; and our time, if this be meant (211), is the eighth day, not the seventh. So the Lord by His word (in John 7:37 et seqq.) would have us enjoy now in the Spirit. But these judaising errors flow from the fatal root-error of denying to us the known present possession of life eternal.

In the notice of Heb. 11 according to the new school, we are told that since "sin came in saints were being instructed in some way or other in detail as to the world to come. In Abel we see the principle of the world to come, that is acceptance by sacrifice. Then in Enoch we get translation"... "and in Moses the destruction of the world power" (211). Did ever a narrow and prejudiced Puritan convey anything paltrier? In Abel it was really a question, not of the world to come, but of righteousness from and of God, as it was testified in Enoch the next case for heaven and eternity. Noah might as to this bear such a view in the world after the flood; but what God's word actually says is that he condemned the world, instead of inheriting it, and became heir of the righteousness that is according to faith. No doubt the pilgrim fathers are said to be heirs of the same promise; but it is carefully shown that they all sought a better country, that is, a heavenly, the city that hath the foundations. Must one tell these darkened brothers, who formerly needed it not, that "the world to come" means the habitable earth to come, and does not include the

heavenly side of the scene? The Epistle, while owning it habitually and in this chapter, was written to set their eyes on things above where Christ sits. This book retrogrades and sinks to an earthly level. Lastly what halting poverty of application only to get in Moses the destruction of the world-power! Why not point out, in blessed type, the overwhelming downfall of Satan's power and ourselves brought to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus? Yet no one denies the outward analogy when Israel's foes are destroyed by-and-by.

One of the pupils remarks that "It is not that they were delivered at the moment, but they were waiting for the One who delivered them" (213). Now scripture (1 Thess. 1:10) puts "our Deliverer" from the wrath to come, as the most expressive form of conveying their abiding rescue. So said our Lord in John 5:24, speaking of the last crisis of that coming wrath (cf. Rom. 2:5, 16), the believer "cometh not into judgment." It is a present and assured exemption. Another adds from his teacher that "we do not need Christ as our righteousness for this world. We need practical righteousness here, Christ is our righteousness in view of the world to come." Well, if we have not got eternal life now, and thereby communion with the Father and with His Son, this might be; but just think how its denial degrades His life both now and by-and-by! A third has found out the error of taking (Col. 1:12) as heavenly, the inheritance of the saints in light! "That is not heaven", says J.S.A., "but the world to come"! How deplorable the descent of error!

It may help him to learn that the word which deceived him is not κληρονομίας (inheritance) but κληερου (portion or lot). This is far above the "world to come." Even "inheritance" in Eph. 1 rises higher than the

earthly horizon. Let him unlearn this folly and use this scripture, as they were all wont to do. How evidently one lie about a vital truth unsettles, vitiates, and falsifies many more! Would to God that no saints might “grasp these thoughts”; for they are a grievous perversion, and can only defile and destroy. A soul less an adept did cite 1 Cor. 1:30 for Christ made to us of God wisdom and righteousness now. Yet F. E. R., after admitting it, said “I don’t think it is in relation to this world, but to the world to come(!).” It was written to the saints here and now; and has no more to do with “the world to come” than the rest. “The age to come” attached to “the world to come.” Neither contemplates heaven. This prattle is one tissue of blunder on blunder. No sound and well-taught man can truthfully deny it; and I trust that none such out of party zeal may have the hardihood to palliate it. They are likely enough to cry out about my tone and spirit, as once against J.N.D. because he did not mince his words when his soul fired up against outrage done to Christ or the truth. He was not at all animated by fleshly enmity or feeling, which I too disclaim. Is there to be no righteous indignation at such sin?

We can see in pages 220, 221 that neither J.S.A. nor O.O.’B. could give up without a protest the certain if mysterious truth of Eph. 6:12; but F.E.R. showed himself alert to lower, here too, all he could. “I don’t think the rendering is quite right (!). We wrestle against the spiritual things or influences of wickedness in the heavenly places (!). We don’t wrestle against the wicked spirits (!). We have to do with the effect down here. There are influences which are abroad in Christianity. We have escaped one evil, but may fall into another.” “We don’t wrestle against wicked spirits” says this

adversary of the truth, ever bold against God's word when it is plain.

"We have to do with the effect down here," says F. E. R. But the apostle says we have to do with the sources up there. The express aim is to assert that our wrestling is, not against blood and flesh which are down here, but against principalities, against authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against "spiritual [hosts or powers of] wickedness in the heavenlies." This I venture to affirm is the right rendering; and it is dead opposed to "things or influences," which sense in the context is nonsense; for this would-be renderer himself means "influences which are abroad in Christianity" [? Christendom], and can hardly mean to call the evil spirits "things" on high. The apostle speaks here solely of spiritual beings of subtle energy and malice banded against us; and all the more seriously, because they rule the world's darkness from that heavenly elevation by their wiles as quasi-deities. He does not speak of "spiritual things or influences" in the heavenlies, but a man as far as possible from being an apostle, for he contradicts the true one. Nor does he seem to be aware that infidelity and rationalism are as real if not as rampant in Popish lands as in Protestant, though the latter are generally more open and outspoken.

The reading ends with a few vague, obscure, and scarcely intelligible remarks on eternal life; but there is nothing definite enough to call for any notice further than the mistake of putting resurrection, instead of the Son, for the coming out of that life (225). How all these "thoughts" belittle Christ, and becloud the truth! Whose work is it to do either? Not the Holy Spirit's certainly.

Passing by not a little worse than worthless in the last reading as in those before, we may now consider in its continuation (220-242) some of the more shocking errors. Take this in concurrence with J.S.A. (page 227): — “F.E.R. Every point in the Epistle [Heb.] holds good for the world to come.” Such a sentiment is worthy of a Jew masquerading as a ritualistic clergyman. He saps the transparent truth of the Epistle; for as it proves the “better thing” than even the fathers looked for in the fulfilment of promise, the surpassing difference of Christianity is, I may say, everywhere made plain. The lowest object in God’s purpose, the habitable earth to come (ἡ οἰκουμένη ἡ μέλλουσα), is abused to swamp the far more commanding and distinctive truths of the Epistle.

It is utterly false that “every point in the Epistle holds good for the world to come.” Israel and the nations shall see the King in His beauty, and their hearts muse on the terror of His day begun on earth. But not even the most spiritually intelligent among them can look by faith on the Son seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had made purification of sins (Heb. 1). Nor will they behold Him crowned with glory and honour in heaven, as we do when we see not yet all things put under Him (Heb. 2). For though it is a citation of Ps. 8, the Epistle shows that Christians have the excellency, which Thomas had not, of having believed without seeing. Then again is it no point of vantage that Christians are “partakers of a heavenly calling” (Heb. 3) while the millennial saints have an earthly one? Nor will it be theirs to suffer being tempted, like Christ, yea, to endure, and reign with Him, as 2 Tim. 2:12 says, whereas they are reigned over, having had no such

gracious experience. And the rest of God (Heb. 4), is there no difference in enjoying it on the habitable earth to come, or with Christ above?

In all the similar and deadly thrusts of B.W.N. at our heavenly privileges, I remember none so sweepingly pernicious as these “thoughts” of F. E. R. palmed on the unwary as the truth of God. Surely “an enemy hath done this”; for one might easily go through the Epistle and prove that in every salient point it ascends and associates us with Christ, in contrast with his descent to the world to come. But, even again, to cite (the same page) “we which have believed do enter,” as our anticipation of it, ought to disgrace a youth on the outside seats of a meeting-room. For it is really “a promise,” and not our anticipation by faith, as ranters preach, but a simple fact that we enter there (viz. at Christ’s coming), not that we have in any sense entered in. In the same context, as ever in the Epistle, we are as yet and only passing through the wilderness. No: this is the reverse of divine teaching, and wholly opposed to the truth accepted and taught by every instructed person among brethren. Surely they are not all traitors to it now! It must be so, if some teach the truth, and others are allowed to teach error. Is this the compact?

“This brings in the House of God, for the truth of the House of God is not literally fulfilled in the present time, it points on to the time to come” (page 229). What a discovery! One might have expected a due appreciation of what is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being a corner stone for God’s habitation in the Spirit, though it be not literal. Yet no saint need deny or grudge the future house in the land of Israel. But will that house of visible glory be

comparable to a living God's church, pillar and ground (or basis) of the truth? Truly this abuse of "the world to come" is letter, not spirit; and a like abuse pervades the volume. Christianity is here debased. How very largely it is "I think" and "I suppose" and "quite so" we all can see; and alas! how many are content to remain "by this wonderful system" bereft of the truth! Consider the absurdity of counting it (page 234) "a great mistake to think that Christianity is one thing, and the world to come another"! Christianity not another thing from "the habitable earth to come"! One might excuse such ridiculous error in a pulpit rhapsody from a preacher to whom that earth is an unknown land, or who is a spiritual babe.

But is it honest to allege that F.E.R. can plead either excuse? He poses as the burning and shining lamp in the obsequious company of several who do not think meanly of their lesser degrees of light. Is it not a stern duty, for any loving the truth who can, to expose so shallow and self-complacent a pretension? For where is "Christianity" or "the world to come" in the admirable group of Heb. 12:22-24? Does he identify "Zion" with the one, the heavenly with the other? If so, he only demonstrates the same darkness into which he has fallen by yielding to his own ideas. We can hardly conceive that he found either in the "myriads of angels," or in the "spirits of just men made perfect." It would be blasphemy to identify them with God or with Jesus, and folly to do so with the "church of firstborn ones" (which is neither Christianity nor the heavenly city), or with the blood of sprinkling. Christians these firstborns are without a doubt.

But Zion, though the most exalted spot of the millennial earth and the embodiment of royal grace as its principle, is a very small part of the habitable earth to come. And the city of a living God, heavenly Jerusalem (distinguished from David's city, the earthly one), is the glory above this world, for which the patriarch waited (Heb. 11:10, 16); not the new Jerusalem seen by the last Seer (the symbol of the Bride the Lamb's wife herself), but the glory which is to be the seat of the elders who believed of old. Thus self-evidently this heavenly city is not Christianity, and as clearly distinguished from the assembly of those associated with Christ as first-born ones.

The order of Melchisedec does apply now, in that Christ like him is the one sole priest without predecessor or successor. But the exercise of His priesthood now is after the pattern of Aaron in the sanctuary, and His intercession is founded on sacrifice, in contrast with the blessing and refreshment of Melchisedec for the world to come. F.E.R. shows he is a bungler following the tradition of Christendom, not scripture, when he says (page 232), "It is King and Priest, Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and at the same time saluted as High Priest." Heb. 2 says not a word on His kingdom, which is not come till the seventh trumpet of the Revelation, long after the rapture, and only announced a little before His appearing. It is not "at the same time." The soi-disant teacher is a forgetful professor, and a dreamer of dreams. As almost all in fellowship used to know better, so he must have been drinking the waters of the veritable Lethe from the dark regions. A King in righteousness by and by is not grace reigning through righteousness as now: none but a hopeless retrogradist

could say so. But it is far worse; for it indicates, as far as the truth is concerned, a wicked heart of unbelief in departing from a living God. Even he once learned better, when at school and apparently grateful for sound teaching.

Page 236 has again the ridiculous disorder of the new covenant, purgation, reconciliation, and sanctification, directly opposed to what the Epistle indicates, as a child may see. How Satan must enjoy such nonsense greedily swallowed by persons who once seemed to love the truth, and the sad sight of grave men deterred from their allegiance to the Lord in not clearing His name and word by fear of consequences! Think too of such trash as the comment (page 237) on 1 Cor. 6:10! "F.E.R. I think every man is set apart in the mind of God before he is justified." Brethren, is not this a falsification of the text? "Washed, sanctified, justified," you used to know, is a blessed existing fact, whatever the difficulty of such as have not learnt the truth of setting apart to God before justification here.

"The old man gone in the death of Christ" is a light and unguarded speech, as if flesh or sin were not there still. "Crucified with Christ" is the truth, "that the body of sin might be annulled, that we henceforth should not serve sin." Sweeping human phrases are dangerous for souls.

It is evident that he is as wrong about sanctification as (336, 7) about the kingdom, the Covenant, reconciliation, and life eternal. Sanctification, he says, is after reconciliation. It "means that you are before God as the brethren of Christ, in association; 'in Christ,' in a word." Now this all familiar with scripture must know to be utter falsehood. For 1 Peter 1:2 clearly teaches that

sanctification of the Spirit is unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; whereas F.E.R. allows, as all must, that no one can be reconciled save through death, the death of Christ (Col. 1:22). This fundamental setting apart is therefore in being quickened by the Spirit by the faith of Christ unto obedience and the sprinkling of His blood, whereby justification comes. It is the same error which betrayed itself in his perversion of 1 Cor. 6, where the apostle Paul joins Peter in putting “sanctified” before “justified,” contrary to common evangelicalism, which sees only sanctification in the practical sense, and therefore of course after being justified. How comes to pass this incessant ignorance of, and opposition to, what every average “brother” used to know? Is it not the unmistakable work of the evil one that a leader should be thus guilty, yet without any decided or effective correction? An attempt was made by W.B. but silenced by the shuffle of “in the mind of God.”

Just think that his answer (page 238) to What is the Minister of the sanctuary? should be, “Christ is Head of the body, the Church, and has the place of Minister of the sanctuary. He presents the saints to God; He takes the place of Head;” and this is interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews!

Other remarks follow which in an average saint might have seemed strong; as in 240 where F.E.R. says to W.M., “Yes, but you see we are now going in so that we may be qualified to come out. W.B. I never saw that before. F.E.R. Well, it is a very good thought”[!]. Whatever may be felt at such self-applause, all sober Christians must agree that it was sad for any to remark (241), “I think that word ‘will’ declare it, in the second

clause of John 17:26, is what has been misleading to many of us." No, no: the misleading is from another source. The word of God here as always is quite right.

But I do call the attention of every saint to the atrocious verdict of F.E.R.: "Eternal life is realized only in the Assembly; no one touches (!) eternal life except in that connection(!)." This is an unmitigated lie of Satan. Scripture never speaks of it in that connection. It is strictly an individual privilege, and was as it is realised in each Christian apart from the assembly. Their corporate communion begins and goes on in the given Spirit. Such a statement betrays a soul not taught of God as to the assembly any more than individual Christianity.

What an astounding error to propound that "eternal life is realized [not possessed] only in the Assembly; no one touches [not has] eternal life now except in that connection!" Scripture on its very face never speaks of eternal life "in that connection." Neither did F.E.R. give one written word to warrant so bold an assumption and indeed untruth; nor did a single soul rise up even to ask for scripture. The Christian truth which is throughout denied, that the believer has it now, and that we know that we have it, and know it both objectively (John 17:3) and subjectively (1 John 5:13), is not in a single scripture connected with the Assembly, still less "only" there. All this is inexcusable departure from the plainest assurances of God's word. It is wanton opposition to scripture; and what must one conclude from his saying (page 242) that "the proper connection" of life eternal is with the world, the habitable earth, to come? Has he ever done more than read to talk about John's Gospel and First Epistle? Is it not there we find eternal life applying to the Christian now, thus only attested, and

applied in the fullest and deepest way? Never is it there connected with the habitable earth to come, which is a prophetic “connection” and not “the proper one;” nor is it “in association” that we get it as a present thing, but individually by faith in the Son of God. “You are out of death” by His death and resurrection, as His coming will prove. As to our souls, we are risen with Him now. To say that we have this “only for the assembly,” and talk of earning one’s living and providing for the family now is to talk strangely like a poor raving creature.

The reading on “Fellowship and the Lord’s Supper” opens with the effort to draw the contrast between the coming together and the assembly: the former in connection with our life down here; the latter having it in association with Christ (243). There is the usual fog of thought and phrase; not mystery, for this is God’s revelation, but mist wrapping things up in dark ideas. “I think the supper is introductory in the assembly; the supper rallies the saints, and they come together in assembly to eat the supper: it is what is immediately before us in coming together, but as introductory to the assembly” (244). What does this mean? The Supper “is introductory in the assembly,” and yet “introductory to the assembly”, both in the same sentence, and each incompatible with the other. How can the same thing be introductory “in” and “to”? The mystification is increased by the care taken to show that “fellowship may exist even if we never come together” without the least pains to explain what sort of fellowship is meant. The enemy’s aim is helped on by leaving high-sounding words in entire vagueness. Truth is not stated or even sought, save that 1 Cor. 10 is referred to for “fellowship” insisted on, without any “coming together.”

Now what true-hearted saint can fail to discern that this is the letter that kills, not the spirit that quickens? Here is what the apostle lays down in real and refreshing contrast with that vain and unprofitable idealising. “I speak as to intelligent ones: judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion of the body of the Christ? Because we the many are one loaf, one body, for the whole of us partake of the one loaf.” In 1 Cor. 11 it is the authoritative order of the Lord’s Supper, where the coming together of the saints is in season and place to eat it. There, where the object was to preserve from all taint of idolatry without, and not from internal disorder, he even begins with the cup and ends with the one loaf as symbolising the one body of Christ. Hence there was no moment then to speak of our coming together; but think of the folly of forgetting it is strictly presupposed! Yet we have as to cup and loaf the expression of our most intimate association with “Christ,” more so even than in chap. 11. It is not merely fellowship with one another, but also the communion of “Christ’s” body and blood.

But we come next (245) to the still more solemn and most fatal error as to 1 John 1:1-4; for the effort is to confine the fellowship there to the apostles, depriving the saints of their best. This troubled O.O.’B. and no wonder.

No soul of the least intelligence doubts the special place of the apostles and prophets as inspired vehicles of Christianity; and here the beloved disciple treats of truth and privilege made known second to none. The apostles’ function is perverted to deny the self-same fellowship to the Christian. Those heard, saw,

contemplated, and handled; for Christ was manifested, and to many beyond them. But those had seen, and were witnessing and reporting to the saints generally, as none others could with like certainty and power, the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to them. To what end was this testimony and report? Expressly that others, Christians, also might have communion with them. “Yea, and our communion (says John) is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; and these things write we to you that your [or, our] joy may be filled full.”

Due honour to the chosen witnesses; all praise to the Father and the Son made known in the Incarnate Word, the eternal life that was with the Father manifested. But even the witness and the report of the apostles came, that the saints everywhere should know that they share the most essential boon grace bestows, known present possession of eternal life. No otherwise can there be communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. This communion is enjoyed in having life eternal. The way is this, and there is none else. Satan never more audaciously assailed “the proper Christian privilege.” Others in general may have been feeble, doubtful, and dark; F.E.R. is his deadly instrument, ever striking at its principle.

The reason why limitation to testimony is spoken of is, because thereby life eternal as ours now in the Son is wholly denied. Thus and thus only had the apostles fellowship with the Father and with the Son; and they in the power of the Spirit communicated the truth of Christ to us, that we, having the same eternal life as they, should enjoy the same divine fellowship. There is many an inconsistent thing said in these readings; but the

most awful feature is the consistency of the error with itself, and its power of perverting other truths to subserve and confirm the capital error. In my judgment only an evil spirit could effect such concatenation of falsehood or impose a gloss of truth so persuasively on unwary souls.

Observe how smoke from the pit darkens the truth of God: “If anyone will take the trouble to read the first four verses of John’s epistle he will see that they are an introduction, in which the apostle shows their title to address us. Then it goes on to say ‘this then is the message which we have heard of Him and declare unto you (248, 9).’“ Such a remark proves fundamental ignorance of this scripture; for these verses, far from being a mere assertion of apostolic title, are the foundation laid for all that follows. What proof could be more complete, that the system leaves out the revealed manifestation (on which depends the gift of life eternal to the apostles, as well as to the saints for whom their testimony was written), and also that divine fellowship which is its fruit now and evermore?

“These things write we to you that your joy may be filled full” refers not to “the message” subsequently sent, but to His manifestation of which the opening speaks, the pillar on which depends all that grace builds up. It is utterly false that John begins with the lowest point. He could not speak, and nowhere does, of aught higher. This is spiritual blindness generated by the enemy. He begins with Him fully and intimately manifested, Who was the eternal life with the Father, but afterwards a Man as truly as the witnesses, though infinitely more. And what they had seen and heard, they report to other believers also, that they too may have that fellowship

which they themselves had with the Father and His Son. And this is the truth to fill with joy, which is evaded and annulled by F.E.R. and his school. For it is plain that many besides himself are caught in the net of the fowler.

Very far is “the message” in the rest of the chapter from being that grace. It follows up the blessed beginning in 1-4; and consists of tests in varied forms of the deepest wisdom and interest, applied to false profession under the Lord’s name. The pretension to life is put to the proof by God as light, in Whom is no darkness at all, by the three “if we says” (6, 8, 10). The first two verses of chapter 2 are an appendix completing all by the provision of grace for any so blessed, if there should be a sin. But the deadly lie betrays itself by denying fellowship in heaven, because of the wildly false hypothesis that fellowship is in a scene of contrariety. The wonder of Christianity is that we have life eternal and such blessed fellowship in a scene so evil; but to deny either, now or for heaven everlastingly, is to deny the essence of Christianity. If persons born of God can so think and talk, does it not show how far such can wander from the truth?

But this too is sad consistency with the statement in page 116, “I think eternal life refers to earth. I don’t think that we should talk of eternal life in heaven.” Were it one demented who blurted out such folly and falsehood, one could compassionate. But no; it is a man with his wits, energised by will to undermine the most precious privileges of Christianity under the darkening wiles of the great enemy. If eternal life be not now given to be our life, and its best fruit communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, Christianity is unknown in its positive and proper character. But if and as it is

our sure and present joy, where are F.E.R. and his echoes? That both the life eternal, and the divine fellowship thence, are our portion in God's love by faith in a scene of contrariety is most true, though denied by this dismal system; nor is there ground to doubt that they will be perfectly known and enjoyed in heaven and for ever. It is distinctly affirmed in the "eternal" life, and the fellowship results unfailingly by grace. Hence it is that here we are told of "the Father and the Son;" whereas in the rest of the chapter it is "God" as such.

Next (250, etc.) we find a quantity of truly small talk, as in the previous readings, unfounded and unedifying and indeed injurious: so we may skip these trifles now as before. But in 260 we arrive at words which manifest alienation from God's mind very plainly. "R.S.S. Does not the more blessed part of the meeting come properly after the breaking of the bread? F.E.R. The supper is introductory to the assembly; and that is the reason for finishing all that is formal at first. Passing round the bread and the cup and the box are so far formal; you cannot help this, but it is a great thing to be free of it, so that you may be prepared for the assembly in its proper character" (!). Surely no reverent believer will bear lightly such a profaning of that which is the very heart of true worship, as in the solemn calling of Christ to our remembrance. Can it be that the great thing which ordinarily follows is the speaking of one or more? And the same pair add yet more clearly to the same effect of irreverence and presumption. "R.S.S. Is the first part of the meeting what you do, and the last part what the Lord does? F.E.R. Yes. It is the cup we bless and the bread we break. The Lord never does that again. And then the presence of the Lord is realized; He has His

place, and we are conscious of Him as Head." "If the Supper is over, it is over. If you get hymns and thanksgiving after, it is worship in connection with Christ as the Minister of the sanctuary. He leads the praises." "We are risen with Christ and quickened with Him, and therefore are priests."

Can words disclose more clearly men who have broken loose from God's word? This never hints at such splitting in two the gathering for the breaking of bread, that is, the Lord's Supper. Least of all, does it sanction any such slight put on the saints in sharing the bread and the wine for remembrance of Christ. There is no part, time, or act so profoundly near or deep in the meeting; and the contrast of what goes before with what follows is a myth. The Lord does not come into the midst at the Supper, nor does His word justify such words as "you cannot help" the formality of "passing round the bread and the cup and the box," and a "great thing to be free of it;" or again that "when the Supper is over," it is "worship in connection with Christ as the Minister of the sanctuary." It is letter work and theorising with little reality and not a little contempt for the Lord's Supper. And where does scripture connect the Christian priesthood with being risen and quickened with Christ? What random and sensational effort or mere dogma!

So in One Spirit and one body (263), the Lord and His death are lowered to a means: "the subject leads on to the assembly." Where is such an "idea" in scripture? In this page the error grows bolder still." F.E.R. You cannot call Him to mind as dead, but as One who is living, Who did die." This is to destroy the force of the Lord's repeated words, Do this for remembrance of Me; which is simply, expressly, and exclusively recalling Him to

mind in His death, His body given, His blood shed. It is in no way looking up to Him as alive again for evermore and glorified. This is a present joy, not at all His remembrance. His headship or our risen state are not what should then occupy the heart. I remember one put out by some of these brethren for this error: now it passes as precious truth. The argument about the Duke of Wellington is beside the mark, not to say profane also. Christ's love in dying for us, for the remission of our sins, is His alone; and Him thus would He have us call to mind. His being made known to the two disciples in the breaking of bread was not His supper though not "curious" but most instructive in its way.

Farther, the contrast (268) between the Corinthian saints and the Hebrews in the Epistle is utterly contrary to scripture and facts. They were alike short of being "perfect" or full-grown Christians; and their state distressed the apostle according to both Epistles. He speaks of falling away or reprobation, and warns solemnly of such an end. Nowhere have we the body of Christ more unfolded than in 1 Cor. 12, save on the still more elevated ground taken for the Ephesians; the practical interior of the assembly on earth is given in 1 Cor. 14. The Epistle to the Hebrews richly treats the heavenly calling, giving us the key to the Jewish shadows, and more; but it is silent on the great mystery as to Christ and as to the church.

Again, how incorrect to say that Matt. 18:20 has to do "with prayer, not discipline!" In fact it lays down the great governing assurance of His presence in the midst of even two or three if gathered together unto His name, including both discipline (18) and prayer (19), as well as a larger range not limited to those aims. This may seem

a comparatively small mistake; but does it not expose the folly of so unfit a person assuming, or accepted, to "correct" "what is defective or erroneous?" See the fond fancy of page 5.

See too how the unbelief of life eternal being now affects other truth in the gravest way (276). Eternal life, said W. M., is not introduced in Corinthians at all; to which the rejoinder is, "How could it be, for they had not got to love"? Those who could so speak evince their departure from fundamental truth. For how could any get to love, save as "an idea" without having eternal life to bear that blessed fruit of it as a reality? The only escape from the force of this (what seems to be the fact) is that these benighted and heterodox folk hold that Christ gives the believer now another life, which is not eternal life: an idea inbreathed by Satan, and absolutely incompatible with Christ's own testimony. In short it is a different Christianity, which is not another; for how can there be but one? Besides, the doubt that Corinthians, carnal and worldly as too many were, "had got to love," is an unworthy exaggeration for "he that loveth not knoweth not God;" and the apostle, in rebuking severely, was careful to qualify its application by "some have not knowledge of God."

One can hardly conceive a greater muddle of speculation than the theory advanced on spurious authority without a tittle of scripture for a progress from the Lord's supper to the assembly, thence for the spiritual to touch life eternal, and thence onward to the sanctuary. As throughout, it is confusion of things which differ, and here of the Epistles to the Corinthians and to the Hebrews (270-280). How loose too to say that "if a man is a believer, he is a Christian!" Cornelius is a

sample of genuine piety by faith before Peter was sent with words whereby he and his house should be saved. So indeed it had been for Peter and the rest when they received the same gift from God. No doubt all such had been born of the Spirit; but sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise is essential to enjoy the new relationship. The error is from denying the difference of having life eternal and receiving the Spirit, an error shared with all the uninstructed in Christendom. Only in F.E.R. and his companions it is departure from all that was fully believed, and I hope is still believed by not a few who connive at this painful declension through incredulity. Faith in the gospel of salvation goes far beyond faith in Christ's person.

Then, moreover, how misleading to say "you may accept the truth of these chapters [presumably 1 Cor. 11 and 12] and never enter into the reality of the calling, that is, of the sanctuary and the service of God! In chap. 15 the apostle deposits the truth of the gospel with the Corinthians ! and in the second epistle he brings to them the new covenant and reconciliation!! So they could not as yet enter into the calling of God" (281)!!!. Contrast with it what the apostle says to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:26-31). No doubt they were shallow; but this is a sadly common complaint. Is it necessary to refute falsehoods so palpable? Was there ever among brethren such trifling in print? and with pretension so unbounded, yet unrebuked?

The same dark departure appears throughout "Things Unseen" (283-304). Truth (well known comparatively) on Heb. 12:18-29 is set aside, from first to last, yet with a superficial gloss suited to deceive. Speaking of Mount Zion, he says, "I don't think there is the idea of

sovereignty in grace so much as in mercy." Why? Was it his pleasure and Satan's plan here to oppose one in particular to whom God's children are pre-eminently indebted? to repay his own debt by the vain contradiction that characterises much through this despicable book? He refers to Eph. 2:4-6, to Ex. 33:19 (where divine mercy occurs), and to the fact that the mass of the people in Indianapolis were not present. But how does all this support his correction of J.N.D.'s "defective or erroneous terms"? The truth is that "mercy" does not characterise Jehovah's choice of Zion; nor yet "grace" only, but royal grace in view of David, and of his greater Son and Lord. This makes it the most honoured seat on earth, and clothed with the principle of such special grace in contrast with Sinai or law.

Next he is equally astray as to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22), which like other untaught men he will have to be the church, with of course his correction. "I think the idea presented is [not God's revelation to Paul himself, but] according to the work of the twelve, especially according to Peter" — anything to change and differ. Now there are plain and solid and unanswerable grounds to disprove the general thought, to say nothing of the futile speciality. For first the epistle speaks fully and distinctly of this very city (as none can dispute) in Heb. 11:10, 16, Heb. 13:14. By a suited figure it is the designation of heavenly glory, for which the patriarchs waited. But they never awaited the church of God, Christ's body and bride, either in its present condition or in that which is to be. The mystery in all its parts was then hid in God. Secondly the context itself refutes "the idea." It is not the truth. "The church of the firstborns enrolled in heaven" is given as a fresh

object in its due place within this group (ver. 23). It is quite distinct from the “city.”

We may leave the childish talk, and turn to the object subjoined, “To an innumerable company [or myriads] of angels, [not “to”] the general assembly.” Here we have baseless speculations imported from Rev. 21:9 et seqq., which does present the bride the Lamb’s wife, symbolised as the holy city, new Jerusalem: not the heavenly glory where she is to be, but herself. The only one of these vague remarks worth a notice is the strange fancy that “God’s providence may in a way appear to be against His people; but angels are not the providence of God, but agents employed for His people” (288)! Is this to “correct” the belief that they were and are so used in His providence?

Then comes the notable idea that “the church of the firstborn which are written in heaven” is “another aspect,” Paul’s work here, as the former Peter’s. O brethren, is it come to this, that even the least of you should be so readily and madly deceived? Can you have entertained for a moment this double of the church? Separated too by “myriads of angels,” universal gathering as they are, and wholly distinct? Once you were not so easily taken in; but now that you have so soon forgotten the sound teaching of many departed to be with Christ, you are become the prey of folly and imposture; and silence pervades the better sort, lest the truth should lead to a universal explosion. O why do you not trust the Lord, clear His name, save your own souls from blighting errors, warn the deluded, and deal with the deceivers? If all fail to deliver others, deliver your own souls from His dishonour.

Having demonstrated the false teaching thus far, I have no wish to occupy the reader with lesser points, though it is sad to think even F.E.R. could not see an incomparably higher reference of the firstborns than to those of Israel. The truth is that it beautifully agrees with Heb. 2:12, and means the assembly of persons thus associated individually with the Firstborn; an aggregate, not a unity, in accordance with the Epistle. Nor need we discuss the curt and unsatisfactory remarks on the other objects in this group of glory, which are far from a just explanation. All is poverty-stricken as well as untrue. And you who know it, and are one lump with all, hold your peace! Is there not even a watchman to blow the trumpet? How different of old! What pity for mere weakness and ignorance! What hatred of presumption in divine things! What intolerance of error! Now you seem looser within your borders than the loosest you used to loathe. Beware too of hypocrisy. You still profess veneration for Mr. Darby as a great expounder of "divine teaching;" yet none but a simpleton or a knave can fail to discern that this deplorable book undermines his witness in all that is here pointed out and in much more that it would be a wearisome and needless task to expose. Are you now, through desire to hold together at all cost, imitating those with whom we have had "no communion"? They would be ashamed of much which here and till now passes as "great blessing" among you.

"The Kingdom as connected with the Church" (Plainfield), beginning at p. 305, betrays the usual desertion of scripture for human imagination, and is fundamentally erroneous. The truth is reversed in the remark, "if you make much of the assembly you make much of Christ." The assembly wholly depends on Him.

Facts too sadly prove that the church may be cried up extravagantly and sinfully to the disparagement of Christ. She answers to the true Eve of the Last and heavenly Adam; she owes all to union with Him. It is a precious truth to know this as our portion in God's sovereign grace. But the one safeguard is to cherish that Christ is "all," the all: without this, that He is "in all" is often a danger. Those who ignore the assembly are quite wrong, dishonour God and His Son, overlook and misapply a large part of scripture, losing the full joy in the love of Christ of a relationship so wondrously near and glorious. But those, who teach the error that the mystery is the assembly, instead of the truth that it is CHRIST and the assembly, are inexcusably disloyal, ungrateful, and vain. All she is or has is from His love; and to make Christ the all is God's way to keep her from pride and shipwreck. The actual state of the church is its undeniable proof; and such will be the issue of those who make much of her to exalt Him. She thus becomes an idol. "Children, keep yourselves from idols."

In the next page we are told that "the institution of the Kingdom of necessity brings in the assembly," of course without a word of scripture. But scripture is explicit that it is false. The Kingdom, as our Lord speaks of it, is that which was prepared from the world's foundation (Matt. 25:34); but those who were to compose the assembly God chose in Christ before it. And this is no casual feature, but an essential difference. Neither the Kingdom nor any other institution necessitates the assembly, which is a part though but a secondary part of the mystery, not told to men but hid in God, which the Kingdom was not but just the contrary. The O.T. saints as a whole anticipated the Kingdom exultingly; but not one

knew the purpose of God for Christ's glory as Head over all things to the assembly. The thought is a return to the old lack of intelligence from which the truth better known was blessed to saints fallen asleep, and to some who still survive and await the coming of the Lord.

Then what can we expect from one who, being asked in p. 307 what are "the elements of the assembly," answers, "the Spirit in this chapter [1 Cor. 12]. In the next chapter it is love, which is the heart of the assembly; and in chapter 14 the important point is the mind!" Is this meant for a climax? It is an anti-climax and seems a woefully inadequate summary: and if "mind" be so important, how strange that so poor a specimen should be presented! But leaving this we have in pp. 308, 9 the strange quotation of Col. 1:27 for "the great importance of the church." Surely any simple saint might rather have said, the all importance of "Christ in us, the hope of glory." This is not to depreciate the assembly; but it maintains the homage to Christ which is His due, and ought to be our chief joy.

Indeed throughout this page the misuse of scripture is remarkable, as generally throughout the volume. How is this? What has brought about so marked a change? What struck me near sixty years ago was the spiritual intelligence of unlettered souls in the just application of God's word. Here almost all is random and vague, if not erroneous. Think of citing 1 Cor. 12:3 to show that the Spirit "came here to effectuate the Kingdom" ! and John 14:17 to make one body! It is certain that the former is a guard against evil spirits; and that John, even in treating of unity, speaks of its family character, never of the body.

Speaking of 1 Cor. 13, F.E.R. (p. 312) alludes to “those with whom we have been once in fellowship” as lacking love. But if they, as before God, reject his teaching as destructive of the truth, how could faithful men slight so great a sin? One could not expect those so accused to appreciate such fidelity. In 1889 he not only objected to apply absolutely to the believer, in his mixed condition (which of course goes on all his life), what is true of him as in Christ, but he declared this to be the key of his system. Now this really means unbelief in God’s justification by grace; and no explanation can conciliate it even with the bare gospel. He denied the unity of Christ’s Person, contradicting His being God and man in one Person, because his natural mind suggested that this union would necessitate two Persons. He taught in 1897 that in Christ “becoming a man, He becomes the Logos;” whereas one of the most momentous communications of John 1 is that He was eternally the Logos, and in time He became flesh. What can argument in defence of such blasphemy show but his preference of his own “ideas” to the revealed truth of God? What can silence at best mean, but that he prefers his own reputation, if he now knows his shameless error, to owning it and vindicating Christ’s glory? He denies eternal life to the Christian now, and fellowship with the Father and the Son in heaven, to say nothing of false trash on the Kingdom, covenant, reconciliation, etc. Can he and his complaining friends have any right sense of the truth, if they look for what they call “love” but really indifference, in presence of such fundamental errors? Is it not a pernicious system and an unholy fellowship, which could tolerate such evils, or seek to explain them away?

The rest of the colloquy is so trivial or such a repetition of errors already pointed out, that we may turn to p. 321 where it is taught that “the Holy Ghost never comes where there is not light”; and Eph. 1:13 is quoted as the basis of scripture for it. This led one to suggest that “faith is light,” which was assented to. It is the old story; not a word about life, though our Lord Himself so often assures that “he that believeth hath everlasting life.” Now “light” is equivocal. The apostates in Heb. 6 had been once “enlightened” and had tasted of the heavenly gift, yea had been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and powers of the coming age, yet fell away. They were not born of the Spirit; they had not life eternal. Anything short of this comes to nought; to warn of it is the aim of a passage so solemn. It was not Paul’s function to dwell on life now, but given to John; yet he does fully show in this very connection the necessity of believing, not only in Christ’s person but in His work, in order to receive the Holy Spirit. One must have heard the gospel of salvation. It is after this the believer is sealed. The unction follows the blood on the cleansed leper, as in the type here alluded to. But life is ignored, which precedes peace by the blood. Thus, as to the great truth of a new and eternal life now communicated, all is confusion and error. Here as ever is the evasion or denial of eternal life as a present possession by the faith of Christ, and known through the Spirit.

Again, “Peter was sent to enlighten Cornelius.” Why is scripture so systematically ignored? Peter never speaks of mere enlightenment in the case, when challenged by the Christian Jews of Jerusalem; he says in Acts 11:14, that he was to tell Cornelius “words whereby he and all

his house should be saved." This goes beyond light or even life to salvation assured, and is based on Christ's death and resurrection. Cornelius was not a natural man, nor were his prayers and his alms a lifeless form but acceptable to God. He was already born anew, a dependent, God-fearing, and pious man, like Job or other O. T. saints. But he needed to hear the word of truth, the gospel of his salvation; and this went forth on the accomplishment of Christ's work. Then God's salvation came, instead of being "near to come" (Isa. 66:1), and His righteousness was revealed, as it is now and not before. Without this, as the fruit of Christ's work, the Holy Spirit could not be given. But as Cornelius and the rest hearkened, the heart-knowing God bore them witness; and they received the Holy Spirit as the Jewish saints did at Pentecost. The work as well as the life of Christ are the due basis for the gift of the Spirit. "They were enlightened first, and then the Holy Ghost was poured out" is superficial and unsound, leaving out the essential life in Christ, and His work received by faith.

To F. L. it was admitted that "the divine work of new birth is always there first": but it is one of the incongruities of the system to allow this, and to deny life eternal. What other life, then, is communicated when one is begotten or born of God (1 John 5:1-4). Not but that in John 3 wisdom shone, in the language of verses 3 and 5 as compared with verse 15; but it is folly and error to deny life to one born anew, and to doubt that it is life in Christ, life eternal. Think too of one so unenlightened as to say (p. 322) that the blood of Christ is "light, because it is the blood of Christ that reveals God to you!" Where does scripture say anything of the sort? What it teaches is that "the life (not, His blood) is the

light of men" (John 1). "The true light was that which, coming into the world, sheddeth light on every man;" it is Christ Incarnate. But the title to become children of God required much more, even to believe on His Name, on God's revelation of the Lord Jesus. His blood lays the basis for showing forth God's. righteousness, which is quite another question.

Here too are the old vagaries about the Kingdom and the Covenant (323), and the false statement, "that John 3:16 is not the beginning of the gospel;" though the Lord declared it to Nicodemus before His Galilean ministry commenced. It was not merely "in view of eternal life," but that the believer should have it. Eternal life will be the great blessing in the day of the Lord; but the wonder of Christ come, dead, risen, and glorified, is that the Christian has it now, and knows it both objectively and consciously. Its denial as a present thing is one of F.E.R.'s fatal errors, the denial so far of Christianity on the positive side.

When one not fully poisoned said (in the same page) "the blessing is heavenly," F.E.R. boldly answered, "No, I think the blessing refers to earth," qualified afterward "by the introduction of heavenly things upon earth." But what perversity! especially when 1 Cor. 12 is mixed up with it. For when the time here spoken of does come, the manifested blessing will be in the highest degree heavenly, and for others in a rich but incomplete degree on earth.

Pp. 324, 325 tell us that "Christ has not taken David's throne, but He is at the right hand of God." But this is flatly to contradict what was taught in p. 32, "Then David's throne is really the throne of God. You could not

understand this well from the Old Testament, but in the New find that David's throne is God's throne." The truth is that the N.T. really refutes any such confusion, as we have seen already. So too in p. 155 it was false to say, "He has received the Kingdom," and still more to quote for it, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." This is the present exaltation of our Lord in heaven; yet where does one word of scripture warrant the rash error that "He has received the Kingdom, but has not yet returned "? On the contrary Daniel predicts in his chap. 7 the uprising of the Beast and the blasphemies of the last horn which domineers it, before he tells us of dominion and power and glory and a Kingdom over all peoples, etc., given to the Son of Man. Again Rev. 11 is explicit that not till the seventh Trumpet sounded could it be said that He took His great power and reigned.

What sad ignorance, if it was not still more lamentable opposition to what has been heretofore fully believed among brethren of any intelligence! Whence comes this retrogradism? And why such unwonted toleration of folly? Here too the fundamental error reappears, "In the coming age eternal life comes in," which is thus made only dispensational. Dead silence on what Christ gave when here and still gives in richer power: eternal life now the believer's portion for his soul, which he falsely says "you can only touch it (!) in association with Christ; the fact is not yet brought to pass (325)." Alas! the fact is, that F.E.R. flatly contradicts not only the apostle John but our Lord and Saviour, the Son of God, and His present known gift of life eternal, which is beyond all dispensations, and was promised before time began.

Next we have Reconciliation as connected with the church (326-345). "In many minds the idea connected

with it is extremely indefinite," says he; and his "idea" follows, that "where distance was there is complacency." Is this, then, definite? Complacency really was with Christ, where no distance was. Reconciliation has quite another force. It is that change, not in God but in us, when we are brought by Christ's atoning death into God's perfect favour and settled therein.

The grace and truth came in Christ. God was in Christ, reconciling the world. Man would not be reconciled, but crucified Him; and God therein made sin Him who knew no sin, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus was reconciliation made effectual for all who believe. But it is untrue that its principle (p. 330) is "No longer live I, but Christ lives in me." Life in the Son of God, as living it now by the faith of Him, is in no way "reconciliation," though both are our accompanying privileges. That it is the same in principle is truly and "extremely indefinite," and false too; and to say that "you are reconciled by being removed" is not the old truth but new barbarian theology. God reconciled us in the body of Christ's flesh through death.

It is puerile and vain exposition to say (331), "You can understand how Christ is the beginning in that connection." Not so; in Col. 1 Christ is the Beginning, First-born from out of the dead, as adding a second first-born. He was First-born of all creation; and, to be the suited head of the church, He was First-born out of the dead too (Col. 1:15-18). Then we have the two reconciliations; not only the purposed reconciliation of the universe, but the already effected reconciliation of Christian saints (Col. 1:20-22). The order just stated is only confusion. Here is repeated the old mistake, so profoundly wrong, of simply presenting "the world to

come," the habitable earth really then, instead of (what scripture so plainly says) "all things, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens." Can there be a grosser fault in a teacher than leaving out what is there revealed and bringing in what is not? Again, is it not poor work to drag in here Aaron and his house from another part of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in order to illustrate Christ's relation to the saints in Colosse where He is set before us as Head of the body? And again, what has the ministry or minister of the sanctuary to do with the truth revealed to the saints in Colosse? It is the crudest perversion of the Lord's right paths that I ever remember to have seen; and it is habitual. There is no subjection to scripture nor guidance of the Spirit.

Then in p. 354 comes fresh speculation without scripture: "I don't think we shall address one another in heaven." What is the value of such fancies as these? Souls want the truth God has revealed. But admitting the need of viewing things in spirit as in heaven, it is remarkable that the chapter before us looks at the saints on earth, as its distinction from Eph. 1. It is not, You in Christ on high and in the glory, but "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Thus these "Notes of Readings" meddle presumptuously with what one has not seen (Col. 2:18), and muddle what God has given for all His saints to profit by.

But we may omit such like thoughts, and come to the serious slight of God's word apparent in page 340. "Suppose I am thinking of the scripture, 'Holy and without blame before Him in love,' I cannot enter into it by accepting a statement; I can only enter into it by being it." The words of men are "statements," and if only such they are powerless. But consider what it means so

to estimate the word of God, which faith appropriates. It is the more grave here, because he thinks that being reconciled, and presented “holy, unblamable, and unreprovable” before God go together. Yet the one is God’s reconciliation of us through Christ’s death, and the other is our being thus holy and blameless in love. What more incongruous, what more suited both to build up presumption in the self-confident, and to destroy the peace of the self-judging? Is it only in virtue of our new and divine nature that we could be thus spoken of, we in Christ and Christ in us? If this was intended, it should have been explained. Here all is in the air. But we who believe are to enjoy the wondrous truth God gives us of our place now in Christ, soon to share its glorious result. We are saints according to God’s own nature; we are sons according to the good pleasure of His will, who reveals Himself to us as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and blessed us in Christ. His word is no barren “statement,” but the means of His grace in Christ to introduce us into every blessing of faith.

With F.E.R. contrariwise it is love that appropriates the Head, instead of His love in all its unfailing fulness appropriating us (Eph. 5). What cloudland! yet no Christian would minimise our love created by love in Christ. First and last this scheme is mischievous. According to it one may have the faith of eternal life, but not the thing; one may have a “statement” of the blessed place in Christ grace gives to faith, but this does not make you to be what is said. Thus faith, like the word, is powerless, as if the Father, the Son, and the Spirit took no part. “You must be the thing itself in order to be before God according to that,” whatever this ambiguous oracle may mean. It seems mere self-righteousness, like

the Pharisee standing and praying thus to himself, “God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men.” Who thinks we enter into Christian blessedness “by accepting a statement”? Who doubts of any door so good and sure as through Him Who is the way, the truth, and the life? His words are spirit and are life.

Not the unbelief and heterodoxy alone of the novel school, but its folly stands plainly in “Divine Teaching and its End” (pp. 346-356). “Risen with Christ is God’s mind in regard to believers,” and so I might go on. “Eternal life is the expression of His pleasure in Christ risen,” etc. But how consists this with a system which wholly denies life eternal to believers as an existing fact of His grace? Risen with Christ, it is said, we are; but how could this be if believers have not even life in the Son now? Is “in God’s mind” a loophole to escape the acknowledgment that it is already a real thing in the spiritual realm? If F.E.R. means so, simple souls are deceived into thinking that the error is exaggerated, and that he is really orthodox in this; if he does not mean it, it only adds error to error, as if life more abundantly could be in Him risen without life eternal being possessed in Him even before His resurrection.

But “risen with Christ” goes beyond having life eternal, as the Lord told the believer he had when He was here below. It is a fresh privilege which none could have till He was raised from the dead. For this is the way the apostle Paul was inspired to reveal it. Christ is seen as dead and raised up from out of the dead and set at God’s right hand: not Christ quickening now, and raising by-and-by, true as this is; but God raising Him by His mighty power, and ourselves who believe quickened and raised together with Him by the same power. If we

possess not now eternal life in Him, still less can we be said to be quickened with Him, raised up together, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. The system betrays its absurdity inherent and evident. The two truths, eternal life now given and ourselves risen with Christ, coalesce in the Christian, but are set aside by this destructive error: and “the consciousness of eternal life” (p. 347) cannot be unless you have it now. The consciousness is false unless we have it already in our souls in the most real sense.

The Epistle of John begins with eternal life in the Word of life, that we may have through the apostles’ witness that fellowship with the Father and with the Son which they had. This is left out in any true force here as elsewhere. F.E.R. says it begins with “Christian fellowship,” meaning the fellowship we have one with another in ver. 6. But this leaves out the foundation and fulness of grace conveyed in vers. 1-4, on which depends our true relationship to the Father and the Son. It starts with the holy tests due to God and His nature, which follow in vers. 5-10, after which comes the resource of grace, if the enjoyment of our proper place and blessed fellowship be interrupted by sin. Hence even here the “Father” reappears (2:1), whereas it was “God” in the interval. How shocking the blindness which wholly omits our fellowship with the Father and with His Son, reducing our privilege to “fellowship one with another”! No wonder he counts it small.

There is nothing deeper or higher in all the Epistle, instead of its beginning with an elementary stage, whence it rises all through to the climax of “He is the true God, and eternal life” in 1 John 5:20. What wretched fallacy, real disorder, and bold untruth! For it

is the same true God and eternal life at the end as the Word of life at the beginning, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to the apostles. But therein is (what is not in any part of chap. 5 nor indeed elsewhere in the Epistle), such a fulness of love expressed as our sharing with the apostles the fellowship with the Father and with His Son. This is altogether and systematically explained away. To what spirit can we attribute this? Not surely to God's Spirit, but to "the spirit of error," of whose working the Epistle so pointedly warns us.

Undoubtedly there is immense force in the impressive close which the Spirit gives to the Epistle in 1 John 5:18-21. But the notion of steps leading up from a lowly start to the greatest height of blessing is a complete misconception, even where the truth generally may be seen. Alas! true to the unfailing character of this book, falsehood surreptitiously takes its place; and all that the system allows is "carrying us into the scene and sphere where Christ is, who is the true God and eternal life" (p. 356). For even then it is not eternal life possessed, only looked forward to in hope. Yet the Lord had declared that He gives (not "shall give" merely) life eternal to the believer, who has it, distinct from but ending in the resurrection at last, not objectively only but subjectively as "our life," and hence consciously as in 1 John 5:13. What monstrous unbelief to doubt such ample testimony!

The same insubjection to scripture is seen in "What marks the fathers" (p. 348). F.E.R. says it "is that they had judged the world system in the light of the death of Christ." No doubt they had; but this is what is rather attributed to the "young men" distinctively. Wholly

different is what the apostle himself says (1 John 2:13): “I write to you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning” — Christ as manifested here. And this is simply repeated in ver. 14; whereas he enlarges for the “babes” and the “young men.” It is not that truth, but a Divine Person Incarnate showing the Father and declaring God; not here His death really, but Himself (the eternal life before time) come as Man among men, exercised and displayed in every matter small or great, in word and deed. It is not the world judged in His death, but Himself, the True God, yet also a living Man in all lowliness and obedience, and with all love and holiness, yet in all the inscrutability of the Son. “From the beginning” (ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς) is contradistinguished “from the outset” (ἄνωθεν) in Luke 1:2, 3, and should not be confounded; but why notice such mistakes? F.E.R. has a fatality of error, and seems raised up to contradict, undermine, and destroy as far as he can, what God-taught men laboured to instil into the faithful for much more than a half-century before. “The consciousness of eternal life” (p. 350), if you have it not, is absurd and self-contradictory. The steps of progress are a fiction of his mind.

Turn we now to another chapter of blatant crudities, “Eternal Life in connection with the church” (357- 375). There is the old reiteration of the only order “morally possible” (!), the Kingdom, new covenant, reconciliation, and life eternal, all falsely said to be in Rom. 5 which speaks only of the last two, here misrepresented. For even the last is but eternal life at the end, here and throughout abused to exclude eternal life at the beginning, though it be one of the most distinctive

truths and important boons of the Christian as a known present possession.

P. 359 says that “the Church brings us to the truth of eternal life.” What does this mean? It is so vague that it might bear many explanations, not one of them consonant with scripture, either in the final sense which the O. T. recognises as well as the N., or in that present sense on which Christ insists as His gift now, as He too will effect the other at His coming. In both cases it is Christ, and not the church. F.E.R. says “the church,” where God’s word points to Christ alone, whether at the first advent or the second. There is not an effort to cite scripture, as indeed not one word bears it out. Are not such baseless assertions from Satan? John’s Gospel and First Epistle are the inspired authority for the truth of eternal life as a present gift to the believer; and neither even once speaks of “the Church.”

Here at any rate the present is in view, for “quickened with Him” is referred to; and “the whole body is, in that sense, in the life of Christ; He is the Spirit of it.” How unscriptural the language! and this to avoid and deny that the believer has life eternal! The truth is that “quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,” is another way of regarding God’s work of grace: not the Son quickening dead souls by giving them life eternal on faith, but God raising Christ out of the dead, and quickening and raising those who believe with Him. This is an advance on John 6 which teaches life eternal given in the days of His flesh, but emphatically in His death: here it is in resurrection power with Him. The error is that this is allowed according to Col. 2 but the life is denied to be eternal life according to John 6. What other life does Christ give believers? How

quickened with Him, if not life eternal? It is really saying and unsaying. He adds in the same page, “Eternal life does not take you off the earth,” though admitting that “the truth in Eph. sets the saints in heaven.” Did they lose life eternal when seated there? Was there ever a more absurd scheme? It is a mania of contradicting what scripture teaches, and what brethren have hitherto believed and taught without a dissentient voice. And now, -?

It is flat opposition to our Lord’s plain assurance in John 5:24, 25, John 6:35-40, that “you cannot get to eternal life except either by resurrection or the setting aside of death [whatever this last means]. If God sets death aside, as in the millennium, then eternal life comes in.” Not a word of Christ giving it to the believer when He was here (to say nothing of believers previously), though no doubt to none without His death whenever it came, as it was before God for all His own when unknown. “On the other hand, we reach eternal life by reaching resurrection.” What does “reaching” eternal life signify? Not, having it: for this is wholly denied; and it is for those who accept the oracle to find out. It is one of the numerous ambiguities throughout these Notes; so that weak persons are deceived to think F.E.R. does not deny the present gift and possession of life eternal, and the strong who know better shut their ears and hold their tongues. Do they flatter themselves that they thereby escape responsibility? Where is their faith working by love?

Passing over questionable and false assertions of no less moment, we hear again (362), “I don’t see any meaning in its [eternal life’s] application to heaven.” What an egregious statement to one who weighs 1 John 1 to 5:20!

We have it communicated to us here: else we do not belong to Him at all; and by the Spirit as power we enjoy. So too are we transformed by beholding God's glory in His face on high, and await His coming to have the same life completely, even for the body, when He will take us up to the Father's house. Christ is eternal life, and on receiving Him we receive eternal life, but only receive it in full when conformed to Him for glory. No doubt it is superior to death, and the believer in Christ, though dead, shall live; but so little has it "to say to death" in itself, that every one who lives and believes on Him shall never die (John 11:25, 26). For we shall not all sleep, but we shall be all changed. So unquestionably false is every detail. When we go from this earth, eternal life cease or have no longer force (363)! If these men were Jews, one could comprehend. As to it all F.E.R. judaizes, and renounces the special Christian truth, not only of life eternal now but of its only completeness at Christ's coming for and in heavenly glory. A more shocking delusion and antagonism to plain scripture, who can find?

Leaving lesser thoughts, we take up what is said of 1 John 1:2. Every true-hearted person accepts the simple but momentous truth that the life eternal was with the Father before it was manifested to the chosen witnesses here below. There was the source and the home proper to it; and there is that life eternal now. And if we have that life, we have it in Him above. This gave the true meaning of "the sphere." Life eternal is here said to be with the Father before the manifestation on earth. It was in its own eternal sphere. Now we have it truly, but in a wholly different sphere; but we await His coming to have it completely where He was and now is. "The world

to come" will only know it in a partial and imperfect way, where righteousness reigns, and power suppresses evil; yet there evil is and will break out openly when the wicked one is let loose to call it forth. But this error-loving book lowers the being and gift of the life eternal with the Father to "a moral statement," which is false; and to "an abstract way" applicable to us ("true in Him and in us "), which is also false, for this becomes only true in us "after He rose from the dead." And again, "in the assembly you are risen with Christ": what fumbling in the dark! And when one asked "the significance of the term, you touch eternal life" [not the phrase of scripture where it is unknown, but a nonsensical invention], the answer of gloom came forth: — "Your soul comes into contact with what is outside of death, that is, Christ Himself and the saints looked at as risen with Him; we are called of God to priestly service and that is where I understand the soul touches the reality of eternal life. Q. Cannot we touch eternal life outside of the assembly, individually, I mean? F.E.R. I don't think so (368)!"

Can there be a more melancholy exhibition of departure from the divine faith of a Christian? F.E.R. owns some sort of a life, but not eternal life. Not only is the individual believer denied it, though our Lord affirms it of him, but "in the assembly you are risen with Christ" [a rare utterance of folly], you have not life eternal — not even those on whom the Lord breathed His risen life in the Spirit; you only "touch" its reality! And the reason why so little is known about eternal life is "because so little is known about the assembly"!!! Can aught be a more shameless slight on the Son of God? Is it not the voice of Babylon? And J.S.A. asked, "If he is going to die, how can he say he has actually got eternal

life?" F.E.R. "It is an enigma to me" (p. 374). Has the enemy cheated these men, not only of divine truth, but of common sense? Did not Christ die, Who was and is the eternal life? Why should one's having life eternal in the soul preserve one from death of the body? So of 1 John 5:13 F.E.R. says, "You are conscious of it — but not as a possession(!)." Can there be a stranger or falser notion? One might have a thing and not be conscious of it; but how be conscious that you have eternal life, and not possess it? It is indeed a system of delusion.

The last reading (376-396) and the last address (397-406) call for few remarks, though full of the same or kindred errors as we have noticed. But as we have seen the utmost violence done to the truth in levelling down eternal life for the Christian to a Jewish measure, and hence denying its present reception, so here we have Abraham's blessing levelled up to the height of life eternal, as indeed it appeared earlier. Naturally the usual vagueness prevails; yet there is no thought of Abraham having life eternal: but "I think the blessing of Abraham will be eternal life... You get it, I think, in Psalm 133; 'There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore (380).'" How simple divine revelation would be, if one could solve deep questions so easily! Because Jehovah promised, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"; and the Psalm speaks of the blessing, even life for evermore; therefore it is the same thing! Q.E.D.

Rash assertions are repeated on the scriptures, especially "It is no good sending out Bibles if there are not preachers." Is this from God's Spirit or from another? 1 John 4:1. Again "in regard to certain things which have come out in this country as to eternal life,

the difficulty was that the limit of scripture was transgressed: the moment you get beyond the limit of scripture you are a transgressor." Pretty bold this from F.E.R. Had all brethren transgressed scripture in affirming, on the word of the Lord, that the believer has life eternal, till it was set right by the audacious denial that any believer possesses it now? And how are those who know he is a transgressor, as to not only this but almost every Christian truth, content to wink at the evil?

Such declension, such high-minded departure, from what once characterised, is of a piece with the denial of life eternal, not in the Jewish future form, but in its incomparably higher Christian privilege. That will be when Messiah comes to reign. This was when the Son came, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily. No one doubts the blessing to be then, life evermore for Israel and the nations. But O what blindness to the True God and eternal life in the Person of Christ, not only when on earth, but shining out more brightly still when He died and rose! And this in giving eternal life to the believer now, so that he has it, and comes not into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Apostasy from this essential Christian truth is a horror, whatever one's pity for the blunders of a babe. Christ's words in John's Gospel are so clear that one can only impute their rejection to the deceiving power of the old serpent. What is it to give up truth and prefer darkness?

It is the distinctive character of the N.T. to reveal in Christ God come down to earth, and later Man in Him ascended up to heaven. The O.T. in its brightest aspect is predictive in type and shadow, in promise and prophecy. The N.T. starts with the Promised One come (Matt. 1.)

and in Luke 4 proclaiming, Today is this scripture [Isa. 61, as far as He read] fulfilled in your ears. His death in rejection led to the Light shining brighter far in His resurrection. It was life abundantly to those who had it already, bound to tell others of life eternal. But the Holy Spirit, both in His action on believers and in oral teaching as well as the inspired writings which followed, wrought as the Spirit not merely of prophecy but of present communion, a fountain within springing up, and rivers of living water flowing out. As He sealed the Son of man, He sealed the believers; and this not merely as having life and light but in virtue of Christ's work. In Him is the Yea; wherefore through Him is the Amen for glory to God by us. But it is the unbelieving rejection of this present power and fulness of blessing in Christ, which alike denies the actual possession of life eternal and the unspeakable value of the scriptures, especially of the N.T. so called. It is accomplishment we have now, not merely "promise"; it is the thing promised before the world began, brought to light by the gospel and enjoyed in the power of the Spirit This is in harmony with the slighting of the "living oracles" in p. 125. Like rationalists, J.C. said, "The word of God is in the scriptures;" like Quakers, F.E.R. evasively replies, "Christ is the word of God;" but he too can scarcely be unaware that what he added is just the unbelieving phrase of higher criticism at home and abroad: — "The scriptures are more the record of it, than the thing itself." Every word proceeds out of the mouth of God. They are spirit and life to man sin-sick and indeed dead. They feed the soul as well as quicken it by ministering Christ through the Spirit. They cleanse our feet when defiled, in answer to Christ's advocacy. They glorify our God and Father as nothing else does. Time would fail to

tell the manifold blessings, which the scriptures confer, though surely not apart from Christ and the Holy Spirit. F.E.R.'s unworthy belittling them is the precise opposite of what pleases God, or what Christ exemplified.

It is nothing to the purpose that when Paul spoke to the elders in Acts 20, the New Testament was not yet written. Those whom God inspired to write it in due time communicated in the Spirit the same truth from Pentecost which was afterwards written by the same Spirit. If we have not the living apostles and prophets, faith is beyond expression grateful for the written word. This, even in a partial shape, our Lord teaches us to set before His oral testimony because of its divinely given permanence: "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" It is all the more sad that such thankless unbelief should emanate from companions of men of God conspicuous for Bible love and scriptural intelligence and self-sacrificing devotedness beyond any of whom we read since post-apostolic times. O how fallen, fallen, such followers!

Let two remarks on the address suffice. "Those who minded earthly things" does not mean "the working of unsubdued flesh" (404), but rather of flesh religious, seeking its own things, without living association with Christ on high. Alas! it is and has been ever since the religion of the day. They are enemies, not exactly of Christ, but of His cross. It is a fair show in the flesh, not its corrupt or violent working.

Equally is 1 John 3:2 turned upside down. "It is not that I see Him to be like Him, but I am made like Him in order that I might see Him" (405). Faithful to his mission F.E.R. seems to have no pleasure so prized, or so

frequent, as contradicting scripture. The apostle says just the reverse. “We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.” To be made like Him first is to have no cause, or at least not the divinely assigned cause for it. What fatality and perversity of contradicting scripture!

P.S. — Great unbelief prevails generally as to life eternal. But till now I never heard of any sect save American Adventists (the most unsound and infidel of all), that anticipated F.E.R. in saying, that when Christ comes again, we shall have eternal life; “which is not possessed now at all: we have only the promise of it.” See J.N.D.’s Letters, II. 469.

F. E. R. HETERODOX ON THE PERSON OF THE CHRIST.

In F.E.R.’s Notes of Readings in America little said on the Person of Christ demands animadversion. But as deep unsoundness thereon has elsewhere appeared, tainting all else as it must, a brief notice is here given.

Like B.W.N. he does not deny the true deity or the perfect humanity of Christ. But the mind of man readily overthrows the truth of His Person otherwise. So Mr. N. did by his teaching that distance in Christ’s relation to God was involved in His birth of woman. Still more boldly does F.E.R. assail the common faith of God’s elect. This he knows quite well; for he denies that its truth “consists in the union in Him of God and Man.” I am content to denounce his own form of denial as a lie against the truth. He has trusted his mind in trying to explain the very point of the Son’s inscrutability. The question is not simply of the divine and eternal personality of the Word, but of Him incarnate. The truth

no less clearly revealed is that He became flesh, Christ Jesus Man henceforward, as surely as also God from everlasting to everlasting.

It is to the unity of the two natures in His Person that he objects, and in very revolting and contemptuous terms, where reverence and self-distrust were pre-eminently called for. Yet he knew that he was not only opposing but striving to put shame on the confession of every saint who has written on it, as far as is known through all the church of God, to say nothing of every teacher esteemed among Brethren. Here are his words (7 Dec. 1893):- "Where the idea of unity of a person is got from I know not. It seems to me perfect nonsense. The idea of person does not bring in the thought of either parts or unity. A person is that person in every variety of relations he may enter. No one would accuse me of dividing the person of the Queen because I said that in her home life she was seen distinct and apart from what she is as Queen. It is two totally distinct ideas coalesced in one person, but which can be separately presented and apprehended."

Now who does not know that a person among men consists of both parts and unity? There are spirit and soul and body; and yet they constitute the person. There may be temporary dissolution of the outer tie by death; there will surely be their unity in one person for eternity. But for the true believer Christ's Person is distinguished from every other by the infinite fact of God and man united thus. These are in Him for ever indissoluble, though no saint doubts that He is Son of God and Son of man. Whatever His profound emotion in spirit, whatever the conflict when He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became as great drops of blood, that Man was

inseparably God; and as from His conception, so fully in His death and resurrection. Thus had His every word, work, thought, and suffering divine value. It is not the Son alone, but “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” The man Christ Jesus is not only the one Mediator, but the true God and eternal life; the sent Servant, and the “I AM”; Christ of the fathers as according to flesh, yet He that is over all, God blessed for evermore. Amen.

Deny the unity of His Person, of the Word become flesh; and all the truth of His life and death dissolves. His atoning work is thus utterly subverted; on which depends not only man’s salvation, the reconciling of the creature, and the new heavens and earth, but the moral glory of God in view of sin, His counsels of grace as to Christ and the church, and His triumphant rest in men for all eternity. Think of the Queen or any other human being adduced to solve the great mystery of godliness! What have various relations or differing conditions to do with the divine and the human united in one sole Person, the Christ of God, the knot which man’s wicked wit and will dare to judge, and essay to untie to his own destruction? Truly “fools rush in where angels fear to tread,” where saints love to believe, prostrate themselves, and adore. To F.E.R. IT SEEMS PERFECT NONSENSE!

Brethren, have you ever heard of a true Christian who did not thus confess Christ? Here is one called a brother, and claiming to teach, who utters his scornful unbelief of Christ’s Person in terms which must have insured his expulsion with horror from all fellowship of saints in former days. Who has a doubt that then it would have raised an impassable barrier? Only of the Lord Jesus

could such a unity be predicated, for in Him alone were the two natures for ever united. F.E.R. talks of the Queen! and "two totally different ideas coalesced in one person!" Yes, it is not truth, but "ideas" for F.E.R. Is this to "abide in the doctrine of the Christ"?

It is to join Apollinarius of Antioch (the son). He too made the Logos simply form Christ's Person, as F.E.R. does, and was therefore justly branded as an antichrist; so Nestorius was for dividing the Person, and Eutyches for confusing it: all of them, strict Trinitarians. For if the Logos had not been united to the soul as to spirit and body in the Christ, Christ was not and is not very Man as well as very God. Without that union there must have been two distinct personalities, the divine and the human. It is the union of both in one Person which alone secures the truth according to scripture. F.E.R. with shameless self-confidence vaunts his idea, which is plain heterodoxy. He does not "bring the doctrine" of Christ. The Son did not change His Person, but took up manhood into unity, and this in soul as in body.

In some such way deadly false doctrine befalls such as venture to pry into what is only known to the Father and immeasurably above man's ken. The Apollinarian heterodoxy prevails largely at present; as the error which led to it is a relic of heathen philosophy, accepted by early Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, and exceedingly common among "thinkers" now as at all times. It pervades Franz Delitzsch's Psychology and its English analogue, The Tripartite Nature of Man. They (and F.E.R. follows them) make the self-conscious "I" or individuality to reside in man's spirit. But scripture abundantly proves its seat to be in the soul. The spirit is inner capacity as to which man is responsible to God;

but the soul is that in which he is so; and the body is the outer vessel which displays the result, whether by grace for God's will or by self-will in Satan's service.

To the soul belongs the working of the will, and now also since the fall the instinctive knowledge of good and evil; so that one is enticed into fleshly lusts which degrade man, as well as into reasonings of the spirit and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God. Hence we read of soul-salvation or "salvation of souls" as in 1 Peter 1:9. Hence Ezek. 18:4, "Behold, all souls are Mine," and the regular use of "souls" for persons in both O. & N. Testaments. For the self-conscious individual, the responsible person, is in the "I." It is the "I" in self-will without God; the "I" when converted to God, but in bondage of spirit; and the "I" when Christ's deliverance is known in peace and liberty; as for the latter we see in Rom. 7, 8. Read also Gal. 2:20.

The error falsifies the truth in human things and yet more in divine. F.E.R. has fallen into Satan's trap in the most solemn of all truths through morbid self-confidence, and the mania of correcting every body by the standard of his fanciful ideas. He has imagined for the Christ a being, Who, if God, is certainly not complete man. For in his theory the soul does not enter Christ's personality which is exclusively the Logos. Thus he bans that unity of the two natures which every saint hitherto confesses to be in Christ's Person. He was already wrong as to man's person; for like most philosophers he follows the error of the heathen, and ignores the teaching of scripture which points to "the soul" by many plain and irrefragable proofs. But the awful weight of the falsehood lies in his audacious rising up against faith's mystery of Him Who was manifested in flesh (the

body prepared for God's Son), not taken up as a mere condition but united with Himself indivisibly to all eternity for God's counsels, work, and ways. If we can rightly say condition, it is that of humanity sustained by Deity in the Person of the Christ.

Beyond doubt the union of God and man in one Person is the wondrous and unfathomable One revealed, not for our comprehension, but for unquestioning faith, love, and honour as we honour the Father. He is thus at once the weary man and the only-begotten Son that is (not "was" merely) in the Father's bosom; the Son of man here below that is in heaven, and the "I am" on earth threatened by the Jews with stoning because He told them the truth. He must have been the Logos to have been what He was here as man. His soul was united to the Logos: else the Person had been doubled or severed, and He could not be true and complete man. He cried, Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. There was His holy will; and it was right to lay it before His Father, but in entire submissiveness to His will and glory; of which none but a divine Person was capable. It was not therefore the Logos superseding the spirit (still less the soul), but perfectly associated with the soul in His one Person. He was true man and true God in the same indivisible Person. In Him dwelt and dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Yet it is deep pain to feel compelled to speak out plainly, on such a theme not only before others liable to stumble, but in the sense of one's own danger of offending against God's word in defence of what is dearer than life, and far beyond man's thought. Indeed some may be surprised to learn that it was most distasteful to say anything more. A warning I did give in 1890, and a brief

leaflet, when the Weston-super-mare Notes disclosed the impious libel against the Lord, that, “Becoming a man, He becomes the Logos.” Many hoped that it might be but a slip; but if so, why was it not confessed in sackcloth and ashes? Understanding that it has been defended since, what must one fear? At any rate when the volume unasked for was sent me, not a page was read for years. At length having dipped into it, I perceived an astounding progress of unabashed evil. Even then I intended no more than a short paper on “Life Eternal,” and another on its denial as a present gift. As one read on, it seemed a duty to expose unsparingly the system of error in general. This may account for a lack of due order through enlarging the original design.

1 Only in these Epistles it is said in developing “the body” of Christ. It is even more intimate here as a question of life in Him.

2 Ibid.

The Calling and Hope of the Christian

Ephesians 1:3-14 (B.T. Vol. 7, p. 89-92.)

The right application of the truth of the Church in both its calling and its hopes depends, more than many Christians are aware, upon the spiritual condition of the soul. I doubt not, indeed, that spiritual condition has much to do with all apprehension of divine truth, but of this beyond all others, for the simple reason that the Church's privileges are so boundless and so special that the mind of mail and even the heart of the believer find no small difficulty in accepting them simply in their integrity. The very conscience of the believer makes a difficulty unless there be a child-like acceptance of the word and grace of God. We can easily understand this; for it is natural even to the believer to mingle the question of his own feelings of acceptance with the reception of the truth of God. He examines himseIf, but finds only unworthiness; he feels painfully, humiliatingly, day by day, his own shortcomings and positive faults. Such being the fact, it looks a hard thing to receive the astonishing truth that grace has given even him oneness with Christ.

Yet the great distinctive feature of the Christian's calling is found in these very words, "Together with Christ." Sovereign grace can alone account for it. As God claimed and exercised the title, at all times, to bless according to His good pleasure, so now He puts the members of Christ's body in the place that seems good to Him. He looks for unqualified sub. mission in our hearts. And in proportion as we are simple in bowing to God, His grace and truth open far more largely and

more distinctly on our souls. Now the bearing of this will soon be seen as I make a few remarks upon the scripture just read. The subject is the Church's calling and hopes — the latter, of course, in connection with the coming of the Lord. The Holy Ghost opens the subject with a kind of allusion to Israel's place. They were the chosen people, but it was on earth and for the earth. I do not deny that there were elect men in Israel, upon whose hearts brighter hopes dawned. No doubt Abraham was but a sample of the faithful. And indeed in the dealings of God, before there was a people called, there were those who looked by faith beyond the earth, who saw what is brighter than earthly hopes. But here we have a different character of blessing: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The heavenly places are clearly in contrast with Israel's earthly place. Now Israel looked, and rightly looked, to be thus blessed here below; indeed, it is to disparage the word of God to lose sight of this: God will make it good to them in a future day.

But we ourselves are in the same place as these believers, addressed by the Apostle Paul, — "Blessed with all spiritual blessings.... in Christ." That little word, "in Christ," is the key to it all. In one sense a Christian is nothing in himself; in Christ he has everything. Let my heart only get hold of this precious truth. Christ now shows what a Christian is in the presence of God. No doubt, besides being the risen man, He is also God, the object of worship, equal with the Father. He has a divine right to all, yet is He pleased to possess all as the glorified man by right of redemption. He came into this world. He had the only claim as man, for He alone bad

accomplished God's will. He was the perfect manifestation of what man ought to be to God under law, and He was the perfect manifestation of what God is to man in love, he was above law — it was grace. If the law dealt with evil, it must destroy. Grace takes the, supremacy. It shows grace to those who do not deserve it. Christ as under law showed perfectly what God's will was. Then He manifested what God is to man. It was His place to manifest perfect grace and truth. Christ takes the inheritance neither as man or God only, but as Redeemer. He suffered on the cross that He might have others to share it, others to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." It was only in resurrection that the Lord Jesus took all things. When upon earth He did not take the inheritance; He took sorrow, He took shame, He took suffering-every kind of hatred from man. He took God's judgment about sin. In this He was alone upon the cross, because there the wonderful problem was being solved, how sin could be put away. Christ abolished sin that God might justly justify, that God might manifest all His character.

Here, however, it is a larger measure than merely justifying. God blesses with all spiritual blessings in Christ. He had never uttered such language before. In the Old Testament there is not such a thought as Christ having members. You have a king reigning in righteousness, and nations blest through Christ that blessed One who will take all things from God. What we have here is quite different. It is God not only pardoning, and not merely justifying, but making Christians to be the members of Christ, of His flesh, and of His bones. Here we have language rising above everything that believers had before redemption. There is no

disparagement of the privileges of saints before, but what I am anxious to show is that Christians are not generally alive to their own privileges.

The first thing to point out is this, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Mark the language. It is God acting in this especial manner of relationship. He means to bless the believer as He blesses Christ. That is, not as Christ is blest as a divine person — that would be blasphemy. Here we have what is bestowed upon Him as man in heaven. “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them” is a kindred truth. Christ as the risen man is exalted on high, having glory conferred on Him as the risen man that by the grace of God had died. The risen man is also God, but we must never confound His deity with His humanity. As thus risen He said, “I ascend unto my God and your God, unto my Father and your Father.” Here we have His and our God and Father, and the apostle shows that we reap infinite blessing from each of these relationships. As God of our Lord Jesus, He gives us to partake in the divine nature, holy and blameless before Him in love. He means to have men in heaven along with Jesus. To have that blessed glorified man there is not enough. He gives Jesus companions. These companions of His must have, of course, the divine nature morally. (2 Peter 1.)

Again, angels are servants: they never rise above the nature of servants. The archangel even never rises above the place of a servant. The angels are called the sons of God in a certain sense, as all men are by virtue of creation. Angels are a spiritual class of beings, but they have not the intimacy of those born of God, the place of children, the Spirit of adoption, etc. Now I call your attention to this, because it is but feebly

understood by Christians in general. It is not presumption to know that our sins are forgiven. I would ask any person who knows the name of Christ, who loves Him, On what ground is it that you take the place of a believer? On what ground have you received favour from God? Do you believe in Jesus as One that suffered for sins? I ask you, Has He done the work perfectly or has He not? There is no believer who would not at once answer, Yes — perfectly. Then as surely as you are a believer, you have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. If you have not this forgiveness, when can you have it? Christ will not suffer again. Suffering and offering go together. They must go together in the mind of God. Once purged is the word for a Christian — once, because it has been done perfectly, done for ever. Now I maintain that it is done for every Christian. Every Christian owes it to Christ to believe unhesitatingly that He has done perfectly the work of putting away sin. There may be failures. Far would I be from saying that a believer should not confess failure always. Daily failure calls for daily humbling before God. Still the fact of redemption remains unchanged. Take the case of a child: he may offend and offend grievously, but he remains your child all the same. The more you enforce on him that he is your child, the more is his failure felt, as it is the worse in itself. In the same way, instead of the holding fast our relationship, really weakening the sense of sin, it is the very and only ground of' judging it aright. It is that which makes sin to be most exceedingly sinful.

We have here the full roll of christian privilege. How striking it is in all this passage there is not a word said about our original condition a sinners. In the Epistle to

the Romans it is quite another method. In Ephesians 2 we have a deeper character of sin than we have even in Romans — “dead in trespasses and sins,” etc. But first we find God unfolding His counsels which refer to the Christian. It was a purpose of God in Christ before the foundation of the world, entirely from man’s condition upon earth. We find here the very blessed truth that redemption is no mere remedy, it was the first choice of God. God counselled and determined in Himself, before there were any creatures at all; He determined to have beings in heaven capable of fellowship with Himself and with His Son. Then He allowed man to be tried upon earth. This took place with Israel, etc. When the wickedness of the world rose to its height in the cross of Christ, at that very moment when Jew and Gentile united to kill the Lord of glory. God answered their awful conspiracy by bringing out His richest grace. God showed through and in His Son a salvation that not only meets man ruined upon earth, but that would give man an everlasting portion with Christ in the presence of God. The Church consists not merely of persons pardoned and saved, of people looking to heaven; it has a deeper character of relationship; it implies union with Christ in heaven. This is what God imparts to believers now.

The next thing taken up here is that God not only brings us into this astonishing place of blessing, but opens His secrets: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will.” Thus, first of all, He makes us holy in Christ; next, He gives us the place of sons to Himself; and then He makes known to us what He is going to do. And what is that? To put the entire universe under Christ, to have all in heaven, all on earth, put under the glorified man. This

is the first part of the secret of God's will; the next is, that the believers now — all believers in Christ — are made joint-heirs with Christ over this inheritance. Not that we are the inheritance the Jewish people will be a part of the inheritance but the peculiar character of Christians, that is, they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

As to this, the simple question is, What does scripture say? What is the teaching of God on this head? It is said to be a mystery, which means that which could not be found out by the wit of man, but what can be understood when revealed. "The mystery of Christ" consisted in this — Christ, the centre of all God's dealings, and believers now united to Him. There is nothing wonderful in the Son of God being over all things. God the Father could not be said to confer anything upon God the Son as such: it would deny His supreme deity. But yet it is perfectly certain from scripture that Jesus now receives all from God the Father. A man is at the right hand of God! — a man is the object of heaven's delight and adoration! But more. By the Holy Ghost the Church is united with this glorified man, the spiritual Eve of the last Adam. The Church is the bride, the Lamb's wife, as it is the body of the glorified Christ who is Head over all things. Thus it is written at the end of this chapter. Christ is said to be "Head over all things to the church, which is his body." The Church is really associated with Christ over all things, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

The wonderful mystery is here made known — the Church called into oneness with Christ. Into this one body we are baptized by the Spirit now; and now is the time that the believer is responsible to receive it into his

soul, and to manifest it in his ways. Of course it is a matter of faith; for, as to his body, He is the same as any other man. He can only triumph through Christ; but he his Christ in glory not only as his righteousness but his life, yea, one with Him. All that God confers upon Christ, Christ shires with the Church. The effect is immediate and immense. Suppose a person were to wake up to the fact that he was the queen's son, would it not have a mighty influence practically on him? So, to be given now to know not merely that a person is saved, but that be shares with Christ all that He possesses, that he is a member of His body, that he is viewed now as perfect by God in Christ such is the position of a Christian. It is not that one does not take into account a Christian's failure: I do, but the way to feel our failure most is to hold fast our relationship to Christ. Upon christian doctrine is founded christian practice.

As the believer even now is set in this blessed place of enjoyment, God has sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell in him, in such a sort as never was before. There never was a time when the Holy Ghost did not work; He beyond all doubt is the active agent in all the dealings of God from creation downwards. There could be no power of God at work in man without the Spirit of God. But not the less do I maintain along with this, that the Lord Jesus Christ prepared the disciples for a greater blessing than either they or others had ever known before. He told them "it is expedient for you that I go away," etc. What could make up for such a loss? The answer is, "if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." It is contrary to Scripture or even sense to suppose that it was merely prolonging something they possessed

before. Nay, there was a deeper blessing. It was the same Spirit that had made them born anew, but He was now for the first time sent down from heaven to dwell in the saints.

Who had ever been thus blessed before? Yes, there was One who had enjoyed Him thus. Who was that One person who bad been the temple of God upon earth? It was Jesus. Upon Him the Holy Ghost came not as a flame of fire, but as a dove, the witness of the perfect spotlessness of Jesus. The humanity of Jesus being absolutely pure and holy (Luke 1), there was not the least hindrance to the dwelling of the Holy Ghost in Him. We can understand Jesus being bodily the temple or habitation of the Holy Ghost; but how could it be true of us, evil and defiled as we are by nature? Christ has so perfectly put away the sin and sins of a believer, that it is as though the evil, root, branch, and fruit, had never been. Hence the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and actually now dwells in the believer, as the proof and result of the perfect putting away of sin by Christ's sacrifice.

The saints of old were waiting for what was coming; they knew there were good things to come. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Peter 1:12.)

Manifestly then there is a special blessing in the gift of the Spirit consequent upon redemption. When we know and weigh what redemption is, there will be less difficulty. It is a poor partial notion of redemption as an

accomplished fact that makes people ask, Why should not God always act in the same way? The right understanding of its infinite work teaches us, that God sees such virtue in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ that He reserves a special blessing for that hour. The believer now is blessed with, and will share, His supremacy over all things.

What makes us members of the body of Christ? We are made so by the Spirit, and not by faith only. Of course, no one but a believer has this place; but it is nowhere said to be by faith, but by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 12.) The saints of old time were not baptized into this one body. There was nothing of the kind. The Jew preserved his separate place; the Gentile might come in (as a proselyte), but there was no identity: still less was either one or other made one with Christ. In Christianity these distinctions disappear. There was faith among the Old Testament saints, but there was no “one body” yet; not even when our Lord was upon earth. He told the disciples that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The cross of Christ, on man’s side of it, was a joining of all men (Jew and Gentile) in wickedness; on God’s side it led to a joining of Jew and Gentile in common blessing by grace. In Matthew 16, Peter answers Christ’s demand with the confession, “Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.” Christ says, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” What does He mean by this? Peter confesses His glory not only as Messiah or the Christ, but as Son of the living God. He was marked out the Son of God by resurrection from the dead.” He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead.

What hope is suited to such a calling? Jesus says, “Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself.” The portion that Christ has is the portion of a Christian. Even now He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. As He took our portion on the cross, so we have His portion in glory. He will bless the Jews on earth. God promised to do so. Whereas, He has in title blessed us with Christ in heaven. Some think the mystery was that the Gentiles were to be called, but this is plainly referred to in the Old Testament. The mystery goes much farther, namely, that all who now believe, Jews and Gentiles, should be united together as the one body of Christ, head over all things.

Our hope is for Christ to come and take us to be with Himself in the Father’s house. This implies the highest scene of enjoyment even in heaven. Can any place there be too high for Christ? Assuredly not. The Father manifests His love for His Son thus. If God gives us ouch a place in Christ we ought to believe it; and this is not merely for ourselves, but for every believer, for every Christian. This, and nothing less than this, is the portion of all who believe the gospel. Christ will come Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. We shall be with Himself, in that glory which is entirely above the world. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” (Rev. 22:17.) To say “Come,” depends not on great knowledge, but on His great salvation and love.

It cannot be too much insisted on that there is no difference between the standing of one believer and another. When you come to a question of faithfulness, there are degrees; but to suppose a difference in the

whiteness of the robe, or the righteousness we are made, is to suppose a various value in the blood of Christ, or uncertainty in the power of His resurrection. There is no difference as to sin in one sense, all being equally dead in trespasses and sins. So there is no Such thing as one saint being brought nearer to God by redemption than another; it denies the work of Christ. All believers now are equally, i.e., perfectly, made nigh as to standing, though bad teaching does much to darken the truth, and lack of spirituality hinders holy enjoyment, even where the truth may have entered. Besides, we are made one with Christ, but for this the gift of the Spirit was requisite.

The Purpose of God for His Sons and Heirs

Eph. 1:3-7

The Old Testament makes it clear that God, even in His aspect of Jehovah, the God of Israel, never limited Himself to Israel. He made them His particular people. He made known His name, His will for a people on earth to Israel only. He abounded in every kind of privilege that could be to a people in the flesh. Israel as naturally, were the chosen people who belonged to Him here below. They were objects of favour and goodness and mercy in a way that no other nation received, except the people in the land of Palestine.

But even before that, God had His blessed intention to set up a kingdom that would in no way be confined to Israel. This we find explicitly from the Gospel of Matthew in the last section of the great prophecy on the Mount of Olives; at the end of this age will be the accomplishment of these last words. Not only will the godly remnant be formed out of the Jews as in Matt. 24 down to ver. 44, and the heavenly saints, or the Christian company, which forms the central part from ver. 45 to Matt. 25:30, but lastly there will be the future sheep, or living believers, of all the nations, brought into marked blessing and favour. The King bids them, not reign with Him like the heavenly saints, but “inherit the kingdom prepared for” them “from the foundation of the world.” It is well to have this clearly, as a preliminary principle. Had we only this single prophecy, it is a plain proof that others are to be blessed, in their several places on earth under the reign of the Lord Jesus, whilst

the risen saints reign over it with Him. It is a mere delusion that to the church belongs every elect soul from the beginning to the end, and that God has not varied companies, both for heaven and for earth, destined to be objects of His grace for His glory.

Far from me to deny that there is on earth now, the church, Christ's body, gathered out of Jews and Gentiles, wherein all earthly distinctions disappear. But those Gentile sheep at the consummation of the age are not the church. Scripture proves that God is so full of goodness toward man that He means to bless Israel after all their long unbelief and manifold iniquity; and that He will send the gospel of the kingdom among all the nations for a blessing to many before the end comes. The church will be glorified on high. Remnants from both Israel and the nations are about to be blessed on the earth in that day. The sheep of Matt. 25:32 are by no means all the sheep of God.

The popular divinity, if you believe it, says that there is nothing else but these sheep, and that they compose His church. Why? Because the church is assumed to be the one and only object of divine grace throughout all time. They have got their ideas out of tradition, following not the scriptures, but men no wiser than themselves. Do you ask if we pretend to any wisdom of our own? God forbid. What we confess is that God is true; and what we do is to be subject simply and solely to the word of God. Is it not the only right way?

The fact is, there will be, if we heed scripture, different companies of the blessed in heaven, as well as on the earth. It is mere traditional prejudice to conceive a single multitudinous throng. On the contrary there will

be marked varieties both above and below, blessed with or by Christ. Nor can we know the glorious future for heaven and earth, but by the word of God, which is the one authority for all truth, past, present, or future. In the verses with which the Epistle to the Ephesians opens, we have a wondrous unfolding of divine grace at its very highest, and coming down to the lowest possible. The time too made it all the more striking, though eminently suitable as it must be for such a disclosure. Not a word had been divulged about it in the Old Testament as we are distinctly told in a subsequent part of this Epistle. It was a secret kept hid in God from all previous ages and generations. Indeed it would then have been quite incompatible, whether in the earlier generation, or after the law was given to Israel by Moses.

When was it that God chose to bring out this, the highest, the deepest, and the most wonderful of His purposes? It was when Jew and Gentile, the world, had united in greater sin than it had ever before committed. Need one tell you what that awful sin was? Too well — alas! too little, men know it. To your souls that believe, it has been brought home by the Holy Spirit of God. That tremendous sin is the rejection, even to the cross, of the Lord Jesus. Yet such is His unbounded grace that the otherwise hopeless sin can be forgiven though it be the hating of the Father and of the Son without a cause (John 15:22-25). The worst of man, and the best of God, never came clearly out till the crucifixion of the Saviour. The cross of the Lord Jesus was morally the end of probation. The whole of the Old Testament had been given long before that; people who alone were familiar with Law, Psalms and Prophets were indifferent learners

of the New Testament. They liked the Old better. They said the old wine was good; and they stuck to it, as the Lord told them when their refusal of Himself came out more and more. It was very fate when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to set those of them who believed on their proper ground intelligently. They had been but partially on Christian ground, pretty much as most professing Christians are now. They had only vague notions about the gospel, Christian walk, worship, and hope. All was indistinct, not to say incorrect; and that is the state not only of Christendom, but of the children of God in it. Believers from among the Jews ought to have been teachers when Paul wrote to them his great Epistle. They had to learn better the very elements, “the word of the beginning of Christ.” They had not arrived at “perfection” or full growth, the due and definite truth of Christianity. There was not only a shortcoming, but a veritable muddle in their minds; consequently their conduct as Christians was mixed and vacillating.

Among those who are upright, how much depends upon their real hold of what scripture actually teaches! The Christian Hebrews feebly understood anything distinctive. Without denying that Christ died, rose, and went to heaven, the great truths that came out consequently were not developed as they should be, so characteristically different from what the Old Testament led people to expect. With Christ confessed they looked for everything grand, honoured, prosperous, and delightful here below. But how did the cross of Christ and His going away to heaven consist with the expectation of Israel being now at the head of the nations and in the enjoyment of earthly glory ? Even believers had that idea still. You will recollect that when

the risen Lord was about to go to heaven from the Mount of Olives, they asked, “Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” They had little idea of the thorough break with Israel; still less that God was bringing in a wholly distinct purpose, and associations new and heavenly. This is what we find very fully in the Epistle to the Ephesians and elsewhere: an absolutely fresh revelation. The believers in Jerusalem were slow to learn. Nor does the Epistle to the Hebrews rise to the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church. Even the heavenly calling therein treated was imperfectly known. Yet it was written late, though somewhat before the destruction of Jerusalem. It speaks of Mosaic. covenant, ritual, system, tabernacle, altar, priest and offering, superseded by what was far better, earthly shadows by the heavenly realities. This was strange not only to the unbelieving Jews but to the Christian remnant. They thought that the old forms were rather to be filled with new power, and that grace would be given to make them living. They had not realised that the old divine service must pass away, and be succeeded by entirely heavenly things in accordance with Christ seated at the right hand of God on high. He is the truth, and must be brought not only into the heart by faith as He is now exalted, but wrought into the worship of God and into the practice of men that believe as a living reality here and now.

To this and nothing less is the Christian called. He is, end ought to know from God through Christ, that he is a heavenly man, while here on earth. He has to act out this association with Christ above whilst he lives here below. The consequence is that the Christian seems, if faithful, the greatest fool going. That is what the world

thinks of out and out fidelity to Christ. They can understand a Papist or a Protestant, an Anglican, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist or the like. If you are ever so inconsistent with Christ, it may be excellent in men's eyes. Accordingly they scourged, imprisoned, stoned and slew the faithful witnesses of Christ; and Rome at length tortured them in every cruel way to kill, or cure them of the truth, which seemed to them nothing but the most chimerical ideas. Do the children of God feel how far they have slipped away? It is to recall them to a better grasp of Christianity that I am speaking to you to-night. It were not much to talk about what you know well enough yourselves. My duty is to show in my measure some things you are but little acquainted with. Think me not proud or pretentious if I thus speak and earnestly urge. God forbid! He that would be true to Christ's name and word, and true to the church of God of which he is a member, ought assuredly and with all his heart to speak of the fruit of Christ in heaven brought by the Spirit to men on earth; for, if we believe it, we are called to speak it and by grace to live it. What indeed is the good of truth if you do not humbly seek to carry it out? Better not to hear and know it, than to have on your lips what condemns all your life and your worship.

The truth now made known in the N.T. would not have been understood by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. None of them could have so much as guessed what is now revealed. It all hangs upon Christ come down in reconciling love, yet utterly rejected not merely by the Gentile world but by the Jew most of all. Him God has received up into heavenly glory, and by the Spirit associates us with Himself there and

now. Of Him and this, we are called to bear witness, in our walk, service, and worship. We care not to confess it boldly, if we shirk it practically; it is only our greater condemnation. Assuredly this is as true as it is solemn.

I cannot but believe God raised up brethren to recall themselves and their fellows to these truths in all their necessary consequences practically; it is also my sad conviction that some lifted up with pride have brought these very truths into all kinds of confusion. Does any such reaction disprove the truth? Not for a moment. It proves how easily grace may be divorced from truth which then degenerates into knowledge that puffs up. The truth never got really into their heart, for one does not suppose they depart from what they know to be true. When grace does not direct and strengthen, it becomes a great danger for every one of us of losing whatever truth we have. All really turns upon Christ, and Christ now in heaven, who also brings out the now revealed character of God. For He does now assume a new character according to the position of Christ who died and rose. When Christ receives the earth, He takes up the Jewish people, and all the nations; and Jehovah shall be king over all the earth, one Jehovah and His name one. God will act in accordance with it in power and majesty. For the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ shall then have come, and He shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 11:15). The Spirit of God will make effectual what is then in hand, as He always does. “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’’

In past history who can recall a single thing in which the Gentiles and the Jews agreed except to crucify the Lord Jesus? Otherwise they hated each other with mortal

enmity. Yet they joined for once to cast the Lord out of the earth as unfit to live. Nevertheless the Lord is gone up into supreme glory on high, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And all things being made subject, He is given as Head over all things to the church, which is His body — He that stooped to all ignominy in the cross. We cannot be Christians in faith without both. To Him in all depths we go as lost sinners to be saved; and when we have redemption through His blood, we that were far off are brought nigh, in the closest association with Christ at the right hand of God.

Is it not a strange and humbling and prevalent fact that so few Christians should understand their own Christianity? Yet it is true that there are many brethren in the Lord who know more about the Jews than they do about their own Christianity. Pay close heed to this, lest it be your own case. It is always the truth most important for us which the devil tries to hide away from us, and turn us bitterly from. Nor is it only the bad things that he perverts, to hinder our blessing. For many true believers are kept back because they refuse to look for more than the forgiveness of their sins through the gospel. Now therein is God’s righteousness revealed by and to faith; therein the sinner owns the riches of God’s grace to his soul: but to stop there is altogether unworthy. And so many saints of God fall into this snare at the present moment, that it is well to see to it that we ourselves escape it. What is the good of occupying ourselves with what does not promote God’s glory? Let us seek in all integrity to judge ourselves. Let us zealously seek to be taught of God. Let our eyes be fixed

on the Lord that we may be filled with fervour of spirit, and purpose of heart, simple and thorough going. The question for our faith and practice is the attitude that God assumes toward us, and our relation to Him while Christ is above on His own right hand. How is the answer to this great truth to be carried out on the earth in the heart and ways of those who believe? Must it not be through faith working by love?

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us.” It was His God and Father that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope should be in God — His Father and our Father, His God and our God. As in the rest of the N.T. it is not the God of Abraham, etc.; but here “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is no longer the revelation of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; you naturally become more or less of a Jew in this case; and your heart cannot then rise higher than the promises made to the fathers. Hence so many believers now, like the Puritans in former days, talk of grasping the promises. This is to ignore and lower the privileges of the gospel and of the church. It loses sight of Christ in heavenly glory after redemption. Every Christian ought to appreciate the difference. At any rate, the foundation of Christianity is that the most wondrous of all promises is already accomplished. It is no longer the righteousness of God as near to come, or His salvation to be revealed (Isa. 56:1), but His righteousness is come, and His salvation is revealed. This supposes the Lord Himself come, and His work done for our sins, with an entirely new state of things. And this is the new creation in Christ which each believer gets by grace in the gospel. Therein is revealed

the righteousness of God, and thereby salvation is no longer a hope, save for the body, but a reality now also brought into the soul. This reminds me of a text much misunderstood in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 11:14). Cornelius in Caesarea was to send for Peter at Joppa, who should tell him words whereby he and all his house should be “saved.” It was not merely, nor at all, words by which he should be “converted.” Cornelius already was as much converted as you. He was as truly born again as anyone in Jerusalem. The chapter before describes him as devout and God-fearing, as a man that gave much alms, and praying to God always. Well for you and me to be in these respects, his match, if not his superiors. It is a total error to regard Cornelius then as a self-righteous person. This is the effect of ordinary Evangelicalism, Calvinistic no less than Arminian; because they alike confound conversion with the soul’s salvation. It is theology, not the gospel. The N.T. makes the difference known.

The words of Peter were to tell how they were to be “saved,” which goes far beyond conversion, and is the actual privilege of the gospel through redemption. Ignorance of this leads preachers to pervert the force of this scripture, and of the truth in question. It destroys for converted souls in our day what grace was giving Cornelius to learn through the apostle then. Cornelius, like the O.T. saints, was already born of God. He was, as we are told in Acts 10:37, not at all ignorant of the word published throughout all Judea, and sent to the children of Israel. What he wanted to learn authoritatively was that God intended the same word of His grace to himself a Gentile and others like him, in all the freeness and the fulness of the gospel. He did not dare to take it without

divine sanction. He saw it clearly enough for Israel whom he honoured as the old and chosen people of God. He believed that Messiah had come for their blessing; but he was not one of God's people Israel. He needed to have the assurance for a poor Gentile. For soul-salvation means the knowledge of being saved now. When people do not know this as their present portion, they are in substance like Cornelius. They too need to hear words whereby they shall be saved. It is really to be brought personally into "the word of truth, the gospel of" their "salvation." Many converted persons do not know on the word of God, that all is clear between themselves and God, now and for ever. This is soul-salvation. It is not only that a good many of our Methodist friends need to be saved in that way. Their system allows them but a scanty salvation, because they think it depends so much on themselves from day to day. Consequently if ever so happy today, they dread losing it tomorrow. This is not the salvation of God, but rather of man, or more particularly of John Wesley; who nevertheless did believe on Christ, and had the blessing far beyond his own scheme. For who can doubt that John Wesley is with the Lord, a blessed man as he really was, with short and imperfect views of salvation. I hope no Methodists here will be offended. Why should they be, because they are told plainly the truth? It is not mine, save that I believe it, but what God reveals in His word. It may soften matters, but is a sorry comfort, that we are all liable to mistake. Brethren, so called, are just as liable as others, especially if high-minded. Nothing keeps them or any others but God's word and Spirit. Thank God, in His rich grace, we Christians have both; and therefore should we be glad to prove more and more how perfect the blessedness is for our souls and to His glory.

The relation He gives us is not only beyond all that had ever been known, but the highest and nearest that could be given. For what could equal Himself as the Lord knew Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? The Lord said the same. So on this resurrection day the Lord gave the message to Mary of Magdala, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” There is the revelation of the divine Name according to this knowledge, and the relation that His own beloved Son enjoyed. There is necessarily the difference, that God was the Father of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a way ineffable and inscrutable, because of Godhead where He could not but be the eternal Father of His eternal Son. If people do not like the word eternal in this connection, so much the worse for them; for doubt here is peculiarly dangerous. If the Word was not the eternal Son, He is not God. You cannot bring time into the Godhead, because its nature being essentially eternal, what is not so can have no subsistence in Godhead. The Word became flesh, the man Christ Jesus, inasmuch as He was born of the Virgin Mary; He was truly man in virtue of His mother, yet in no way to the loss of His divine nature. Yet the Son, the Word, was God; and when born of woman, the Holy thing born was still the Son of God. He took nature into His person, but was still eternal as God. Before Abraham came into being (if we render it in its full force), “I AM.” There never was a beginning to that “I AM.” Going back before the world’s foundation, He could then say as He said to the Jews, “I AM.” The eternity of His divine being could not be more distinctly expressed than in “I AM.” It is granted that you cannot prove it by reason; because man argues according to his reason from his own experience. It is

legitimate enough to reason from yourself in what is subject to man's sense or mind; but to reason from yourself about God is presumptuous folly. How then are we to learn divine things? We learn by receiving what He says in His word. How else could we learn the truth about Himself or His Son? But also as to what grace gives the believer, the new place was taken by God the Father when Christ accomplished redemption for the soul though not yet for the body. Both Jew and Gentile had done their worst work when God did His best work.

The meeting place of man was at the cross of Christ; which was the immutable basis for God. There was this foundation for His judgment of our sins and for uniting the otherwise irreconcilable. Thence was the new and everlasting building to rise, God's habitation in the Spirit even now, to grow into a holy temple in the Lord; the church of God, to be the bride of Christ through all eternity. But it is remarkable that the apostle in unfolding this great mystery in the two Epistles devoted to this end carefully begins with the individual soul. When any learn of the church before they learn themselves they invariably make a very bad use of it. Does the Romanist say, "I believe what the Church believes?" Alas, my friend, you believe nothing as you ought. This is no genuine, no acceptable belief. It is merely believing what other men say. The true ground of faith is believing what God says. To be right before Him I must individually come out of my own thoughts or yours to what God says. You and I must begin with this; and what does God say to us at the start? He says that I am dead in sins, an utterly lost sinner. In Christendom they furnish the babe with an ordinance for giving life. Not in Christ by the hearing of faith is one quickened,

but in the christening of one as duly ordained! The Eucharist sustains or renews it! Both are portentous and pernicious lies of Babylon. Baptism is to Christ's death and never gave life since the church began. The Lord's Supper is the memorial of Christ's love unto death, and the symbol of His one body to the many members. Baptism is individual confession of His death, as the Lord's Supper expresses the communion of His body and blood. This makes all the difference possible. Christ died because all were dead; and this the believer owns to his life and salvation. He came down as the sacrifice to God for me by His death, and brings me not only life eternal, but propitiation for my sins. Christ is the only life and salvation for the sinner who believes. Baptism and the Eucharist are His institutions, the one individual, the other corporate, but simply signs, however precious for His sake, and holy, which it would be sinful and even rebellious to refuse.

I once knew a Jewish Rabbi who could not understand English any more than a Greek monk, but both able to understand French. So we had a little meeting for them and others to read the Epistle to the Hebrews. The monk was already converted; and the Rabbi confessed at length that Jesus was the Son of God. He was told of course to get baptised. But from this he shrank, saying, "If I were baptised, I should be counted a dead man." He was told that this was exactly what the Lord meant by it, namely, passing out of the scene of death into the blessedness of the Christian salvation. If I meet God without Christ, it can only be ripening for hell fire; but if I receive Christ from God, He is life and quickens me. That is why He says nothing at first about union; it is God's purpose about us individually. Blessed be God, the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who not only honoured Him, but blessed us with every spiritual blessing. The Jews had every sort of carnal blessings. Our blessing is distinctively of a spiritual nature, not on earth, but in heavenly places where Christ is. The meaning of this should not be dubious.

Of course as to the body we are all on the earth; but now that I am in Christ, I belong to the heavenly land. The Christian is no longer of this or that country. Heaven is meant to supersede his old boast in England, or Ireland, or Scotland, or anywhere else here below. To be “in Christ” is meant to take him out of earthly places. I know some friends who are still so enamoured of Devonshire (Where this address was given, in Exeter.) that it spells danger to talk of anything that reflects ever so little on the things or the men of Devonshire. What is Devonshire compared with the heavenly places? What is any other country here below? The Lord takes all the vanity or pride out of us for our native land by giving us an incomparably better. To the child playing with poisonous fruit the mother says wisely, “Here is an orange, dear, much better than those berries.” The child gladly drops the danger and grasps the orange. O that we may be won in heart to heavenly things! He blessed us “with every spiritual blessing”; and not only the best blessings, but in the highest or “heavenly places”; and also “in Christ,’’ the best possible security. We have then, the highest blessing; His purpose follows in vers. 4-6; and then in ver. 7 the redemption in Christ “through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses,” — for the soul, not yet for the body. God confounded the worst wickedness of man by bringing out His secret and best blessing to the glory of His grace, when Satan

succeeded in drawing all mankind in principle to their united and worst daring rebellion against Himself and His Son. Is not this grace God's grace beyond mistake? Who need despair, if he bow in faith to such a God — the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Be not dull of hearing, nor hard of heart, like the Jews. You have not the danger or excuse which they had. They as a people had promises beyond all others. They sprang from Abraham the friend of God. They had a religion and city laid down by Him who was their God. The Messiah came of their stock supernaturally, long after the manifestation of divine glory was forced to depart. Was it not very hard for a nation thus favoured to forget such favours and own their need of grace, like sinners of the Gentiles? Compared with such antecedents as Israel possessed, what are we? Our ancestors ran about in the wilds and woods with stains of blue on their bodies instead of clothes, and burnt their children in order to appease their demon gods. It is easy enough to understand how the Jews in unbelief, proud and stiff-necked, resisted the truth which pronounced them children of wrath like others.

But at a time of utter evil it suited God to divulge the secret of His purpose. From before the foundation of the world He chose us Christians, in Christ, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love. He would surround Himself above with beings like Himself: holy in nature, blameless in ways; and love, their animating principle as it is His own. Such we shall be when His purpose takes full effect. We are sadly short now, yet is it verified in principle as to His elect. But God's purpose cannot fail; and Christ will make every word good when He comes to receive us to Himself and like Himself for

the Father's house. Not as though we had already attained, or were already perfect; but we follow after; and God's purpose shall surely be fulfilled then. He that knows what the Christian is destined to, judges any present measure in the Christian race and knows that he will have a more humbling yet blessed account to give the Lord in glory than any one's experience in a Methodist class meeting. Those who have entered more deeply into God's mind in His word are better aware what our manifestation to Him will prove. The faith of it has already brought down their high thoughts and imaginations, and shown us how weak and unworthy we are as saints, that no flesh should glory in His presence; and "that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

But God will surround Himself, not merely in heaven, but in its nearest circle of His own, with those capable of holding communion with Him about everything that concerns His nature, counsels, and ways. Can anything be more wonderful than the place He designs for Christians? We ought to be therefore in course of spiritual education for it now; but till we are like Christ at His coming, none can have yet arrived as a matter of fact at the fulfilled purpose of God. But then we shall be absolutely holy before God, and not a single thing to blame in us, according to the working whereby Christ is able to subdue all things to Himself. Instead of vanity or pride, there will be love that delights in God and His goodness without alloy. Even now are our hearts won to all this by divine grace, in partaking of a divine nature; but we justly feel how poor is our manifestation of it now, and how comforting is the purpose, that every son

of God will be absolutely thus according to God's nature. So it is to be according to the fourth verse.

The fifth verse takes up another side of the truth. Predestination is not quite the same thing as election, and here we have the Scripture account of it. We do well to stand clear of human exaggeration here. Election is to fitness for His presence in a nature like His own. Predestination is to a relationship, as like as possible to His Son's. But scripture carefully excludes any such human inference as God's predestination to hell fire. It is clearly revealed that such must be the unending end of the wicked. When the everlasting judgment comes, and they are judged, each according to their works, the book of life has none of their names written there, and they are cast into the lake of fire. But there is no predestinating decree of God in the case. Their own sins fitted those vessels of wrath to destruction.

Notice that pious and learned men have made the mistake of confounding " son" and "child" in the Scriptures. But they, however closely connected, are not the same thing. To identify them is really to take no small liberty with the word of truth. Not that one means to deny that the child of God may be also called a son of God; but the N.T. shows plainly that the two words express different things. It is the apostle John that particularly dwells on our being "children" of God. Why? Because we are born into the family of God. Born of the Spirit, we are thereby children of God, children of His family. "Sons" is wrong in the A.V. of John 1:12 and of 1 John 3:1, 2. Beyond question it should be "children" as in 1 John 3:10, and 1 John 5:2. But when it is a question of being "sons", it is predestination that puts us into this place of relation. This was overlooked in the A.V. of Gal.

3:26, which should be, not “children,” but, “sons,” as in Gal. 4:5-7. And so it should be in Eph. 1:5, where the word requires the adoption of “sons,” not “children.” There is never the adoption of children, but of sons. One must be by new birth a “child” of God. But God also predestined to adopt the Christian into the position of a “son” by Christ Jesus to Himself. All the Old Testament saints were “children,” as we who now believe are also. But they were not the adopted “sons,” as we may read in the argument that opens Gal. 4. On the other hand, we are all His sons now, whether Jew or Greek, and receive the Spirit of His Son. Every Christian is brought into that place of sonship. It is one of the new privileges of the gospel. The King and Queen do not consider the highest nobles in the land to be in any such dignity. They may by courtesy be their trusty cousins; but they are not their sons. We Christians are adopted into the place of sons, and have the Spirit of God’s Son sent into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. How wondrous, yet true! We are sons of an infinitely greater personage than the king, or any other that ever was on the earth. Such is the Christian by faith in Christ Jesus. It is not spiritual necessity as in ver. 4, but “according to the good pleasure of His will.” God might have predestined to a much lower place; He was pleased to give us, for His own delight, the highest possible for a creature, “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He made us objects of favour (far beyond the one act of “acceptance”) in the Beloved.” This explains all. Thus only could we be thus blessed (ver. 6), whether in new nature or new relationship.

Yet the apostle comes down in ver. 7 to our need even in communicating this roll of privilege: — “In whom

(Christ) we have (a present thing) redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses." This is indispensable for the soul now. Otherwise we should be burdened and wretched, and unfit for the gracious working of the Spirit, or the enjoyment of Christ, or communion with God.

The Purpose Of God In The Inheritance - vers. 8-12

The earlier verses presented to us God's purpose about His sons, His heirs. This, I need scarce say, is the highest of all; for therein we are viewed as perfectly brought into communion with His mind. This goes far beyond the inheritance, and we are before Himself. The inheritance is what we are set above in His grace. But the purpose of God about His sons directly concerns us in the nearest way, because it concerns Himself too. As men He has given us a soul and spirit by which we are distinguished, yet thoroughly responsible to Him. But as His sons we have now a new blessedness and a new responsibility. The old responsibility, we know too well, ended in total ruin. Man fell, and this practically led to, and means, every evil in nature and ways, because all is involved in sin, and flows from it. But now in grace He has taken us entirely out of ourselves (so to speak) as sons of Adam, and set us in Christ. God found none in heaven, still less in any other part of the universe, comparable with His Son the Lord Jesus. On the contrary, Satan led the world to the rejection and slaying of Christ; as the setting up of the antichrist will be his worst work at the end of the age. Impossible to conceive anything so evil, hateful, and rebellious as the antichrist. Even now are there many antichrists that prepare the

way, who are all the worse because they once confessed His name. Of course, as the apostle says “they were not of us”: had they been, “they would have continued with us.” Their departure proved that none had part or lot with Christ. They abandoned their natural place in professing His name, and they became His greatest enemies, in direct antagonism to the One that God delights to honour, and loves supremely.

Already are believers given to know that they are set in Christ, associated in this ineffable way with Him to whom we belong. We may, however, be in the presence of God in spirit now. By and by we are to be there, in the very likeness of Christ, according to whose glory we are now called in every way by God. First, the heirs are brought out very distinctly; next, comes the inheritance. God, as to the heirs, had that purpose before the foundation of the world. But He purposed the inheritance also. It was not an afterthought. It was not after the ruin, but before the creation. It was immeasurably in eternity. Quite different was the call of Abraham. His was merely in time, but the call of the Christian was before time began. The very first purpose that God formed in His own eternal mind was to surround himself with beings of a totally different destiny from those that were to follow; beings that could know Himself, and appreciate grace and truth; beings that needed it all, but at the same time whom He needed in order to gratify His own love and share with them His thoughts and affections. And a wondrous fact too is, that He would have them to enter into that purpose of His now by faith. They were His secrets before redemption, but are here revealed in due time. It is what the apostle is now occupying us with in this Epistle.

It is observable in ver. 8 that His grace abounded toward us in all wisdom and intelligence, that such a communion should not be in vain. We do not hear about His rich supply in the earlier verses. There it is rather to tell us that we should be holy and blameless in love. But He would have us understand the inheritance, immense as it will be. Before, it was the imparting of a divine nature, as 2 Peter 1 calls it, an answer to His own in holiness and blamelessness and love; for what else was suited to His presence? Not only so; but the new relationship must be just as fully in accordance with Christ. Nothing would satisfy His love but that which was after His pattern. The Son, the Only Begotten, was God, and of course therefore eternal. These were necessarily creatures, taken out of all ordinary conditions, but put into the immediately nearest relationship that God could vouchsafe. It was an adoption, a sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. Assuredly, it concerns every true Christian to know what his new nature and relationship are. God forbid we should ever neglect or forget these things. Can anything make one feel more deeply that all is ruin at the present time and how deeply we are fallen from our true estate? It is not meant that the purpose of God can be frustrated in the end; but where, among those that bear the Lord’s name, can be found any adequate approach to what is here revealed to the saints? The rarest thing to find in Christendom is any answer to the description God gives of the Christian. Is it not so? What can we say to such a fact? At best we are only learning what it is.

So again this future and immense inheritance is so illimitable as to embrace all heavenly and earthly

creation, all that is to be put under Christ and consequently under those who are united to Christ. Do Christians realise that they are to share it all with Him? Hence the form His grace takes in view of the glory of Christ. He would have us capacitated to apprehend it in all wisdom and intelligence. This last word is in the A. and the R. Versions called “prudence,” an excellent thing in practical things. But in the present case it is a very insufficient word. What has prudence to do for understanding Christ’s future glory. Clearly it stands here for “intelligence.” God would have us even now acquaint ourselves with this purpose also. We need to know our personal blessing first; but next, what we shall share with Christ when He takes the inheritance of all things. Spiritual understanding is requisite but is also abundantly given for this express purpose.

We may be helped in this if we look at the first Adam. When God made the first man and put him into the brightest part of the earth, or paradise as it is called, everything was “very good” (Gen. 1); but the very best were collected by Jehovah Elohim in His power for the head of mankind. So He planted the garden for Adam with special provision, not for every use only, but for delight and enjoyment also. And as Adam was constituted the lord of the lower creation here on earth, he was enabled in God’s goodness, through the wisdom and intelligence conferred upon him, to give the proper names to all cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field; for all these were subjected to him. This is the more important, because it is the appropriate sign of the dominion given him. In Adam there was no question of sin. Adam herein assumed nothing in pride: it was the Lord God that brought to

him the animals to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, it had His sanction. As master by divine appointment, the right or title was recognised, as he had the wisdom and intelligence for that function. Divine goodness had pleasure in it.

It is of the more interest to remark this, because, as we generally know, men of speculative mind have dared to question that man was thus endowed from the first. But philosophers deny everything of divine grace and power. They assume that Adam, if he ever existed, was a kind of barbarian. They lack faith and its discernment to enter into the real difference of Gen. 1 and 2, being carried away by the nonsense of the Astruc guess growing into the pretentious theories of German sceptics. In Gen. 2 is the relationship of the creature, and, in particular, man's responsibility founded on the place in which God was pleased to put him. So Adam gave these names, and God recognised them. Very far greater are the things God has done in Christ for us.

A fair and beauteous scene it was with every creature in it that God subjected to Adam. But what is that compared with the whole universe of God, and every creature above and below, after all the ruin, gathered into united blessedness under Christ's headship, and ourselves associated with Christ in that place of honour over all things? God therefore caused grace to abound toward us "in all wisdom and intelligence" that we might be capable even now of entering with spiritual understanding into a scene so boundless.

Even real Christians count it wisdom and prudence to disclaim all definite thought about the future glory. And

no wonder. For the mixture of law and gospel destroys the right use of both, and reduces revealed truth to uncertainty. To souls in this state these purposes of God are, and must be, unknown. They need to receive previously the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. Were they at home in God's grace and truth, even in that respect, they would yearn after more, and the Spirit would lead them into all the truth, and show them things to come for Christ's glory. Surely God looks for this, that we should understand the grace He has lavished on us. Here He has made known "the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of the times" or, seasons (vers. 9-10). The importance of the word "mystery" is that it means, not something unintelligible as in vulgar usage, but, a secret that was never revealed in the Old Testament. Mysteries are entirely peculiar to what is called the New Testament, wherein they are made known from the Gospel of Matthew to the Revelation of John.

Hence the purpose of God about us, or about the inheritance, was nowhere revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is well to recall the last verse of Deut. 29, "The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Now, God is pleased to reveal what He then reserved to Himself. The time was fully come; and these purposes of His are some of His great secrets. You will find for that reason that the Lord speaks about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. In the Old Testament that kingdom was revealed, but not the mysteries of which the Lord spoke in Matt. 13, which

turned on His rejection by the Jews, which forms the theme of Matt. 11 and Matt. 12 especially. Thereon follows the peculiar aspect of the kingdom of the heavens when the Rejected of men would go on high; and there it is that we know Him now by faith. The kingdom of the heavens assumed this new form when Christ took His seat on the Father's throne. And we may note that when He rose from the dead and was glorified, then more and more the disciples were brought into the understanding of the mysteries of God; and of those mysteries the apostle Paul was an eminent steward, as John also was.

All these were entirely outside the Old Testament; but they could be understood like other truths when revealed. For this we need, and we have, the Holy Spirit given to us. None of them could have been anticipated; but now that God has revealed them, they are for us to search into by the Spirit.

Here it is first the truth as to the Christian; then we begin to hear it as to the church, each in due time. All is revealed in view of the new creation that God was bringing in. It is far beyond the kingdom of the heavens in ever so new a way. The church of God is explained which had never been revealed, but kept hid in God. The mystery hid from ages and generations was now revealed to the holy apostles, and by Paul. The new building, the church of God, rests upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It is not said, nor is it true, upon the prophets and the apostles. Great care is taken to put the apostles before the prophets as both of the N.T., and a common class for this work of God, when Israel was finally set aside for the present. Their writings are an entirely new volume; and in order to

make it plain and certain, they were written in a different language, in Greek, as those who compose the church were to be chiefly from among the Gentiles.

God made known this mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself; and, to render it effectual, conferred the needed wisdom of understanding. It is therefore now no longer a secret. His purpose is for administration of the fulness of the seasons, to gather together (or head up) the universe in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth (ver. 10).

This is a wholly different thing from gathering together into one the scattered children of God for which He died (John 11:52). The latter is the unity which He asked of His Father in John 17:20-23. The former is not yet begun till He appears in glory and delivers the whole creation. The heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ must be revealed before the inheritance can be set free; and its earnest expectation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For we know that though grace has already freed the heirs, their mortal bodies are not yet changed into the likeness of His glorious body, and that till they appear with Him in glory, all the creation groans together till now.

Hardly a phrase in scripture seems less understood than Eph. 1:10. Though this is not the fit occasion to lay bare the strange variety of opinions — learned and unlearned — the fact is as certain as inexcusable. The language of the apostle is plain, save that the word for summing, or heading up, rises necessarily to a sense never thought of among heathens, but given its fullest and highest force in this apostolic revelation: an immense elevation shared

with other Greek words in N.T. usage. The question here is not what men conceive who do not adequately weigh both the word and the context; but what these both fairly compel us to accept as the mind of God here conveyed.

Most have been misled by the supposed analogy of Gal. 4:4. But the phraseology is as different as the time and circumstance and aim. “The fulness of time” now past, simply means the time fulfilled for God’s sending His Son to redeem or buy out from under the law to the adoption of sons, and to impart the Holy Spirit. “The fulness of the seasons,” still future, means the completion of those seasons when God instituted dealings of varied character: human government from Noah’s day; call to separation and promise given to Abraham; law from Sinai with other supplements, in Israel; world-power, on Israel’s failure, in the four great empires; to say nothing of the fall of man and creation long before, and the gospel, last of all, consequent on redemption.

God has left all these to run their course, as testing human responsibility in so many ways. And it is unquestionable that none of them is ended, as all must be when the Lord of all comes in judgment of the quick: a judgment practically forgotten in Christendom, though the creeds, so little heeded or even understood, testify to it. There will be seen in all solemnity the total failure of man, in all these respects; but most flagrantly in that the world, Jew and Gentile, rulers and people, crucified the Lord of glory. God will then call to account how men treated each of these institutions which He established and man violated. Take government on the earth. It never was till after the deluge; and it continues still.

Hence in the N.T. we read, “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and those that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment” — not “damnation” which is an execrable exaggeration, and blunder of translation as in Rom. 14:23, 1 Cor. 11:29, and in too many other passages that refer to temporal judgment only. The Christian is to be subject to the law, or, if God’s truth be at stake, bear the consequences quietly. Yet not one word warrants the Christian to exercise civil authority: many scriptures call for his subjection to such authority, but never to exercise it. We are not of the world, as Christ is not. He declined even to arbitrate, and has set us an example that we should follow His steps. It is ours to obey God always, if not always man and then to suffer, not to rebel. We are sanctified by the Spirit to the obedience of Christ, to obey as He obeyed. What a help it is to a Christian to be content to walk as nothing at all in this world but in the spirit of obedience as the Lord ever did. Further, he can afford to respect others, and can do so freely, learning of Him who was meek and humble in heart. Especially does he need grace when it is a duty to find fault with another. Then have we most reason to be lowly, and vigilant. We have to watch against ourselves lest, by a hasty word or way, we should only make bad worse. But to return, God has not yet called the world to account for misgovernment. He surely will, as we may read in Ps. 82; and the One who will be invested with the administration is the Lord Jesus. But quite another dealing of His began with the first of “the fathers” (Rom. 9:5, Rom. 11:28) Abraham. It was the separating to God from idolatry which came in after the deluge and

overspread even the line of Shem, as we read in Joshua 24.

Israel as a people then followed and undertook to keep His covenant. But what did Israel become at Sinai itself? and where are they now? Scattered to the winds of heaven. Where is a nation in the world so dispersed as Israel? Yet had they walked rightly, God would have made them stand unmoved as a mountain. In every way they totally failed. Take any detail of theirs, as, for instance, the priesthood. It was set up, as nowhere else. Aaron made the golden calf to please the people, and before consecration was complete, two were cut off, and the other two only spared by intercession.

Then, take the judges that God raised up in their distress. What failure even in the judges! What can one say of Samson? Even Samuel who shone among them, through his sons' fault lost the confidence of Israel, who would have a king like others. And how did Saul turn out? or even David, the man after God's heart? or Solomon, with his father, typifying the Lord, each in a different way? The nation consequently broke up in Solomon's son, the proof of general sin, till each of the kingdoms in turn had to be swept out of the land by the just judgment of God.

Then came the Gentile world-powers. They were entrusted with universal empire. The head of gold, Babylon, soon set up an idol forced on all the nations at the penalty of death. Such was the first: what was to be the conduct of the last? It crucified the Lord Jesus; and on its rise again, will oppose the same Lord when He returns in power and glory. Man broke down in every

one of the empires; but the last was to be the guiltiest of all.

Thus all these seasons will close when Christ comes in the clouds of heaven. The Lord will bring in an entirely new administration; in which, besides judging each of these broken trusts, He will establish them in His own person and power to the praise and glory of God. Everything in which man failed will be taken up by Him who never failed in His humiliation; nor will He in that day of manifested blessing and glory. He will not only stand Himself, but He will maintain a glorious kingdom over Israel, and empire over all nations and tongues. Then, on earth righteous men will live throughout a period of a thousand years. Of course one does not ask the doctors what they think about that. They, judging by present appearance, must regard such an expectation as mad. They are no worse than the divines, who deny miracle and prophecy, and are giving up genuine inspiration from Genesis to Revelation. These men of knowledge falsely so called know not the scriptures nor the power of God. Methuselah fell short of a millennium; whereas in the future, everyone on earth who is not rebellious against God, is to live the thousand years throughout. Believers will be transferred from the old earth to the new without passing through death. So it will be on earth when the seasons spoken of are fully out, and the time come for the Lord to take His world-kingdom (Rev. 11:15). The future administration will be in His hands when the seasons of man's responsibility have come to nothing but utter sin and ruin. Then will all the universe, inclusive of the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, be summed up under the headship of the Lord. It is not the eternal state, but the

kingdom in its largest possible sense, when the Heir of all things takes and holds the inheritance to God's glory.

The heavens, as we too well know, are now severed from the earth; and the things on earth are in opposition, each to each; and confusion reigns through sin. Spiritual wickedness is still in the heavenly places; Satan is still the accuser before God, as he is the arch-deceiver of the whole inhabited earth. And what a field of self-will, vanity, pride, covetousness, lust, violence, falsehood, corruption, lying, unrighteousness, and ungodliness, is that of man here below.

Even in what is called Christendom, where is Christ all? Where is scripture only, and all, obeyed? Where has the Holy Spirit His due place individually and corporately? But the time hastens when the Lord will come in His kingdom, and the heavens and the earth be in perfect harmony; when everything in the heavens above and on the earth shall be subjected by divine power to Christ, gathered or headed up in Him as a universal and united system. All know too well that there is not the smallest approach to such a call as this now, nor has it ever been so. But in this day of the Lord that is to dawn, there will be unfailing righteousness, peace, and joy. In an exceptional case of rebellion, death will demand its victim. But it will not be the rule as now. It will be normal to live through the millennial day. But Christ will then have complete and universal sway manifestly. He will bear up the pillars, and chase away want and suffering. If the tiniest insect that flits in the sun's light, if a single blade of grass on which we tread, were not brought under the power of Christ's reconciliation and blessing, it would be a victory for the enemy over Him. But God's purpose will stand, not only for His heirs, but

for the inheritance in all its vast extent and to the minutest detail. The reason is plain. As He created, He will restore, all things, though assuredly not all persons, for the mass live and die His implacable enemies. He died to reconcile all things to Himself. He is declared to be the Heir of all things. Everything above, and everything below, the universe will be put under Christ. This is God's purpose, but not the fact as yet now. It is only God's counsel still, while the heirs are being called; it is not accomplished yet, but surely will be. The Lord is waiting for it. He is not reigning in any such sense as prophecy requires. Rejected by Jew and Gentile He is accepted on high, and He sits on the Father's throne above. There beyond doubt He is crowned with glory and honour, but He has not taken His great power to reign openly and put down every foe.

The Jews rejected Him as their King, and the Gentiles crucified Him. But God the Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; and we are meanwhile being called, His friends, His brethren, and His joint-heirs. When the last one is called, the Father will give the word, and the Lord, after receiving them to Himself, will descend in flaming fire on all His foes and tread them down. After that He will inaugurate the reign of peace; and the spared, who submit, will be the willing subjects of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every creature on the earth will share the blessing in peace; for the nations will learn war no more. Such will be the administration of the fulness of the seasons. What an absurdity to fancy that the time or state is yet come! "The whole creation groaneth together." Why does it groan? Because it is not under Christ, revealed in power and glory. It is travailing in pain together until now.

Weakness, failure, and death are stamped upon every creature that has any kind of life. And things that have not life are habitually turned to a selfish purpose. Take gold and silver, precious stones, pearls, etc., what crimes do they not cause? Think of the pride and vanity and misery to which the lust after these things leads! There is a time coming when everything will join in a chorus of praise to the glory of the Lord Jesus. O what a righteous; holy and beneficent change. He will bring it about: nothing but His coming in power, who once came to suffer for sins, will avail. He who has preyed upon man ever since the fall in the garden of Eden, Satan, will be for a thousand years shut up. He will not be consigned to the lake of fire till after the millennium: but during the Lord's reign he is not allowed to deceive the nations. Now he is also the accuser of God's saints above. Now he does all possible mischief there and here. All that will cease during the millennium. Idolatry and evil in general will cease, righteousness will flourish during the reign of our Lord over the earth; and the new Jerusalem, metropolis of the universe, will be intimately connected with but above, the rejoicing earth. The Jews will be the head, not only of Israel saved by God's mercy, but, of all the nations. It does not matter what the anti-Semites say, Israel is kept of God for this blessed time — "the restitution of all things whereof God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets since time began." They will be the lowly and faithful servants of the Messiah in that day of gladness. But the Gentiles will also abandon their self-sufficiency and joyfully acknowledge their folly and God's goodness, and this glory of Jehovah will fill the earth as now the waters the bed of the sea. That is the unforced and explicit revelation of God. More than that, the very beasts of the earth will lay aside their fury that

followed man's departure from God. Whatever may have existed before man, I speak only of the time since man was created. In contrast with the first man's fall, God means to honour the Second man. He is worthy to bring all creation, and the brutes as part of it, to the true centre in the power which subdues all things to Christ. How universal and profound the evil when man fell! Reconciliation of all things prepares for the transfer to the risen Man who is also True God as truly as is the Father, to Christ the one Head of all things in the heavens no less than of all things on the earth. Then will Christ have come forth publicly, with all His glorified saints following Him; then will He take up the dispensation of the fulness of the seasons, establishing all the divinely given institutions which had broken down in man's feeble and faulty hand. But the saints are carefully distinguished from the inheritance. If the inheritance be given to us, we are the heirs, not the inheritance; and so it is distinctly stated in ver. 11, "in whom [Christ] we were also allotted, foredetermined according to purpose of him that works all things according to the counsel of his own will." The heavenly Bridegroom shares His inheritance unreservedly with those who are constituted His bride; just as Eve the earthly bride shared all that Adam her bridegroom possessed as the gift of the Lord God to him.

In Christ's case, it was not only in virtue of creating all (John 1:3); another ground far more precious and unfailing was laid in His death. "Because all the fulness was pleased in him to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto him, having made peace through the blood of his cross — through him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens

“ (Col. 1:19, 20). Here too the saints, the heirs, are beyond doubt discriminated, as in the counterpart Epistle, from the “all things,” the inheritance, “You” He reconciled now, vers. 21, 22. Creation has to be reconciled by power as well as blood, and that will be when He is manifested in glory. But the saints already are reconciled, not by incarnation as is falsely held, but, in the body of His flesh through death.

The church is neither all things in the heavens, nor all things on the earth, still less both, which is a most egregious error, but believers out of both Jews and Gentiles, baptised by one Spirit into one body, Christ’s body, from which all earthly distinction is blotted out. Impossible to fairly maintain the current traditional view, or to deny the truth, that the gathering of all the universe is the future stewardship for Christ’s manifestation.

Christ’s death is the ground for the saints now reconciled; but the reconciliation of the universe as a matter of fact awaits His appearing in power and glory. It is already applied to those who believe the gospel; and they are the heirs. But the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption will be into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21), and cannot be before those already delivered by grace through faith are revealed to every eye as His sons in glory. What is here said, is but a simple reflection of God’s word. It declares with all plainness of speech that the heirs are reconciled; as the inheritance will be, at Christ’s manifestation. The heirs are those reconciled through the blood of Christ, as all creation will be. But they believe the gospel of grace; with which the rest of creation, animate or inanimate has nothing to do. But

they will answer fully to the revelation of Christ's power and glory. We must never confound the Christian's portion with Israel's. The chosen people were Jehovah's especial inheritance. We are united to Christ by the Spirit, not in any sense His inheritance, but heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If Christ is to have all things above and below we too by grace shall share all things.

Let us consider seriously a purpose so immense. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus was pleased so to purpose, and also to reveal it clearly to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Was it not to exercise a direct and intimate bearing on our souls? to lift our hearts to Christ in the heavenly places, as united to Him who is there, for entirely like glory with Him? It is not only the bad things of the flesh and the world that present danger, the best things are perverted and falsified by spiritual wickedness in heavenly places to rob us of our highest privileges. We belong to Christ, for and in heaven; He is the way, the truth and the life. If we give not, as a constant principle and practice, to Christ the first place, we grievously wrong Him and to our own irreparable loss as Christians. It is our privilege and our duty to make Christ the prime object of our souls in every question that comes before us. Satan ensnares by our own interests. We are only kept and guided aright by Christ's dwelling in our hearts through faith. What quiet comfort and confidence, if you are content to tell the Lord about it and are subject to His will and word! He gives entire deliverance from every wile of the enemy. His love entitles one to consult Him about little matters: — nothing, it has been well said, is too great for us, nothing too small for Him, in His grace. Who that believes need wonder, if when dead in our offences and

sins, God quickened us together with the Christ, and raised us together, and seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before prepared that we should walk in them.

The efficacious work is offered and accepted on high for all things in the heavens and on the earth. Yet spiritual wickedness is not even yet dislodged from the heavenlies. Still less is the field of the world cleared of all scandals and those that practice lawlessness. Yes, the serpent's trail is still above; and those associated with Christ in the heavenlies have brought deep dishonour on Him by their unbelief and worldliness, tampering on this side with superstition, on that with rationalism; bad enough in mere professors, far worse in members of His body. The heavenly things therefore needed to be purged by better sacrifices than Israel or any man ever offered. The inheritance, heavenly and earthly, remains yet to be delivered according to the energy of His power even to subdue the universe to Himself; and we shall share His most worthy exaltation, in that day for which we wait, suffering with Him, and it may be for Him, by grace meanwhile.

The prize of our high calling

A review of: ‘The prize of our high calling’ by J. Sladen:

Such is the title of a tract in defence of the late R. Govett’s endeavour to prove that many who receive life eternal fail to reign with Christ, and are kept in Hades all the thousand years of the kingdom, because they were not immersed and rose not up to the requisite mark of good works. “It is of great importance,” says the author in his opening sentence, “to distinguish between (1) eternal life as the gift; and (2) the prize as a reward according to works.”

What saith the scripture? Does not the Lord identify what this theory distinguishes? Take Luke 18:29, 30: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left home, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the age to come life everlasting.” Do not both coalesce here? Only the Gospel of John among the Four treats of eternal life as a present gift of grace, the special known and enjoyed privilege of him who receives and follows the rejected Christ. So in Matt. 18 to “enter into life” is when saints inherit the kingdom; which surely overthrows the alleged distinction.

The alternative again is not a punitive or purgatorial Hades for so many years, but “to be cast into everlasting fire.” Scripture nowhere anticipates for believers such a lot as Mr. G. imagined. The sheep on the King’s right hand, or saved of all the nations at the end of the age (Matt. 25:31-46), were very defective in knowledge, but practically honoured the King in His messengers. Those

who will not are consigned to everlasting punishment, not to temporary suffering. So in Mark 9:42-50 it is either entering into the kingdom at whatever cost, or to be cast into hell-fire. There is no middle position between the kingdom and irretrievable ruin. Scripture nowhere speaks of crownless kings. The foolish virgins without oil in their vessels were but empty professors, who cry too late, Lord, Lord, open to us, whom He answers in the solemn words, “Verily I say unto you I know you not.” Without doubt the Lord knows those that are His (2 Tim. 2:19). These virgins were not His, save externally and therefore for responsibility and judgment, not for life.

It is in John’s Gospel we hear Christ opening the Christian privilege of present known life eternal, far beyond the hope of the kingdom which was revealed in the O.T. and enjoyed by all saints. What lack of spiritual intelligence to treat the kingdom as the grand prize and life in the Son as the common portion, even of the unfaithful to be in Hades while the rest reign with Christ for the thousand years! Not so does the Lord anywhere speak. In John 5:19-28 He lays down that one of two things awaits men now that He the Eternal is the Rejected here: life everlasting as a present possession, of which no O.T. saint ever thought; or judgment executed by Him as Son of man. To hear the voice of the Son of God made the dead even now to live of His life; to despise and reject Him as but man was to be left in death for dread and sure judgment. For there are two resurrections of wholly distinct character: one of life for those who have life already for their souls in Him, and do good according to that new nature, as none else do; another and later at the close of the kingdom when they

that have done evil according to their sinful nature come forth for inevitable and endless judgment. But not the least hint is here, or in Rev. 20 where the prophetic vision of both is given, of a class who had life eternal raised to be judged according to their works, and yet to enjoy a blissful eternity in God's presence, after being in Hades for a thousand years as the penalty of non-immersion and a careless walk. The dead raised in the resurrection of judgment are cast into the lake of fire.

Indeed an O.T. saint knew better than this strange dream. It is due to the blind unbelief of Christendom which talks of universal judgment for sinner and saint, though Mr. G. cleared himself in part from that error. But the psalmist knew better, saying (Psalm 143:2), "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Were God to enter into judgment even of His servant, there could be no justification for him; for judgment must deal inflexibly with sins. And what servant of His has not sinned since his confession of the Saviour? No, salvation is by grace through faith, but impossible on the ground of judgment according to works, which is reserved for those who refused the Lord and rejected His "so great salvation." Only of the wicked Rev. 20:11-15 speaks. "The dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works." With this condemnation of each and all the book of life agrees. For therein was the record of the objects of saving grace. "And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." Not a word is here found of one written in that book. The books condemned them; the book of life had no such names written for grace.

Where then is there room for the distinction here thought of great importance? Where the intimation that any possessed of eternal life miss the prize of our high calling? Rom. 11:6 does not contradict Rom. 2. God will render to each according to his works: to those who, in patient continuance of good works, seek for glory and honour and incorruption, life eternal (that is, in God's kingdom as well as for all eternity too in God's grace: so little is the distinction found in scripture); but to those that are contentious and are disobedient to the truth, wrath and indignation [shall be], etc. But why set this against "grace"? For grace alone gave a new nature through faith of Christ, and works meanwhile in obedience and good fruit, so as to inherit life eternal for the body in the day of glory. Error dislocates the truth, puts one scripture into collision with another, and thus unwittingly makes a chaos.

No Christian doubts that 1 Cor. 9:25 tells us of an incorruptible crown as the prize. But the "disapproved" one at Christ's judgment-seat here spoken of is a worthless professor, and not a child of God. The apostle feared for some of the Corinthians in the church. Some were fleshly and party-spirited, making contentious badges, not merely of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but of Christ. They were morally loose, and so worldly-minded as to sue their brethren at law-courts. They sought ease and honour among men, and made light of heathen temples and sacrifices. Levity and shame had clouded even the Lord's table in their midst, and gross vanity their misuse of spiritual gifts. Nay some questioned (not the soul's immortality, but) the resurrection of the dead. Who can wonder that the apostle was deeply concerned? Yet in his delicate consideration he applies the danger to

his own case (compare 1 Cor. 4:6); as if he said, Supposing I were to walk without conscience and self-judgment before God, what must be the end of it? “I therefore thus run, as not uncertainly; so I combat, as not beating the air [as many there were doing]. But I buffet my body and lead it captive [his was no easy-going walk]; lest having preached to others I should be myself rejected.”

The preaching might be zealous, powerful, and blessed; but if the preacher indulged his lusts instead of mortifying them, God is not mocked, and he himself must be “reprobate.” The word which is softened down to “disapproved” is never used in the N.T. in any sense but the worst. If said of “land” (Heb. 6), it means “worthless,” bearing thorns and briars, but no acceptable fruit. So it is employed in 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7, never for what is good though failing. Lack of perception that the apostle had no real fear as to himself, but was transferring the case to himself to make it all the stronger if he were to walk so wickedly, misled not a few to imagine that he meant works rejected but the preacher saved. It is precisely the contrary here. The preaching might be all right, but the preacher’s life was offensive to God, and himself therefore rejected or as the A.V. says, “a castaway,” which is quite sound, though it is a pity to multiply needlessly the rendering of the Greek word.

As to 2 Cor. 5:10, the true force is that “we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ.” It is not the same as the “we all” in 2 Cor. 3:18. A different form distinguishes them. In the latter “we all” means all and only Christians; in the former it is so framed as to take in not only all saints but all sinners too. Hence it does

not say “judged,” but “manifested.” For the believer does not come into judgment, as the Lord ruled in John 5:24. We shall be fully manifested and give account and receive accordingly. But how will it be with the ungodly? Their manifestation must be “judgment;” for they believed not on Christ, and went on in unremoved sins till death. The believer did repent and believe the gospel, and was justified by faith. Nor will God reverse but stand to it; for “it is God that justifieth”; whereas His wrath abides on him who disowns the Son of God. And is not this truly righteous, however awful? The manifestation is therefore at different times, of distinct character, and with opposite results for those manifested. But it remains that we, the whole of us, shall be manifested, that each may receive the things in (or, through) the body according to those he did whether good or evil. Nothing more sweeping or precise; not a word to countenance failing believers shut out of the Kingdom, and judged with the wicked at the end according to their works.

It is ever wholesome and cheering to hear our Lord say, “I am coming quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11). But this is far from implying that there will be crownless kings in Hades; and though we shall share the authority He will give us over the nations with Him who shall shepherd them with iron sceptre, we shall be associated with Him who is the Morning Star which is far higher and better. This is before He dawns on the world as Sun of righteousness in both judgment and healing (Rev. 2:26- 28; Mal. 4:2).

Christendom seeks to reign now, a heartless reign hollow and faithless. This, with error of all sorts, is what has been “garnered” during the centuries of

insubjection to the word and Spirit of God. The only true place of the bride is to suffer here and now where He suffered to the utmost, awaiting the day when we shall be glorified on high and reign together with Him. Some of the Corinthians in their light-heartedness forgot the truth, and as the apostle said “reigned without us.” But with his large heart he added, “I would that ye did reign [for as yet it was a delusion and a wrong to Christ], that we also might reign with you.” He was far from menacing them with being kept away in Hades, though he did not hide the apostolic path of present reproach and shame for Christ’s sake in which so few are ambitious to be their successors. They prefer to be enthroned as bishops and archbishops, patriarchs or popes, from which earthly glory the apostles were wholly apart. Nor are the so-called Free Churches a whit less covetous of money, ease, and honour, as far as they can compass it. But in Luke 17 the Lord points two aspects of the kingdom: one present in the midst of men, which does not come with observation but is known in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; whilst we await one manifested in power. “For as the lightning shines which lighteneth from the [one end under] heaven to the [other end] under heaven, thus shall the Son of man be in his day.” “Every eye shall see him;” and “where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.” God’s judgments shall not fail to light upon the objects of His displeasure.

Yet the apostle did not put off the spirit of the kingdom till that day. He sought and exercised it not in word but in power by the Spirit, even now and here.

To speak of “imputed sanctification” is to diverge from scriptural truth. But sanctification is not merely in

practice, which is always imperfect and admits of varying degrees. Mr. G. and his defender were not aware that the word of God speaks of a sanctification by a new nature coincident with being born anew, and antecedent not only to practical holiness but even to justification, of which popular theology is wholly ignorant. It is identical with saintship. This is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11: “But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The order stated is exact; but it perplexes all who draw their doctrines from man instead of from scripture. 1 Peter 1:2 may make this truth clear to those that doubt: “elect according to foreknowledge of a Father God, by (or, in) sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.” Here too the ordinary teaching is at sea. Yet the truth revealed is certain and plain. Election as God’s children is shown in sanctification of the Spirit for obeying as (not the Jews, but) Christ obeyed, and His blood-sprinkling which cleanses from all sin, that is, for justification. There is a real and vital sanctifying by the Spirit when we are converted to God before we obey as God’s sons and know ourselves justified. It is a life setting-apart to God, which precedes acceptance, and is overlooked by universal theology, Arminian and Calvinistic; but scripture, as here shown, makes much of it.

No serious person doubts that real Christians may be “carnal, walking as men,” as many Corinthian saints were; but those with whom they were not even to eat were under discipline and put away from among them, as “wicked” persons, no longer in the assembly, nor called a brother though he had been, and might be again

if or when restored. But to be regarded as at the same time a saint and a wicked person is merely human theory, unscriptural and pernicious. The old leaven was to be purged out, that they might be a new lump, according as they were unleavened. Therefore, Christ having been sacrificed, we are to celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth. If leaven enters, the church is bound to cast it out when seen, never to sanction its presence, being directly inconsistent; as the form was in Israel, so its reality is in us. Some in the church might turn out unjust, but they were not to be tolerated but put away, and should not inherit God's kingdom, any more than they had life eternal. None were to be deceived, as they had been. They had been baptised and eaten the Lord's supper, and were none the better but the worse, as 1 Cor. 10 warns. Evils such as these involve everlasting ruin no less than loss of the kingdom, though 1 Cor. 5 and 1 Cor. 11 leave room for repentance in the wondrous grace of God, and if restored, not only for renewed fellowship but for inheriting the kingdom; contrary to this singular theory.

The remark under 4 (p. 3) is quite inept, as far as Rev. 20:4 is concerned; and it is decisive on the point. "Notice the Church is not spoken of as reigning with Christ; but blessed and holy (practical sanctification) is he that hath part in the first resurrection. Unholiness excludes from the first resurrection." Now it is certain that of no class of believers is holiness so strongly predicated as of the church in Eph. 5:25-27: "The Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by

the word, that he might present the church to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it might be holy and blameless." Where is anything said so deep and full of any other object of grace?

The real bearing of Rev. 20:4 is most comprehensive; for three classes are included. "And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and [instead of being judged according to their works] judgment was given to them." These are the saints of the O.T. as well as the church caught up to meet the Lord at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 2 Thess. 2:1), and seen glorified above from Rev. 4 onward. Secondly, the early martyrs of the Apocalyptic time, Rev. 6:9-11. Thirdly, those later and more severely persecuted by the Beast and the false Prophet before the Lord appears in glory. These two are distinguished in the subsequent clause, as ''the souls of those beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus and on account of the word of God;" and "those that did not worship the beast or his image, and received not the mark on their forehead and hand."

As these witnesses for God were only raised after the translation to heaven of the first general class, and suffered to death for the truth as far as they knew it, they are here clearly described as seen by the apostle in their disembodied state, and raised from the dead to join the first great class, after the Lord appears for the destruction of the Beast, the False prophet, and their armies, as well as for consignment of Satan to the abyss. Hence the announcement of the first resurrection here, in order to include in it these two classes of Apocalyptic sufferers, who might have been hastily thought too late to share the thousand years' reign with the Christ, as

well as perhaps spiritually inferior, because their intelligence was small as the Revelation shows. But "Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection"; and as they were slain by hostile authority, it is said "over these the second death hath no power." But to infer that any living members of Christ's body, the church, do not share the rising to reign is wholly incongruous, unintelligent, and wild to the highest degree.

An attempt however is made to find a basis in Phil. 3, a chapter specially setting aside every dependence and boast but Christ, on whose account, says the apostle, "I suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ, and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness which is [or, would be] of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness that is of God through faith; to know him, and the power of his sufferings, being conformed to his death if any how I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. Not that I already obtained the prize or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession, since also I have been possessed by Christ. Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing — forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to those before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the calling above of God in Christ Jesus." It is really the power of life in faith of Christ glorified which fills the apostle's heart to run the race with that prize in view; as far as possible from the notion of a reward according to works, which is essentially law, sterile and deadly. He utterly repudiates his own righteousness for that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

This agrees with what the Lord made of the resurrection of His own in John 5, the issue of what He gives the believer now — life eternal, which loves good, hates evil, and produces good fruit, according to (not law, but) sovereign grace, its opposite. Hence we hear of those that are counted worthy to have part in that age, which is the reverse of the present evil age, and the resurrection that is from among the dead. But He nowhere speaks of it as a reward of our good works (though good works there surely are), but the fruit of His life in power according to divine grace and its counsels.

No doubt it is a manifest token of God's righteous judgment that the saints should be counted worthy of His kingdom, as their wicked troublers deserve the penalty which awaits them. But this strange doctrine looks at the surface of things, overlooking the spring of grace and the power of the Spirit working in the heart by faith. Yet even while page 4 says that the incorruptible crown, the resurrection from among the dead, and the kingdom of God are different aspects of the prize, it adds that thus all may be lost through disobedience and consequent unholiness, and concludes that none of these is a question of pure grace. Yet the very next paragraph owns that grace is indeed needed every hour to insure them. Is not this to say and unsay? It is to confound those begotten of God with such as are not, in order to countenance the fable of saints left to unholiness, and hence to punishment for the thousand years when other saints shall reign. The simple truth is that the Lord prepares us for unreal professors, for those that say and do not, whom He declines to own, while Mr. Govett and his followers declare that they are

His to the great dishonour of His word, the grief of the faithful, and the false hope of the fruitless.

As to failure and sin on the part of true saints through unwatchfulness, there is the plain duty of the church to exercise discipline; and the Lord acts as we read in 1 Cor. 11, dealing even to death of the body; just as the Father judges in loving care, as 1 Peter 1:17 says no less than John 15. They are thus chastened in this life. Nowhere is there a hint of saints detained in Hades while their brethren reign. Saints by call are disciplined now that they may be saints practically. If all these fail, people are not of God, and only false professors.

It is not exact to say that “all saints will share in the Kingdom” or the millennial reign with Christ, but for a plain reason wholly different from the misteaching. The fact is that there will be a harvest of saints possessed of life eternal during the kingdom, who are (whether Israel or the nations) reigned over instead of reigning. These, like all those glorified before them, reign in life through the one Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17); they and we shall reign to the ages of the ages (Rev. 22:5). This will be the eternal state to the exclusion of time or any other characteristic of a dispensation. But that saints by call are not saints by practice also is not apostolic doctrine; for the notion is directly denied in Rom. 8:30 and many other scriptures. When our Lord tells us that many are called but few chosen, it is clearly the public call in the kingdom of heaven, and distinct from the work of grace according to His counsels, whereby all that have life in Him are described as having done good, and rise to a resurrection of life, in contrast with a resurrection of judgment which is only for the unbelieving, unholy and unblessed.

But we come next to what in the same page 4 are called proof-texts, and first John 17:22. This is said to "refer to present union with Christ." Its terms declare the contrary. "And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they also may be one even as we [are] one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me and lovedst them as Thou lovedst Me." It is clear that the glory is not actually ours till He comes again, and that there can be no perfecting for us into one till then. But it is now for the world to "believe," as in verse 21. When the glory is revealed, and not before, the world shall "know"; because it is a fact before their eyes and impossible to deny; and such is the distinction of vers. 22, 23 from what had been already presented by our Lord. The oneness "perfected" will be in the day of glory (as the oneness in ver. 21 is during the day of grace in order to act on faith now), and will only be matter of fact when the Lord appears and we with Him in the same glory (Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:13).

We have already shown that Rev. 20:13 is the resurrection of judgment, in contrast with that of life, the one of the unjust only as the "first" is of none but the just. Neither Eph. 1:21 nor Eph. 2:6 applies save to our portion as in Christ. Thus the "age to come" is the millennial one, and our state is everlasting, as reigning in life (Rom. 5:17) is unlimited.

Then too Luke 22:29, 30 is no less misunderstood and misapplied. The Lord speaks of His own in a grace which secures from all their slips and follies. To construe His words here or anywhere else as a reward of their righteousness is distressing error and real self-righteousness. As a fact, they grievously failed, and

Peter in particular. How can saints be so blind as to argue the contrary? Besides, glorious as “the kingdom” may be, it is not so deep or precious, as life eternal or union with Christ. The kingdom will be a magnificent display of honour; but eternal life and union with Christ suppose communion with God, and enjoyment of His love which is intrinsic and far beyond any display. The scheme spiritually is thus a total fallacy.

Again, Rom. 8:17 draws out the mistaken comment that the Greek particles “always signify contrast.” They may mean no more than distinction, like our “on the one hand” and “on the other.” All depends on the nature of the case intrinsically. Thus in 1 Cor. 12:8 to one (μὲν) a word of wisdom, to another (δὲ) a word of knowledge, though here of different persons, were varieties rather than contrasts; and in Eph. 4:11 these (μὲν) apostles, and those (δὲ) prophets, were so far from being in contrast that they form a joint class in Eph. 2:20 and Eph. 3:5. But we need not go so far from here. Take for instance Rom. 6:11, “dead indeed to sin (μὲν) and (or, but) (δὲ) alive to God in Christ Jesus.” To make one grace, and the other conditional, is not only error but absurdity. And so it is to separate heirship of God from being joint-heirs with Christ, though it is expressly a gift of grace (as in Phil. 1:29) to suffer for Him as well as with Him. He who does not suffer with Him now has not His Spirit and is none of His. It is perversion to make such a contrast in Rom. 8:17, and 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. The contrast, if any such thing were intended, would be with the millennial saints who enjoy entire exemption from such suffering, and therefore do not reign with Christ during the thousand years. But to make this of works is

utterly unscriptural; for good works characterise all saints as born of God.

So with James 2:5. Loving God and one's brother is shown in 1 John 5:1 to be inseparable from being begotten of God. It is essential to the new nature. How dreadful to conceive a saint without loving God or obeying Him! Extremes meet when those who profess sovereign grace can thus talk like the lowest latitudinarians. It is precious to know that God has chosen the poor as to the world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom; but when it is added ''which He promised to those that love Him," who but the legal would confine the latter clause to the poor and refuse it to a Nicodemus or a Joseph of Arimathea? This is not to read the scriptures in the Spirit; nor should we deny practical holiness to any one born of God, though he may fail here or there through lack of intelligence. Not a few who are correct in outward points easily apprehended by the mind may be far behind in the faith that worketh by love, which is characteristic of all who have passed from death into life, and will assuredly share the resurrection of life. One can believe in utterly "disobedient " profession of Christ, but hardly in a "most disobedient child of God." Every true Christian is watched over by our God and Father in order to the partaking of His holiness. Does He not scourge every son whom He receiveth? Heb. 12:5-11. See also 1 Cor. 11:31, 32. Why overlook such plain scriptures as preclude and deny the extravagant theory before us? Gal. 6:8 is quite in harmony with the truth generally. But the word is akin everywhere.

The rapture of the saints is the crowning act of sovereign grace instead of being when the day of grace

is past. The throne of judgment only comes into view when the heavenly saints are seated on their thrones around it above. And “who is worthy?” is answered by the Lamb alone, not by them (Rev. 4, 5). Can anything be more certain?

It is impossible to allow the correctness of the thoughts on the two letters to the Thessalonians, as not touching on the standing and privilege of the church, but on faithful service in waiting for Christ. The opening words refute this. What grace can be plainer than addressing them in both as “the church of Thessalonians in God the (or, our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”? and in the first saying, “Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election”? Their awaiting His Son from the heavens in 1 Thess. 1:10 the apostle treats as part of their conversion to God from idols, no less than serving a living and true God. “The church in God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ” is a unique expression of the grace in which that infant assembly stood, conveying the strongest assurance of divine security in love, just because they were so young and had to face persecution from the first. Nor is such a beginning more than a sample of the privileges of grace of which these two Epistles are full, though no doubt there is not the unfolding of the body as in that to the Ephesians or of the Head as to the Colossians, written when the apostle was a prisoner of Christ in Rome so many years after. But they are the Epistles wherein is found the brightest communication of our heavenly hope, and the triumph of grace in our association with Christ far more intimately and profoundly than in the display of the kingdom in which He vindicates us before the world, and rewards some specially.

To say as p. 7 does, that “some of the Church will not be accounted worthy of the kingdom at the judgment-seat of Christ,” is to assert the strange doctrine without one word of proof. The exhortation to walk worthily is valid; the deduction of harsh dealing with failing saints is a fable. The idea that the question of reigning is decided at the judgment-seat is inconsistent with the likeness to Christ consummated in a moment at His coming to present the church glorious to Himself (not a part but the whole), and then bringing us into the Father’s house, is a monstrous one. So in the Revelation the glorified are seen at home in heaven from Rev. 4 which gives the first view of them there after their translation. And very striking it is that grace so deals; for we naturally might have thought of a judicial inquiry first of all. But nothing of the kind is implied till the close of their presence, before the Lamb’s marriage and the world-kingdom of our Lord is about to begin, when He and the glorified appear in glory and judgments. Only then is it said that His wife made herself ready; and I know nothing else that answers to such a phrase but our each giving account to Him of the things done through the body when we shall know as we are known. For we must all be manifested before His tribunal that we may each receive according to what he shall have done whether good or evil. This affects his particular place in the kingdom, but all reign without doubt if scripture decide.

What a solemn but withal joyful fact to those taught of God that we are already reconciled, justified, saved by grace as fully as God could through and in Christ our Lord, the last to question His own perfect and perfecting work! No longer a mistake in anything; no hasty thought to mislead; no prepossession or prejudice to warp, to

which all here and now are liable. All will be in perfect light and perfect love. Even now we do not fear but delight in what manifests all as it really is. Then it will be without alloy, and ourselves like Christ to enjoy it to the uttermost, without an atom of the old man to darken or excuse; so that it would be real loss not to be thus manifested perfectly, if this could be. And we can understand why it should be just before we come in His kingdom where our particular place will depend on that which shall have been manifested of fidelity and devotedness, or the lack of it (Luke 19:15-26; 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Thess. 2:19, etc.).

Hence it is not with His “coming” to take us on high, but with His “appearing and kingdom” that scripture connects the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award in that day; but this, says the blessed apostle, not only to me but also to all that have loved and do love His appearing. Thus is sovereign grace reconciled with the nicest righteousness, His coming to receive us to Himself and for the Father’s house being as evident for the one, as His appearing and kingdom will manifest the other. Nor can one conceive a sadder wound to this harmony, for all the elect children of God whom He justifies, than the notion without any solid ground for it, that the great mass of saints are to be shut up away in Hades for a thousand years, say for not being duly immersed or some other point of difference, which multitudes glory in without the least fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Can there be a dream more distant from the general analogy of the faith? or more decidedly set aside by revealed statements as here shown?

It is a fundamental mistake, then, to conceive the rapture of the saints “to be when this day of grace is past, and the throne of judgment set up” (p. 6). On the contrary, that the once lost sinners and children of wrath should be caught up and set before the Father, in the closest association with Christ above, is the highest expression of sovereign grace. Instead of being display when this day is past, it is its triumph without an atom of judgment in it any more than in our Lord’s ascension which did not touch a single sinner in this world. “The appearing” on the contrary is the beginning of the Lord’s action in personal judgment after God’s providential inflictions close.

Again, how short and shallow is the view this system imposes on “worthiness of walk for the Kingdom of glory” (p. 7)! It supplants the love and holiness proper to every Christian for a rather mercenary motive. The apostle comforts the Thessalonian saints in their endurance of persecution as a manifest token of God’s righteous judgment, “to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer.” Christ was the object and spring of power; the kingdom, as the glorious day when the tables should be for ever turned into rest for the suffering righteous, and trouble for their troublers, was but the consoling recompense. And this is so true, that every discerning eye can see how these very scriptures are stripped of their fulness by this narrow and withering hypothesis. “That ye would walk worthily of God that calleth you unto His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). How incomparably richer and holier His word than reducing it to the millennial kingdom, true as this may be! But why overlook that this is but one of three such appeals? “To

walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the right knowledge (ἐπιγνώσει) of God." Here is yet more than the young Thessalonian saints had put before them. And Eph. 4:1 is larger and higher still than Col. 1:10, "Walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called": a calling which embraces God's dwelling-place, and Christ's body in union with the Head over all things, immeasurably beyond the kingdom.

Thus we are throughout on the ground of grace which alone produces an answer in practical righteousness, which it does in those begotten of God, as 1 John elaborately states. Undoubtedly the difficulties are so great that to unbelief they seem unsurmountable; but faith is entitled to count on being guarded by God's power for salvation complete, and is in no way disturbed by judgment beginning, now as of old, from God's house (1 Peter 4:17). But the apostle gives no hint of believers suffering as an example, only "those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus"; as it is in 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. The second sight of Hades which the scheme claims is a delusion.

So it is to deny ''that all the dead in Christ will have part in the first resurrection." Take Romans 5-8. All points from "reigning in life" (Rom. 5:17); "so also we (not some only) shall be of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5); "to be conformed to the image of His Son," and if justified, also glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30). How preposterous not to be raised and glorified but kept in Hades even then!

Take again 1 Cor. 15 the capital seat of the resurrection: "For since through man death, through man also resurrection of dead. For as in the Adam all die, so also

in the Christ all shall be made alive" (that is, the simply Adam family in its universality, and the Christ family in its completeness) (vers. 21, 22). Is not this last categorically all the dead sharing Christ's resurrection? So it is repeated in ver. 23, "But each in his own order (or, rank): Christ, first-fruits; after that, those of Christ at His presence" (or, coming). Can any scholar question that οἱ Χριστοῦ comprehends all the dead in Christ thus to rise? "Then the end" at once carries us, not to the resurrection of the unjust (for the chapter is occupied with that of Christ and His own), but to His giving up the conferred kingdom to Him that is God and Father after all such government is over. Again in vers. 49, 50, as we bore the image of the dusty man, we shall bear also the image of the Heavenly One; and this in connection with inheriting the kingdom with Christ, while those converted then in their natural bodies enjoy its blessed effects, as in both O.T. and N.T. But not a hint of some of the sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:36) falling short of their inheritance! And when from ver. 51 he opens the "mystery" of the living saints changed without death, the modern legend of excluding many real saints, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (else they are not properly Christian), is itself excluded as an unscriptural invention. For though we shall not all die, "we shall all be changed." For (1 Cor. 15:52) "the trumpet shall sound; and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the then living saints) shall be changed." Had the νεκροὶ been anarthrous, it might have left room for exceptions; but the article denotes the whole class, as the "we" does the survivors of God's family without exception, with a destiny as far from Hades as can be.

It is exactly similar with 1 Thess. 4:14-17. And 1 Thess. 3:13 is the more striking, as we are therein assured, not merely of the raising of all that are Christ's for the first resurrection and reign with Him when He comes for them, but here we read of His coming "with all His saints", which is when He appears in His kingdom. Can one ask a more overwhelming disproof of this strange doctrine? No less destructive is Rev. 20:4-6. "The first resurrection" here is for the purpose of supplementing the earlier and later martyrs of the Apocalyptic times. They were witnesses after the rapture of the saints generally who were already seen seated on thrones; and those two classes are raised after the Lord appears to the destruction of both the Beasts, etc., and added to the enthroned. This is styled "the first resurrection," embracing all who have part in it, in contrast with that of the unjust before "the end" for "the second death." But here too is not a whisper of one emerging from Hades to join the rest of the risen saints when the thousand years are over.

We may add, that nowhere does scripture teach that the first resurrection is a judicial question; or as it is said in the tract, "This will depend on the decision of the 'Righteous Judge.'" It exclusively depends for us on the grace which has given the Christian life eternal in Christ. Such a one cometh not into judgment, but has already passed from death unto life; and He will raise him up at the last day, as He repeatedly declared (John 6). It is decided already by grace; and the believer will have been glorified before he stands before the Bema of Christ to give account of all done in the body: a process of solemn interest for the saint and affecting his particular position in the kingdom. Only perdition awaits

the unbeliever when he is raised for judgment before the end. These things essentially distinct are here confused.

Further, as it is admitted (p. 8) that “all the church are called to this glory of the first resurrection,” let it not be forgotten that “ye were also called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4) is not declarative merely or dispensational but of effectual grace, like “one body and one Spirit” with which it is bound up. “One baptism” attaches to “one Lord” and “one faith too,” which belong to the sphere of profession, and might fail of effect in one way or another. “One God and Father of all” is wider than either, but expresses the closest intimacy in the ease of all Christians — “in us all.”

Holiness, we all agree, as divine life goes with the word, is so imperative that without it no one shall see the Lord; and the professing Christian who does not pursue it only deceives himself. It is false and misleading to let people fancy that they may be real saints, yet unholy. “Every one” that has the grace-given hope resting on Him purifies himself as He is pure; others that have not are self-deceived. Because of iniquities the wrath of God cometh upon the sons of disobedience; but believers are essentially sons of obedience, and His love rests on them. If one sin, it is a grievous inconsistency. But grace does not fail to awaken self-judgment through our blessed Advocate with the Father, and restoration ensues. Those who do the wicked works of the flesh, and abide impenitent and indifferent have no part or lot with Christ, shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and in no way share the portion of the saints in light.

The Promise of the Father

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. Never had intercourse been so fraught with healing and joy to publicans and sinners. The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. He was come to save what was lost. Never had saints of God listened to such words of sweetness whereby was disclosed to them the bosom of His Father, which He, the only-begotten Son, knew so well. “The Word became flesh,” one of them could say, “and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten from a Father) full of grace and truth.” In the simple tale of the Gospels, we have the blessedness of the disciples in the presence of the Lord. There is no distance nor reserve. He speaks to them face to face; He calls them and treats them as His friends. And oh, what a friend was He! Blessed pattern of all meekness, of lowliness unknown, of patience that could not be wearied, of grace that flowed out the more, the more He was wounded in the house of His friends, like a sweet herb that breathes fragrance when trodden by the heedless foot of man!

It is indeed sadly true that His presence rendered more conspicuous the infirmities, the dangers, the sins, and the enemies of God’s people. But never did murmur break from His lips Who had undertaken their cause — God’s cause. Notwithstanding their unbelief, their pride, their insensibility, and their perverseness, never did He complain, “Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? Wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?” Instead of saying, “Have I conceived all this people? Have I

begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?" Jesus, the good Shepherd, looks onward through the vista of His sufferings to the day when He would say, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Instead of saying, "Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?" He, and He alone, could say, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

It was assuredly a crisis when Jesus appeared. God had given His law; but holy, just, and good as the commandment was, it could not better, and was not meant to better, the heart of man. It detected and condemned what issued thence; for through law is the knowledge of sin. Prophets, too, had been sent by the Lord God of their fathers. But what could these avail save to show the importunate love of Him Who rose up betimes and sent them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling-place? They alas! mocked and misused His prophets "until the wrath of Jehovah arose against His people, till there was no remedy." In this state of things He appeared. Truly we may say that in the person of Jesus God brought Himself nigh to the sinner. But in vain. Jesus must suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust. So must He bring us to God. All might bear Him witness and wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; and surely had there been one pure thought in the heart of man, one feeling undepraved by sin, Jesus must have drawn it forth. But there was none — nothing Godward. His presence, therefore, could but demonstrate, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. "If I had not come

and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God raised up (Acts 2)." The grand basis of blessing was laid. God's righteousness was declared not only at this time, but for the passing over of sins that were past in His forbearance.

Still, while in that death all the past dealings of God were divinely vindicated, Christ Himself, in anticipating His approaching departure, hints at a new order of things: an order consequent upon His rejection by the world, and exaltation to the right hand of God. And was it not worthy of Him, that, when Jew and Gentile joined to show their implacable enmity to God, He should then show the exceeding riches of His grace to them?

From Christ, I say, risen and seated at God's right hand on high, a new and unprecedented and peculiar work of God begins. Their sins had been borne away. They were sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. They did believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. If a work of God commenced then, it was necessarily something above and beyond the blessings they at that time enjoyed, however great these might have been.

Both before His death and after His resurrection the Lord had told His disciples of the promise of the Father. He had spoken of another Comforter Whom the Father was to give them, an ever-abiding Comforter (John 14). In chapter 15 He speaks of the same Comforter as not yet come, One Whom He would send from the Father. In chapter 16 we have further particulars still. “These things (their, as well as His, sufferings from the world) I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” He had told them that He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven, and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself.

On these two truths, deeply interesting as they are, it is not my present purpose to dwell. Suffice it to observe here, how closely bound up with them is the truth of the intermediate descent of the Holy Ghost. It hangs upon the departure of Christ to the Father. So peerless was the gift, “that,” said our Lord, “it is expedient that I go away.” Wherein then was this inestimable preciousness that outweighed the presence of the Lord Jesus? For Him they had forsaken all; and more than all He had been to them. He is about to go. What could turn a loss so grievous and seemingly so irretrievable into positive gain? Was it solely that the Crucified was about to take His seat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, crowned with glory and with honour? Was it needful merely for the display of God’s

righteousness in vindication of His Son? “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away.” The reason, and the only reason stated here is, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

It is clearly impossible to lower the language of these chapters (John 14 - 16) to anything short of the Holy Ghost Himself. Effects and manifestations are beyond doubt enlarged on elsewhere; but such is not the theme here. It is the Spirit personally, the Comforter Himself. It is One Who could be described as a teacher, remembrancer, testifier and convicter — One Who could be said to come, hear, and speak. It is a really present and acting Person Who leaves heaven when Jesus ascends there, and Who, as thus sent down, takes His place with and in the disciples, only on the footing of the accomplishment of that work to which the heavenly glory is the sole adequate answer in the estimate of God, however necessary it might be to all His earthly purposes: a footing clearly impossible in the days of the Lord’s flesh.

Even then, while here below, the body of Jesus was the temple of God; but this could be predicated of none else. Elizabeth and Zacharias and John (from his mother’s womb) were filled with the Holy Ghost; but upon Jesus alone in that day did the Holy Ghost descend and abide. It was not so with His disciples, any more than with believers before them. They, unlike Jesus, could not righteously be the temple of God, until the bloodshedding was actually effected and accepted; even as in the consecration of the priests (in Lev. 8). Aaron is first anointed alone and without blood (ver. 12); afterwards, the blood is put upon his sons and him

(verses 23, 24), previous to their being all anointed together (ver. 30), for the anointing oil is the well-known symbol of the unction from the Holy One. Thus Jesus was first anointed Himself with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38); afterwards being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, “He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Having borne the wrath of God, and also annulled by death him that had its power, thus removing every obstacle, He was enabled to send the Holy Ghost to dwell in the believers; so that the apostle could appeal to them, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” (1 Cor. 3:16)?

Plainly also the miraculous conception of Jesus is totally distinct from His anointing, though both were of the Holy Ghost. As man born of the virgin, He was the Son of God. But besides this, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus baptised and entering upon His public service: in other words, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Analogously, we find as to believers, that their life and relationship to God, and their anointing by the Holy Ghost, are quite distinct. When Jesus arose, He could say, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” But they were not yet anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Later, but before His ascension, He says, “Behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Waiting, they found the sure promise of the Father. The Holy Ghost was given. They were anointed then and not before. Nor was this anointing, one need hardly add, a boon conferred

there and then only; for the apostle in addressing the Corinthians writes, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” These are assuredly not signs and wonders wrought by the hands or tongue, but the blessed presence and actings of the Spirit in the saints. Compare also 1 John 2:20-27.

In principle, then, the coming of the promised Spirit was contingent on the departure of Jesus; and in fact, it was when He took His seat as the glorified Man in heaven, that the Spirit was sent down. Assembled together with the disciples previous to His ascension, He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me: for John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence” (Acts 1:4, 5). The next chapter records the accomplishment of the promise on the day of Pentecost. The Comforter was given. Now in them was He Who was promised to abide with them for ever1 (John 14). The third person of the Trinity was now, and permanently, present in them, as truly as the second person had been with them before He ascended to heaven. The Holy Ghost was the abiding witness, as His presence in the disciples was the new and wondrous fruit, of the glorification of Jesus in heaven.

Are the operations of the Spirit of God from the beginning denied? In no wise. Creation, providence, and redemption, all speak of Him. His energy is to be traced in every sphere of God’s dealings. Who moved upon the face of the waters — strove with man before the deluge — filled Bezaleel with understanding and all manner of

workmanship — enabled Moses to bear the burden of Israel, or others to share it? By Whom wrought Samson? By Whom prophesied Saul? It was by the Spirit of Jehovah. And as in their early national history His good Spirit instructed the people, even so could the prophet assure the poor returned remnant, “According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you.” Were any born anew? They were born of the Spirit; and the blessed and holy actings of faith in the elders who obtained a good report were, beyond controversy, the results of His operation. So far, the way of God is still and necessarily the same. Jesus set not aside in the least the need of the Spirit’s intervention. He proclaimed its necessity as a sure irreversible truth — “Except a man be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Far from weakening its place, He rather gave it a prominence never so clearly enunciated before, though of course always true.

Life, peace, and sonship (while all are communicated and known by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost), are in no sense the presence of the Comforter. We have seen that the disciples possessed these privileges before the Lord Jesus ascended. They are therefore entirely distinct from the promise of the Father, which the disciples did not possess, and which none ever did or could possess, till Jesus was glorified. The presence of the Comforter is clearly the distinctive blessing since Pentecost. It was never enjoyed before, though the Spirit had wrought, and wrought savingly as regards believers at all times. The signs and powers which attested His presence at the first were extraordinary (χαρίσματα),

and thus quite distinct from the gift (δωρεὰ) of Himself to abide with the Christian for ever.

W.K.

1 This is true, I suppose, individually as well as corporately; and thus the apostle exhorts, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (not, lest He should leave you); whereas in the Old Testament the cry is, “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (Ps. 51:11). “Quench not the Spirit” (in 1 Thess. 5) connects itself with “Despise not prophesyings.” The subject is a different one altogether.

The Gospel of the Glory of Christ

2 Cor. 4:6

It is more particularly to these few words I would call your attention tonight. The words of God are deep as they are also simple and most truly reliable. I do not, therefore, at this time purpose to bring many words in an expositional way before you, but to look at the concentration of the truth given in a verse usually passed over without much painstaking. What does the apostle mean by “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”? It is clear that a bright knowledge is intimated, and of the highest value, not only for the present time but for all eternity. The God who spoke that light should shine out of darkness shone in our hearts (says he) for the shining forth of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How pre-eminent the expression!

Our Lord Himself had spoken of the great importance of light and life in a depth and form peculiarly His own. But whatever the form, the same substantial truth appears where, in speaking of His own, He asked the Father that they might know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. And what did He call it distinctively in itself and for its effect on the soul? Life eternal. There are some in great danger of making light of divine knowledge, as others are of reducing it to human ideas. Beyond doubt any knowledge of the creature is small compared with knowing the Father and the Son and the infinite work in virtue of which as well as of His personal glory He has entered into the glory whence He came. But that knowledge may be greatly

adulterated, as it is often ignored. For souls cannot but suffer who approach the word of God in an intellectual way.

Not so is the believer led of the Spirit who deals with him, at first, through his conscience. Till then, what is effectual? We may see this clearly in Peter's case. For, though he may have been a converted man when he first confessed the Lord (John 1), he needed a deep lesson as to his own nothingness; as every converted soul is all the better for it, and must have it if he is to be really blest and a blessing. Is it any honour to the Lord for souls that confess His name to accommodate themselves to the ways of the world around them in the little while given us to glorify God in our body? Did you ever notice that "in our spirit" is left out of the Revised Version? Every one moderately at home with the Scriptures was aware of this, which is of importance in its measure, because not a few think they can cleave to what is good in their spirit while walking with the world in their body. Is this "doing" the truth? Is it not in every way unworthy?

Where self is not adequately judged, we cannot enjoy the Lord's infinite love to us. The heart cannot but be divided in its affections, instead of being filled with the love that passeth knowledge. But this can never be, till we are brought down to be nothing in our own sight. Hence the Lord, when Peter had been toiling with his companions all night and catching nothing, told him where to cast the net. Now those used to fishing are not generally inclined to think much of what an outsider suggests. They are as jealous of interference as satisfied with their own skill. And no doubt it would have been rather presumptuous for an ordinary man to have given that word to Peter. But it was the Second man, the last

Adam. He is the Man that brought God into the world. This was the first part of His work, as the next was to put sin out of the world. It may be far from being done yet as a fact; but the ground was laid in His cross, and He will do it. The reconciling work has been wrought, on which it will all be accomplished in power by-and-by. And remember, my friends, this is the work of redemption, on which I now call you, if you have never done it before, to rest your souls — Christ's work according to God's will, as Heb. 10 describes it through the offering of His body once for all.

Well then, we are told that Peter acted in spite of all his experience, on the word of the Lord — "At Thy word I will let down the net." The consequence was that the boats were filled to sinking. It is usually the history of things in this world when blessing comes. Earthen vessels are too weak to keep the blessing. All sorts of disorders ensue. It is not that the treasure is not good, but because even God's servants are indeed feeble. Nevertheless Peter learned a weighty lesson there; as he had to learn a good deal more before he was nothing in his own eyes.

But let us turn from the servant to his Lord, Master, and Saviour, as ready to be your Saviour tonight if you never heard His voice till now. What gave occasion to this striking expression — "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"? It was the most remarkable conversion that ever took place in this world. Of course one cannot pretend to know much about other people's conversions, and one feels that everyone's conversion is of the utmost importance to himself, as it ought to be of great interest to every other believer. Still we may say that there are marked

differences, and that one transcended all others, not only in its importance for him that was saved, but for the shining forth of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Saviour. It was not that of Peter, nor of Andrew, nor yet of John, but of Paul. How was Paul converted? By the voice of the Lord Jesus from heaven speaking from, and seen in, the excellent glory. For the holy mount was only a little illustration. The Lord Jesus was now in the very centre of the glory whence He appeared to Saul of Tarsus. It did not hinder that the smitten many lay prostrate on the ground. The Lord made Himself seen, and as easily in one posture of him who saw as in another. For it was a divine work, incomparably superior to all vision of the eye. It was a supernatural sight and hearing in his case — expressly meant to be so. In every respect it was a great conversion, and, what is rarely the case, a striking miracle accompanied this conversion. Christ's earthly miracles were rather signs like most to unbelievers; but with Saul of Tarsus the Lord went out of all ordinary ways, in bringing him to God, to work a stupendous wonder. For such it was that a man on earth should by the power of God see the Lord in heaven and hear His voice. The scene was in broad daylight, in the midst of a crowd of persecuting enemies, and not one of them so deadly as the man singled out by His grace.

Is there not bright hope for your soul after that? Is there a man or a woman in this company tonight so determined an enemy of the Lord Jesus as he to whom He spoke outside Damascus at the time? What a change from Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle! It is the most striking conversion all Scripture shows. What was there on Saul's part to bring him to God up to that moment?

Was there any — I will not say merit, but the least repentance? — even previous compunction? Was he not in the mid-career of his crusade against the name of Jesus? Was he not “breathing out threatenings and slaughter” at the time? Who was so full of religious pride? Had he not the highest authority of that day on earth? Little did he conceive that this is no safeguard, but may be the greatest illusion, as it was in his own case. He had letters from the High Priest to Damascus, authorising him to drag to prison men and women that confessed the name of the Lord Jesus. He had been only a little while before accessory to the martyrdom of Stephen, and according to every account — his own repeatedly — absolutely impenitent, ignorantly glorying in his sin. Indeed, there is nothing that so shuts out the heart from compassion as ecclesiastical pride; nothing that makes mild people more remorselessly cruel; nothing that more surely closes up every avenue to mercy. If ever a man seemed to be going straight to Satan, not only away from, but against, the only Saviour, it was Saul of Tarsus. Not a word of caution had he heeded from any quarter; not a doubt or fear as to what he was pursuing haunted his mind. He verily thought with himself, as he says, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. All that we do learn from God’s account is that Saul was wholly untouched till, all being fallen to the earth, only he heard the Lord’s voice. They all knew of something occurring most extraordinary in its nature. The light from heaven exceeding that of the sun at mid-day proved itself divine. And there was a sound — I do not say more than a sound — that reached the ears of the others; but the life-giving voice of Christ did not fail to reach the one to whom it

was directed. It was quickening for his soul as well as a miracle.

Now, an appeal like this brings every soul of man to a point. One either believes or rejects it. Some in rejecting it may resemble that which is so fashionable in Germany; there they strive to reduce the outside circumstances to a hailstorm, a flash of lightning, and all that sort of delusion to which those learned men give themselves up so willingly. And why? Because, being unbelievers, they hate the truth and the love of God in Christ. As for our countrymen, are they not generally more scrupulous as the rule in the things of God? Yes but they like increasingly to be, what they call, abreast of modern thought; and the reality or affectation of "learned Germans" is so very attractive to some, that if the Germans are boldly sceptical, Englishmen are not ashamed to follow them admiringly. Yes, they follow them in this, and where? Away from God and His Christ, turning their back upon that grace that not merely was toward Saul of Tarsus, but is written and preached just as much to you tonight. It was life to him then; it is no less to you also, but only if you believe on Him. Beware lest it be a great deal worse before God, if you persist in rejecting the Christ, who made it all so blessed and so efficacious to Saul of Tarsus.

Why should not that light come to you? Why not this very night? The Saviour is come, His work for sin is done. One well understands the Jew, who does not believe, in waiting for the Messiah; but what are professing Christians waiting for? What are they if only baptised and they have no faith, no life, in them? They are worse than nothing. Christian baptism means that Christ died to give remission of sins, and that sin is

condemned. But what does it mean for those that have it as a rite and believe not on Him that died and rose again? Undoubtedly it is a great truth that is represented in baptism. For Christ is therein shown, not merely as the Messiah, but as the Saviour who has accomplished redemption, the propitiation for our sins, and the sacrifice and offering to God and for us. But He is now raised and in heavenly glory, out of which glory He revealed Himself when He spoke to Saul of Tarsus.

Clearly, then, salvation is an individual matter. Saul was the only one in that crowd that received the blessing at the time, whatever God may have done through it; for nothing was more impressive. Could there have been found on the earth a person more nicely and rigidly moral than Saul? He was not conscious in his unconverted days that he had broken the law at all. But when the light made his real state manifest, the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. He was not awakened before to know the exceeding breadth and depth of the law, and he was well satisfied with himself; he had never offended in any gross manner. He had lived in his unconverted days a more correct and just life than anyone in this hall. He was frank, straightforward, conscientious, and truthful, religious after the flesh in no common degree. Further, he was a man of great capacity. He was not at all open to the passing fashions, but profoundly attached to the faith and institutions God had given to His people.

God particularly notified his conversion, wonderful as it was in its circumstances “for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” For the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in it. And His grace has recorded it in the Scriptures that you

might be brought to the self-same salvation, seeing that Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom Paul declared himself chief. The Lord gave Paul a place that made many jealous of him; even some blessed people did not altogether relish it — those who were before him at first for instance. But Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and so he looked for good, and loved to seek and find it. Barnabas sought Saul when others were shy, and brought him to the apostles, and he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

Turn we once more to Him who made this revolution in the persecuting missionary of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Can you have a more magnificent proof of the grace of God in dealing with a great sinner on the spot? Would that you might hear His voice in the written word tonight! Do not dream of preparation of any moral kind; do not yield to the temptation of a religious apprenticeship — if you are subject to God’s word. Nothing whatever of this kind fitted Saul for the vision of the Lord Jesus in heavenly glory. Do not question that the Lord is still speaking from the same heavenly glory. For this is the doctrine in Hebrews 12:25. It is real, though not a miracle also as in Paul’s case. As truly as He once spoke upon earth at Sinai, the same One is now speaking from heaven. In whose person did God speak on earth? It was in the Son. Now He speaks in His Son emphatically, as Heb. 1 declares. He had sent His messengers of old; but if ever there was a time when God speaks in His Son, it is now. When the gospel goes forth to your ears, it is God speaking to you from heaven in His Son. So in 2 Cor. 5 and 13 you find the apostle expressing himself similarly. What he preached was

“Christ speaking in me.” Nor is the gospel Paul preached confined to the apostle. He that preaches aright is one who just gives out the good news unadulterated and fresh from God. If it be the true tidings of divine grace, is it not Christ speaking in that man to your soul?

When God was speaking on earth, as on mount Sinai, what was it about? Of the sins men, Israel, were prone to. In the Ten Commandments He forbade the various evils man was inclined to then, as he always is. Take the last of them, “Thou shalt not covet.” Did you ever know a man, woman, or child that did not covet — did not desire to have — what they had not got? Did you ever know a man who would not prefer to have a sovereign in his pocket rather than a shilling? Is not this coveting, though it does not mean that one is dishonest? The chief dishonesty, alas! and of every soul, is toward God. How we have wronged Him! How we have dishonoured His goodness and His will! If He wants me to have only a shilling in my pocket, why should I trouble myself? Perhaps a little industry may add a shilling or more to what I have; but let me not forget that “man’s life (how much more a Christian’s!) consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.” All such things perish with the using. A heathen savage might put a coin in a dead man’s mouth to take him over the River; but you know that all thoughts of the kind are vanity. We came naked into the world and we can bring nothing out.

All are sinners, though not in the way of Saul. But of him I have spoken particularly, because the subject calls for it, and gives such an admirable proof that even the chief of sinners may be saved; and as in this case expressly,

when no plea called for mercy except God's grace, unless you add the greatness of his sins. This would be a strange sound in the ears of men, but it is not unknown to the Bible. Even in the Psalms of David, though God was then dealing by the law before grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, you may find its echo. Take for instance Ps. 25, where first in the book we hear of the forgiveness of sins — "O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Think of a man in the dock claiming such a favour from the judge! Would he not think the man clean mad? So too, the gospel is thought madness by unbelievers. It is quite foreign to the ways of man, who dreams not of showing good, save in return for good. But you, a sinner, have no good before God; you neither have merit, nor can you acquire merit in His eyes; you have sins, and only sins: what can become of you?

See, too, the immense danger of thinking so much of a little education, or of abstaining on the other hand from drink. Men, if temperate and educated, seem to think themselves somewhat better, and, if not nearer to God, more in the way to the gospel. Alas! how many build on sobriety or avoiding the dramshop, and the racecourse, and the like, making of these things their righteousness. And what does the Spirit of God do with men seeking after a little righteousness of their own? When God's word is mixed with faith, all such "righteousness" crumbles into dust. It is a barrier between his soul and salvation. He must come out of his little righteous castle, and surrender as nothing but a sinner, that he may be saved by grace through faith. It is not man that commends his love, or his anything else, to God; but "God commendeth His love towards us." And in what condition? When "without strength and ungodly;" for

“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Can you ask a more conclusive proof than in Saul of Tarsus, himself the man who wrote those words for us from God? Are they not true now as then? Do you think the nineteenth century can add to or take from Scripture? The spirit of the age puffs up men, who think too much of themselves nowadays. Undoubtedly we have many conveniences — railways, steamers, electric telegraph, school boards, and what not? — all sorts of inventions which indicate progress; but is it progress in the things of God? Is it deliverance from sin? Not in the least. On the contrary, if you lean on material progress, or even intellectual, you will find it a broken reed which fails and pierces, when leaned on.

And where then is there safety for the poor sinful soul? In none but Him who is at the right hand of God; in the same One that met and converted Saul of Tarsus that day. Was it not on the spot? I do not say he was brought into peace the first moment. People are often in too great a hurry to get peace. It is of more importance that one should feel his sins thoroughly, and judge self in the light of God and His word and grace, perhaps long slighted. Through the faith of Christ’s work on the cross, peace surely comes in good time; and the delay is turned by God’s goodness into profit for the soul.

Christ did with the apostle just what He did on earth with the woman of Syrophoenicia. She also had to bear a temporary hindrance. “He answered not a word “ (Matt. 15:23): an unusual thing on His part. But why in her’s? Because she came on wrong ground. She concluded to herself from Jews who appealed to him as Son of David. But she had no right to any such appeal, because she was a Canaanite and not of Israel, not of David’s people,

but rather of the enemy. When the Son of man comes by-and by, there will not be a Canaanite in the land. The evil stock will all have come under the solemn judgment pronounced at the beginning — “Cursed is Canaan.” But for all that He is the God of grace. He is righteous in vindicating His injured name on him who despises Himself, and who has dealings with everything that is hateful to God; but He delights to take up even the worst of sinners on the spot, only He will have the sinner to know the truth of his sins. Where the soul realises that he is lost, he will find God in the fulness of His grace. Now the Syrophoenician woman came with a title right for a Jew, and the Lord would bring her to feel that she had no such title to His favour. And He helped her by explaining to the disciples that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Next she cried, “Lord, help me.” Then He answered, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” This cleared her way, and she said, “Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” With faith thus enlightened and strengthened, the woman readily saw that even the dogs, the little dogs, eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table. Indeed the grace of God so works that the crumbs which fall to the poor dogs turn out richer food than all that was on the table. Such was Christ’s wonderful way with the woman now blessed more than any other one hears of, as He testified of her faith.

But what about you, my friends? Can a poor sinner, you ask, receive perfect rest from Him that is in heavenly glory? What link can there be between the glorified Saviour and any wretched guilty one on the earth? Let me ask you, How did Christ enter into that glory? Was it

not after He bore our sins in His own body on the tree? He came down, the Son, the Only-begotten Son of God, and, in infinite love, became a man; and, yet more and more wondrous love still, He who knew no sin was made sin on the cross; and the sacrifice was accepted. He bowed under the weight of sin that He might deliver those who were ruined by them; and God raised Him up from the dead, and not this merely, but set Him in the very highest place in the heavenly glory, and set Him there as Saviour, as well as Head of the church which is His body. Oh, how wondrous that glory for Him who was humbled to the uttermost!

And God now sends the gospel, the glad news, to the needy and the lost, Jew or Gentile, not at all to persons who deserve it. In point of fact, the word of His mercy never was really to such, but now it is conspicuously for sinners; now it is expressly to the lost. You cannot really be worse than lost. To be lost is the extreme, but not of all, not merely for the life that now is, but for ever. Nevertheless, while here, though you may feel in your conscience the awful brand of “lost one,” “lost,” “lost,” it is just the occasion for the Saviour to save you. He is the Saviour of the lost. He is the Saviour not merely of people in danger of being lost, but of the lost.

Here is the mistake in a vast deal of the preaching of the day. They do not believe man to be really lost; consequently also they as little believe that man believing is perfectly saved. It is a shilly-shally doctrine about the bad state of man, and still more so about the salvation of believers. The apostle writes of an eternal salvation, leaving us only to enjoy His love, to do His will, and serve Him. It is not merely your sins all blotted out and forgotten, and yourselves accounted righteous

instead of ungodly, but perfected for ever, made children of God with the Holy Spirit enabling you to cry, Abba, Father, and waiting to be with Christ and like Him.

But the question of interest and importance may be asked, What becomes of inward evil or indwelling sin? For remember that we carry with us an evil nature, even when forgiven our iniquities. Thank God, the Lord Jesus has provided for that. It was part of His great work on the cross, as it is written in Rom. 8:3. The whole case is there summed up, as the conclusion drawn from the preceding chapters — “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” It is not only in the face of our sins, but of “sin in the flesh,” or indwelling sin. Now there is nothing that troubles a believer more than this; for such a one when brought to God expects a path of brightness, not perhaps the absence of sorrow or pain, but of shame and failure. Who then looks for inward evil till he finds himself as weak as water spilt upon the ground?

Now, the old man is still there; and it is well to know it. It would not be salvation according to God if we had no sense of our utter weakness, which is true. It is part of what entails continual dependence on the Lord who died and is risen for us. If we were endowed with strength in ourselves, such as some think is given in a moment, it would nullify our constant need of Christ’s priesthood. But His grace is sufficient for us; for His strength is made perfect in weakness. We are only strong as we lean on the Saviour. And those who otherwise boast only deceive themselves. Satan deceives the world, but should be unable to do more than accuse the saints. Why should they trust their own emotions, instead of the word of the living God?

Not for so uncertain a result was wrought the work by our Lord Jesus. “There is therefore no condemnation” for those that are in Him. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Such is emancipation from the law of sin and death, not merely from our sins. Sin and death are no longer a law to me. No doubt present dependence is called for. If I look to the Lord, I shall be kept from sin. If death come, its sting is gone, and hades is spoiled of victory, which is given to the believer through our Lord Jesus Christ. But more, even now the Spirit of life in Him “hath delivered me from the law of sin and death.” This is far beyond pardon or justification, if the Christian does not easily enter into it all at once.

For three days, we are told, Saul was blinded by the excessive light. He believed in Jesus as the Son of God as truly as he ever did; but he reviewed himself in that light of grace and glory with increasing depth, and could only say, “Wretched man that I am,” as well as hate the religious illusion which made him the enemy of Christ and His own. It was the grace of God that thus gave him deliverance. It was a humbling work that went on thoroughly in his soul, but there was no need of some new work for Christ to do. It was to make his own experimentally what Christ had already done for the root of sin which distressed him. And so he explains in Rom. 8:3, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”

Such is the way God gives us also deliverance. We have already seen by faith the blood that washes all our sins away. Here it is the condemnation that God has already

executed on the principle and nature of sin — on “sin in the flesh.” Christ had nothing of the sort; He had not sin any more than sins. Yet He suffered not only for our sins, but for sin. He went through the whole question, and finished it to God’s glory. The blessed result of His entire work is given to the believer. And you are called to believe it. You are entitled by God to take it in all its fulness, but with all humility. And be assured that the truest of all humility is to bow to God and to what He has wrought in Christ, not to think of yourself at all. Many imagine that talking badly of ourselves is the ideal of humility; whereas the simplest and most real humility is to feel unaffectedly that we are too bad to be worth talking about. Only One is worthy of all our thoughts and words and ways, even the Lord Jesus. Him you can think of and serve wherever you may be — in the shop, kitchen, office, or out of doors, on sea, or land. He is our Lord, and the Lord of all; and you are set free from the bondage of sin to serve Him in whom you believe.

Then only, we may add from verse 4, is the righteous import of the law “fulfilled in us that walk not according to flesh but according to the Spirit.” You are a Christian if you believe in Him who for you died and rose; and to be serving the Lord is not only due to His name but the simplest guard against indulging the flesh and loving the world or its things. Satan used them to crucify the Master. Hence the need of watchfulness. Our criterion is the word of God. Hence the importance of reading the word of God day by day; only it is better to read a little well than to hastily read more. So to read is disrespectful to God, and a mere form; such forms are apt to be dangerous in the long run.

How bright then, my friends, is the light of the gospel for the sinner, which the Saviour displays in the glory of God! For that glory, into which Christ has gone, is the measure of God's approbation of His Son whom man slew, and of His Son's work for our salvation. Is it not beyond all things wonderful? Christ's resurrection from among the dead was the first proof. Man put Him to death, and God raised Him up. God was clearly opposed to the world and its judgment. The people who had the law, the priesthood, and the temple; the empire that had its power ordained of God — all were blinded by the god of this age to crucify the Lord of glory. And what can we say of all the disciples? Even they had most imperfect views about the Lord. But God made all clear to faith, in setting Christ on His right hand.

There sits the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, with all the angels of God worshipping Him. I call on you to believe on Him, whatever may be your state. Put it not off; all delays are dangerous; and there is none so dangerous as about your soul, your sins, and the Saviour above all. You may never be so moved in conscience as now by the truth: God grant it may be so; but it must be in the owning of your sins before Him. If your sins be not as scarlet in your conscience, you will keep away from Him, you will sin more and get more hardened, and perhaps never hear again the call of God's grace through His own Son.

But why should you not be saved even now, young as many of you are? Look at Josiah who lived when Judah was in an evil day and judgment near. At eight years of age he was a decidedly pious child. What will make you so? Nothing but Christ, You are in your sins, it is true; but the very name of Jesus means that He was to save

from sins. Whatever be your guilt as you are, look to Him as the Saviour God exalted with His right hand to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. It is just as guilty and lost ones you are now called by the gospel to believe on Him; and, if you believe, each to say, By God's grace I am saved. Salvation does not depend in any way on the desert of the saved, but on the grace of the Saviour. Indeed, it is now a declared part of God's righteousness to justify him that believes in Jesus.

Do you know the meaning of that righteousness? The righteousness of God in the Epistles of Paul means what God owes Christ because of His work on the cross. With this God is acting consistently, both to believers and to unbelievers, that all may hear the gospel, and that believers may reap its fruit. This perhaps may put it in a plain manner to many. It does not mean Christ doing what is right to make up for our wrong doing. This may be tradition, Protestant or Romanist; but tradition is apt to be shallow and unbelieving, because it is human. The truth of God is always incomparably deeper and nobler and better. And the righteousness of God is seen in His raising up Christ and setting Him on His right hand, as well as in His blotting out your sins; and your evil nature is so completely condemned, that having died (i.e. with Christ) you are justified from sin. There is no deliverance so effectual as Christ's death declared in resurrection. It is the death of Christ that has established this great victory for the believer. If I believe in Him who died for my sins, I am also entitled to add that I died with Him to sin (Rom. 6). If I had been a Jew, death with Him gives me death to the law (Rom. 7). In any case the Christian is delivered now in Christ's death, not by his own death, nor at the day of judgment.

Further, as we are begotten again by the word, so are we purified by the word in practice while here below. All our need is answered in every way by the grace of God through faith.

This deliverance I press on your souls. It is what God has wrought in the cross of Christ, and declared in Him risen from the dead, that you may have its reality in your souls, besides the forgiveness of your sins. Emotions, or even prayer, will not give it. God forbid that I should slight the value of prayer, or deny the heart's affections when purified by faith, any more than Christian experience. But prayer must be founded on faith and experience, growing out of it, or it is altogether worthless and unsafe. What God proposes in His gospel is to bring the soul out of the bondage, as well as the guilt, of sin. Anything short of this scarcely deserves to be called His salvation. If out of sins, but not out of sin, it would dishonour the work of the Lord Jesus. If He accomplished all, it is no better than unbelief to say, I am forgiven my sins; but as to the old man of sin, it must reign; and I can only cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?"

It is right that you should go through that state (which is not unlike the small-pox — a good thing to have it over); but it is delusion to suppose that the believer must go on all his life crying, "Who shall deliver me?" The very next verse refutes this: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not that the flesh is changed or vanishes, but that deliverance is given by God in Christ, as the next chapter fully explains. Assuredly I am not bringing in any novelty of man more than old tradition, but calling you to behold the light of the knowledge of God's glory in His face. It is, indeed, "light from heaven above the

brightness of the sun;" and we, who believe, see it in the best possible way now by faith. One need not hesitate to say that Paul saw far better by faith what he saw miraculously the day he was converted. The sight of faith being divinely given is clear, calm, and fixed. The miraculous vision, however real and momentous for its object, was as overwhelming as transient. The sight of faith is steady, and grows brighter day by day.

The chapter before my text (2 Cor. 3) says, that "we all, with open (or, unveiled) face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Lord the Spirit." Such is the position of the Christian. As there is no veil now between the holiest and the worshipper, there is none on the face of the Christian any more than of Christ, still less on the heart. The veil is on the Jew's heart, till turned to the Lord, when it will be taken away. The privilege of the Christian is with unveiled face "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." This is not the cross, though it could not be without the work there wrought for God and the sinner. It is the glory of Christ on high after and in virtue of that work. On Him you are invited to gaze, and with rich spiritual blessing meanwhile in forming us accordingly.

What a contrast with that which abounds throughout Christendom! Compare the week's preparation, and the very look of those that approach the sacrament (so called). Why is it so? Because they are full of anxiety between righteousness on the one hand, and unworthiness on the other. How many unbelieving believers there are! Even the Psalmist could anticipatively sing, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." How much

more the Christian! Beware of the notions about higher life, and by some act of faith some higher holiness. They are, more or less, a revival of a fair show in the flesh. “We all,” surely puts to flight all these reveries which limit the blessing to “some” of Christ’s flock. They spring from ignorance of the full gospel, which never stops short of complete deliverance, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to enjoy it. Those referred to are anxious from time to time, and call for excitement to encourage them. But visions, frames, feelings, efforts, can none of them give solid rest before God, or strengthen the weak to face a hostile world. Nothing effects this but Christ received in all the fulness of His work and glory. Look at the result here — “We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord [that is, as He is now] are changed into the same image.” There is a progressive work, but it is not making us more meet for heaven than when we were first brought to receive Christ Jesus the Lord. In His work our title is sure; our blessed meetness to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light is really that which God gave us when we believed the gospel (Col. 1:12). But it is a true and great privilege to be fruitful, and also to grow, as the same chapter points out in verse 10. A believing child might be taken to heaven as surely as the oldest saint; but if left here for a while, there ought to be growth through the knowledge of God in all the practical ways of the Lord.

May the Lord in His grace bring home what has been set before you, that the unconverted may be roused to the danger of neglecting so great salvation, and that the converted may know how much greater is their portion in the Saviour than they have realised hitherto. Faith is

the way in which the blessing comes to us, but all the worth is in Christ and His work alone. It is, therefore, all the grace of God. What does grace mean? The pure favour of God, “wherein we stand,” says the apostle. What, even though I fail or sin! Do you love your child when it is naughty, and in spite of faults? If even you do, is God not to love His? I remember a Christian who owned he could not whip a naughty child unless when heated; but I also knew a mother who never whipped her naughty boy till he went to bed, when it became a serious thing to him as well as to her. This, I cannot but think, was thoroughly wise and right, and according to God. Was it not love too? So it certainly is with the Father of spirits, who, loving us perfectly, yet chastises unfailingly.

Take courage then, my friends, along the narrow way, and beware of doubts. There is no Scripture to warrant a doubt. Every Scripture is given to strengthen faith, love, and withal self-judgment. When you are conscious of wrong done against the Lord, or any one else, go to Him yourself at once, and humble yourself before Him. Confess the fault, but doubt not His abiding grace towards you. We are brought into the family of God who loves us too well to make light of our faults. He chastises us that we may be partakers of His holiness. Over the world hangs God’s sentence of condemnation, because, when He came in love, it hated and rejected Christ; and it still refuses to believe in Him. Therefore it is no question of chastising, but of condemnation when Christ appears in glory. But God chastises us when it is needed, because He has delivered us from all condemnation. The world is borne with meanwhile but will be condemned,

and yet more shall be all who falsely profess the name of the Lord.

Therefore, my friends, be real. There is no full blessing without thoroughness. May the Lord grant you never to compromise His name in any way. Everything around is disposed to compromise and to take things easily here below; but this reverses what the Christian is called to. May the Lord by His word tonight encourage His own, and win those who may have been enemies like Saul of Tarsus, to their everlasting salvation, with joy and peace that will never end.

W.K.

Thoughts on 1 Corinthians 15

(Bible Treasury Vol. 3 p. 298-300.)

It is amazingly sweet that the very day on which we came together to remember Christ, and to show forth His death, speaks to the intelligent ear of eternal blessedness — tells those who come at the bidding of the Lord Jesus that the great victory is won; that that is removed which was the only difficulty in the way of God. And, beloved, there was but one thing that ever was a difficulty to Him, and I think I may say with reverence, that there was a difficulty even to God. Undoubtedly all things are possible with God; but then it was possible only at the cost of His Son. Now this was the great thought always before God. For there never was a more profound mistake than to suppose that sin was a mere accident that came into the world; and that the gift of Jesus, the redemption of Jesus, was a bare remedy and necessity on God's part, if that terrible thing, sin, was to be taken out of the way. It is perfectly true that sin was in no wise entitled to fill a place in the universe of God. "An enemy hath done this." It was God's enemy that brought it into the world once spotless, and the outward reflection of God's beneficent power; and all was ruined. But then it is of all importance for our souls to bear in mind steadily that it was always the thought of God to permit that the very worst should be done in order that He might show His own depths of love and grace to those that were ruined by sin, that He might bring out such tenderness, and patience, and wisdom, and goodness in the midst of evil, as never else could have been seen. And goodness is never so thoroughly proved

as where there is that evil which resists it and hates it. It is all well when things are smooth. We know from personal experience that it is an easy thing to go on when there is no difficulty in the way, where everything is congenial and in favour of what is good; where there is no trial and no contrariety to the spirit. But that which puts the soul to the proof is where everything runs hard and foul against it.

Now God permitted that the enemy should introduce into this world that which denied and opposed Himself at every point; that which left God not a particle of character in the world that He had made; for what in God has not been belied of Satan? What evil, what calumny has not Satan invented, have not our hearts believed about Him? Who is it we have so much dreaded as God? Who is it we have most endeavoured to flee from? Yet, in the face of all this evil which God has allowed to come out in its worst colours, He has provided that there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a feeling that Satan could excite in this world, but brings into evidence something of God that never had been so well known before. The wonder is this: the Son of God has come, lived, died, and is risen; and we assemble here together at His bidding on His resurrection day. The evil meanwhile goes on; God has Himself told us that it must increase; “evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived — bad times — worse times — the last days the worst of all — until what God has wrought in the death and resurrection of Christ is brought out before the whole world by His power. But just think, now, what a wonderful place is ours! And this was the prominent thought upon my spirit; that we, having found Christ,

have had our feet, as it were, set upon the rock of ages by God Himself, that we stand upon that which is imperishable and unchangeable, and which brings us into association with the very deepest thoughts of God, and with the greatest victory that even He has ever achieved. For, in fact, all other victories are but the result of that one which is already ours in Christ. Because it must be evident to every intelligent mind that, if that which is the worst of all, and the root of all the confusion, has been met; if the poison that has been trickling all over the world, and penetrating and corrupting everything else — if that has been dealt with, it is only a question of God's will, the bringing, out of that which He has already found and given to us in the death and resurrection of Christ. Now, every Christian knows that he has found it there. I do not mean that every Christian realizes what God has done there. If so, there never would be anything but hearts entirely above all the circumstances of this world. There might be holy weeping and loving sorrow over a groaning, sinful world, but the heart would be evermore overflowing with thankfulness to God. For it is quite possible to have in the affections of our hearts drawn out towards the saints of God in all their trials, and to have the deepest feeling for the poor world, and yet have nothing but praise and thanksgiving as we look at Christ and think who has given Him for us and to us. This is our place. This is what God Himself brings before us in connection with the very day on which we assemble to remember Christ; and it is a blessed thought for us that God did not choose that day when Christ died. Most solemn it was that the Messiah should be smitten in the house of His friends — though it was the death of Him by whom alone our sin could be put away; for God Himself was

obliged to turn away His face from His beloved Son when our sins were laid upon Him. But the day of the cross is not that which summons us together, nor is it the day that intervened between his death and resurrection — the day when man was keeping, alas! his holy day; when those who thought themselves something for God on the earth, but who were really the enemies of the Father and the Son, vainly supposed that they were sanctifying a day to the Lord of Hosts — the day when their own Messiah lay in the grave, slain by their wicked hands.

But now this is the grand change, when God has put forth His power once more — not now to make a world that Satan might come and spoil it all, but the day when the new power is put forth — when God has raised Jesus up from the dead, who had all our sins laid upon Him. And where are the sins? Where is that which God charged upon Jesus? It is gone! He is risen! And out of His resurrection flows every blessing, and this not to the Church only; for there is no lasting blessing that God will confer but what is founded on that death, and flows out of that resurrection. Yet the evil was allowed to go on. The world was making merry, little thinking that such a work was done. Nor was it, indeed, intended of God to be openly, undeniably known to the world yet. But God speaks from heaven Himself. He sends down the Holy Ghost to those whose hearts are opened by His grace upon the earth. And they know this mighty work that God has wrought — that Christ is risen, the first-fruits of them that slept. And there we have the Holy Ghost; for He cannot rest when He opens such a theme till He shows us the end of it — if indeed end it can be called; for he launches out into that scene where God

shall be all in all, and there shall be no end — where there will not be one single enemy to put down — not a sorrow to heal — not a breach to repair; but when all will be the full and suited result of the power of that life which is already ours in Christ.

Beloved friends, how do our hearts enter into all this? We owe it to God that we should feel all that is around is — that we should take notice of that which He is doing — that there should be no sorrow of the creature or of His own children, but what we should have hearts entering into it, and expressing our groan by the Spirit to God. For, so richly are we blessed, that God calls us to be imitators of Himself in this evil world. And how does not God feel for every wound and all the havoc that His enemy has caused? He is tender in pity towards all. Even if he were to execute judgment upon the proudest city that had threatened to ravish His beloved people — the city of Nineveh, He must first send a prophet to warn them; and that prophet, little entering into His mind, might prefer judgment to mercy, if his own character as a prophet lay at stake. Yet, on the confession and repentance of the people, God turned aside the blow. It might be but a little confession, and one that soon passed away. And the destruction came afterwards, and fell upon the fickle, guilty people, for their early repentance was but a transient thing. But there never is even so much but what God takes notice of it. And, therefore, when there was even this outward repentance of the people — clearly not of the Holy Ghost (for had it been the work of the Holy Ghost, it would have had permanency), God sets aside His own prophet, makes him heartily ashamed of himself, and even the

little children and the very cattle of the place are brought into the remembrance of God.

We little enter into the largeness of His goodness, and His compassion, for every creature that He has made. But again, the very depth of Hs compassions, when despised, and where there is the unbelief that rejects Jesus, only brings the more surely eternal destruction from His presence.

But what a thought is this astonishing mercy and compassion of God for the ruined and miserable in the world! It is true that misery is not taken away, and the death of Christ has left the world apparently in the same state. The world, in fact, only got rid of One that troubled it. But what have the saints got through it? We are on God's side. We look at the death and resurrection of Christ, on the side not of man, but of God. And what do we see? In this poor world, which man might think but a speck in creation, we see the wonder of wonders that puts to shame not merely all on earth, but everywhere else; for what is there in heaven itself compared with the death and resurrection of Christ? Never, at any time, nowhere in any sphere that God has made, and that man in his poor thoughts and feelings might set above it, is there ought to be compared with that which calls us together this day. We remember One who was God, but who became man for us — One who did not only come from heaven, full of goodness and power, but to stiffer death, the death of the cross, because we had sins that could not otherwise be put away. But what thanks shall we render unto God that we know this? that we have His own certain testimony of it? that all that God wants is that we should take the fulness of the blessing He has given us? We cannot make too

much of Christ's death and resurrection. God has brought us within the precincts of perfect goodness. He has borne away all our evil; and what we have to do is simply to believe and enjoy and rest upon Himself. We may even find death encroaching, coming near and touching and withering up, as it touches that which is very dear to us. But we know resurrection-life in Christ — a far better life than a life would have been that had not known death. For what would have been even Christ, living in this world, if Christ had not died? (2 Cor. 5) It is His death that proves the power of His life, as of His love — the life which triumphed for ever over death. For the eternal victory is won, and God has given it to us. There is nothing more to be done for us in respect of our sins. There is a great deal to be done in respect of our bodies and of the heavens and earth over which we are to reign. But there is nothing to be done to make good our position before God, or our deliverance, and the putting away of everything that could be a difficulty before God. The only real difficulty has been grappled with, and it if; gone. The difficulty was that we lay under sin, and that God could not get over sin. But it is gone — entirely gone. He has done it Himself, at the cost of His beloved Son, and God leaves us in the world that we may learn the sufficiency of His grace in practice, as we know the triumph of it in Christ. And we are come to remember what He has done and to rejoice in what He is to us, to anticipate the sure glory that is coming, glory without end. No doubt it is glory that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Am I not put in the place of a son in his father's house, who has perfect community of interest in all that his father has and is? We are waiting to be manifested as sons and heirs through Christ; but such we are even now. "Beloved, now are we the sons of

God.” Nothing will be altered as regards the world till God has taken us to Himself to be with Jesus — till Jesus has come to receive us and to represent us in the Father’s house. For there will be no such thing for us as slipping into heaven. He will come for us to receive us, that when we do enter the Father’s house, it may be with fulness of acceptance in that Blessed One who makes all sweet that the Father looks upon. We shall be ushered in by the Son Himself — not even the least one will be left behind. What a change will it be for all — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye! Then God will have the joy of having all His own way, and then Satan will have the misery of seeing all those whom he had attempted to injure fully blessed of God!

Such is our portion even now in hope. We are not like those who have to wait till our bodies are changed to know what God feels towards us. May we remember that we are not dependent upon anything that may happen. We rest upon this — God has shown us Jesus. He has given its to believe in Jesus, and not only in Him, but in the mighty work — that God has wrought for us in him.

May we enter into this our portion with increasing simplicity, remembering that the day approaches!

The "Strange Doctrine" on Propitiation

Mr. C. E. Stuart states his peculiar teaching in these words (Recent Utterances, p. 42):- “Where and when has propitiation by blood been made by Him? The answer is simple — in heaven and after death. Mr. Pinkerton [who laboured till his death in the East and only expresses in substance what saints hitherto have believed and confessed] affirms all was done in this world, not in heaven. If so, propitiation by blood the Lord has not made, nor can He make it. The doctrine we are asked to accept sweeps away all hope of salvation, for atonement is not complete without propitiation by blood, and this Mr. Pinkerton really denies that the Lord did and could effect. His doctrine is in flat opposition to the Word of God.”

That a view of fundamental truth, unknown to scripture and opposed to the faith of God’s elect, was asserted plainly and emphatically, is a mercy: no upright Christian can doubt its meaning. Hence, from its first coming to our knowledge in 1886, it was condemned in our midst, not with party spirit certainly but pain and sorrow; for many had sympathised with Mr. S. as a previously ill-used man. An open and full discussion took place at the Birmingham Conference of 1887; where one, seeming to lean toward the delusion, yet denying that he accepted it, excited censure and fears. When he avowed it soon afterwards, he was refused a place at the Lord’s Supper in Kenilworth, but, profanely snatching the bread and wine, was forthwith put away. Afterwards two at Bournemouth were discovered to hold the same

false doctrine, and withdrew as it was opposed. Only a few years ago one of inquisitive turn, in or near Swansea, came under the same sentence for the same offence against the Lord and His atoning work. All concurred in every quarter, as far as we know. No person known to hold it has been, or would be, tolerated in fellowship.

For this “strange doctrine” robs Christ’s work on the cross of the efficacy scripture assigns to it, and attributes propitiation wholly to what Christ did “in heaven and after death,” on which scripture is silent. The fable is owing, in part to a misconstruing of the type in Lev. 16, and in part to human reasoning on Heb. 2:17, Heb. 8:4, and Heb. 9:12, which in no way bear out the notion, the last even refuting it. For there it is said that Christ entered by His own blood once for all into the holies, having found (not, to find) an eternal redemption. No doubt, Aaron necessarily had to go into the holiest, in order to put the blood there; as he had also to come out for the substitution, when he laid the sins and iniquities on the scape-goat. For propitiation and substitution were essential to atonement. The error lies in denying that both were fulfilled in Christ’s work on the cross, and inventing a chimerical propitiation “in heaven and after death,” which supplants the real one.

God set forth Christ Jesus, not exactly a propitiation (which of course is pre-supposed), but a propitiatory or mercy-seat through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:25): not a word about fresh action for it “in heaven and after death.” All hung on the redemption that is in Christ; and “death” took place for this redemption, as Heb. 9:15 lays down: absolute silence as to a subsequent act of propitiation. For propitiation He had suffered, bled, and

died. Hence 1 John 2:1 declares that Jesus “is the propitiation for our sins, yet not for our sins only, but also for the whole world.” 1 John 4:10 adds that God sent His Son into the world (not took Him to heaven after death) as “propitiation for our sins.” So on the cross He said, “ It is finished,” and delivered up His spirit... Then was the veil of the temple rent from top to bottom, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened. Can any soul fail to recognise that all was in witness and honour of His atoning death, not of something done “after death and in heaven?” No believer doubts that its infinite value instantly reached heaven and lasts through eternity. But how false, evil, and blind to deny propitiation to Christ’s sufferings and blood on the cross, of which scripture speaks continually! and to supplant that truth by that of which scripture says nothing, “in heaven and after death!”

“His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). This was both propitiation and substitution: was it “in heaven and after death?” Or wait we for His future work in this respect when He comes out of heaven? How perilous when Levitical type governs apostolic teaching! “Christ also once for all suffered for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). Not a hint of a further act for this: was it not a full atonement? Did He suffer in heaven, or (as others say) in hades, after death? Away with every dream that dishonours Him crucified!

On the cross Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us. Did not this include propitiation and more? Was it “in heaven and after death?” To the Romans Paul wrote (Rom. 5:10), that “we were reconciled to God through

the death of His Son”: were we “reconciled” without propitiation? To the Colossians he wrote (Col. 1:20-22), that “Christ made peace through the blood of His cross,” to reconcile all things on the earth and in the heavens, as He will soon, but meanwhile “you… He reconciled in the body of His flesh,” not when out of it. “through death.” not “after it and in heaven,” “to present you holy,” etc. Was their reconciliation for so glorious a result without propitiation, or before it? Or is not the new doctrine evil and preposterous? Some, to help it, plead the distinction between the English words, “expiate” and “propitiate.” It is baseless; for there is but one word in the Hebrew, as in the Greek. The verbal form is so used in Heb. 2:17 (for such as we find in Matt. 16:22, and Luke 18:13 have no place here). It was for man before God in heaven; but no sign ever appears of a fresh work in Christ’s case done there after death.

Nevertheless Mr. S. at least was frank and outspoken. He never pretended, like others, that this teaching was unimportant if true, or innocuous if unfounded. He boldly said that Mr. Pinkerton’s view, which is beyond doubt that of saints hitherto everywhere, “sweeps away all hope of salvation!” Far be it from us to retort in like extravagance. But he is quite right in claiming the utmost moment for his view if true; and he is not the man to evade the consequences if false; as brethren also have given the strongest proof in united judgment of it. Long ago too we had learnt that, when fatal evil works, the enemy’s most seductive and effective instrument in spreading it is the neutral. For the unspiritual fancy that, if one professes not to hold the error, there can be no harm, whereas the precise way to dishonour God and damage man most is to disclaim its acceptance, hoping

thereby to escape, while doing all one can to persuade others that it is only a difference of judgment as to certain passages of scripture. So an Arian or an Irvingite, and especially one neutral to either, might say with as little soundness or fear of God. Evidently all depends on the gravity of the case. Here it is a question of the true propitiatian of Christ or of a fancied and false one.

W.K. December, 1899.

Covenant or Testament - Which?

An Address on Hebrews 9:13-17.

We have seen three grand connected and essential truths of Christianity from the point of view which the Holy Ghost is bringing before us in this Epistle. The first is, that we draw near at once and immediately into the presence of God. I mean “at once,” because it is entirely dependent upon the work of Christ; it has nothing at all to do with any measure of attainment on our part, but by the simple faith of the gospel; and I call it “immediately,” because there is nothing between God and the believer, as was the case under the Levitical system. It is a cardinal truth of Christianity, in short, that there is no veil between God and him who believes in Jesus Christ. And this is no question of a privilege enjoyed at rare intervals, or under specially happy circumstances; it has nothing at all to do with progress; it is the fruit of Christ’s work, and nothing else, except that the Spirit of God has brought a soul to own its sins as well as the Saviour. It is to confess the Saviour in the faith of what the Saviour has done; for it is very possible for a soul to look to the Saviour and still to keep, like the publican in the parable, afar from God, in the consciousness of his failure, beating his breast, and calling upon God to show His compassion to him, the sinner. Now there are a great many souls — perhaps the great mass of those that are born of God — who are in this condition now; but it is not Christianity. I do not mean by this that they are not Christians, but it is not Christianity. Christianity supposes immediate access to God Himself, a privilege which evidently cannot be without the complete removal

of every hindrance. This is precisely what the death of Christ on the cross has effected, and now the gospel comes to bring the believer into the confession and enjoyment of it. Till a person therefore enters into that enjoyment it is not really and properly Christianity, although the man may be truly born of God. This then is one thing; but there is another blessing connected with it, that it is not for a time, as it does not depend upon anything transient: Christ obtained eternal redemption. It is in contrast with the temporal deliverance of Israel. It was pointed out last Wednesday that the words “for us” venture to say what no man ought to add. As God has not done so, it is presumptuous for man to insert them. They are not only not necessary to fill up the sense, but introduce another thought which overlays what is meant. For the chief of all requirements is that God should be free to deal with man, and this Christ has amply secured. He entered into the holiest having found eternal redemption. God’s rights were upheld, and this for ever. There is a third truth connected with it all, and that is the purging of our conscience.

Under the Jewish system it was a question of flesh being sanctified. A man defiled himself by touching a dead body; a dead man in a tent, or anything that was not according to the exigencies of God’s law. Unquestionably there was provision to meet the defilement; but while he remained defiled, he had no right to argue about matters, or reason as to how this could affect God: there was the plain fact that God pronounced him a defiled man, and if he ventured to despise Him, death might have been his portion in a moment. They were under the direct government of God, till this terminated with God’s writing Lo-ammi on His people, as we all know. God

even removed the last sign of it at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Then every vestige of theocracy was completely swept away, and never since replaced, as it never will be until our Lord returns to govern the earth. There was no doubt the still more wonderful presence of God when our Lord Jesus came down here below, but this was for a still more wonderful purpose, namely, the accomplishment of righteous access to God in all its immediateness: the perfection of redemption in all its eternal character; and, finally, the purging of the conscience by Christ's blood. For if a man has a bad conscience what good end could immediate access to God serve on his behalf? And where would be the value of redemption as eternal if the man abode miserable in his soul? What would take away that misery but the certainty that all his sins were completely remitted, and that his conscience was perfectly purified by the blood of Christ? This was quite a new status for a soul.

"If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean....." There are two things — "the blood of bulls and goats" on the one hand; and "the ashes of an heifer" on the other. The distinction was briefly pointed out on the last occasion, and a few words upon it may be well now, because it completely disposes of the common idea of a frequent recurrence to blood, which is one of the tests of a human gospel instead of a divine one. A human gospel always imagines that a man must, when he fails, begin again: that the believer, whenever he may have sinned, must as often go back to the blood. Certainly, if he has lost the blood; but is this true? What sort of a gospel is that? The Christian is eternally redeemed then, which is really the fact. Eternal life is very little believed in by God's children,

and eternal redemption, if possible, less. Now it is one of the striking contrasts of Christianity with Judaism that in Judaism all was tentative and experimental in the sense of its being a trial: all was of a temporary character and conditional on the good behaviour of the person; whereas now that Christ is come, all is changed, and all blessing depends upon Him. And what is more, Christ our life produces fidelity toward God no less than self-judgment, and hence humility in presence of His grace.

This it is which draws out affection by letting in what we can hardly call affection, but divine love — the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us. Faith in Christ sets agoing the affections of the new man, the Spirit of God giving him power all through his course. Thus you must have your soul settled and established in God's perfect love (1 John 4); for if there were a suspicion whether or not it rested on our souls, would not love be fatally wounded? Now God leaves no room for that because the blood of Christ, according to His word, meets perfectly every lack spoken of. Whether it be approach to God, this is perfect; whether redemption, for securing God's rights also, it is eternal; and now our conscience is brought up to the mark suitably for drawing near to God, and for resting upon this eternal redemption. Consequently here follows the practical effect of it: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." There you have the religious service of the believer. I do not mean the rendering this or that to a man, which is here entirely excluded by the character of the word used.

Here again is a remarkable instance how the thoughts of men differ from God's word. His thought in giving man such an infinite blessing is not primarily to set him about working for others. In fact, when you do this, you assume a measure of superiority over the person you work upon. As we all know, he who even in a small way is ministering the word, speaks with authority to those who may not know the word. Now this gives the preacher a certain measure of importance in the eyes of others, and, sad to say, sometimes in his own. But here we have another thing: it is serving God; it is not only gospel or church service, to win or to help souls; it is connected with the worship of God. This seems the kind of service, instead of being merely what people call ministry. As you know, scripture has more than one word for service; and this has to be borne here in mind. No doubt ministerial work is excellent in its own place, and of very great importance; but it is of immense moment that we should always recognise God's rights; and were this really before God's children, do you think any person would make it a sort of open matter what they did, where they went, whom they served, and how they worshipped? Certainly not. The blood of Christ is for this express purpose. See what it undertook to do, and does. Of Christ we are told that He "through the eternal Spirit, offered himself up without spot unto God." It is the only place in scripture where "eternal" is applied to the Holy Ghost; and it is introduced here as the qualifying term of the Spirit — in order to show the absolute way for everlasting issues in which the Offering was then presented to God: a Man, but with this truly divine character of never-waning value. Certainly if there be anything which marks the difference between God and the creature, it is this quality of "eternal." Here

a man on earth presents Himself in this wonderful character.

Again, He “offered” Himself without spot to God. It is not the word for bearing our sins, strictly speaking. There were two parts always in sacrifice: the one is the victim simply, presented as an offering; the other is the sins laid upon the victim. Now this word expresses only the former element, which, by the way, detects the wrong use of that term in Peter, where it is said that “he bore our sins in his own body” — as the margin and some others say — “up to the tree.” Now the usage is strictly limited to the textual sense “on the tree.” If it had been the word here called “offered” there might have been some show of reason for it, because “offered” has reference to the presentation of the victim when the sins were not yet laid on it. The fact is that the phraseology excludes a continuous action and asserts a subsequent and transient fact, contradicting the whole idea; in short, the notion confounds the offering of the victim first, with the laying the sins upon him afterwards. Now the passage in Peter speaks expressly of the final moment when the sins were laid upon Christ. Consequently the teaching is as utterly false as it is possible to be. The “offering” is distinct from the bearing of the sins, and each of the two parts has its own moment.

The first thing God looks for in the sacrifice is its perfect acceptability, but if the sins were already laid there, where would be the manifestation of that? It would be merging in one two things wholly distinct for an offering to have already the sins attached to it. In our Lord’s case the first was the evidence that He was “without spot.” If He had had all our sins ever on Him, could this have

been the case? At the last no doubt they were imputed, and this was essential of course. The second part of Christ's work is His perfect identification with our guilt, without which our sins could not have been taken away. But God's making Him sin for us at the end supposes all His previous life when there was no imputation of sin whatever, and our Lord appeared in all His perfection before God. Thus He, "through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God." This being done, Jehovah "laid upon him the iniquities of us all." It is certain that the passage in Peter refers only to the closing scene. The fact is that the true sense turns not merely on the word "up to," or "upon," but on scriptural usage generally as alone perfectly revealing the truth; and we have seen that the general truth refutes the idea. Undoubtedly one might go a little farther into detail; only this would take us into critical nicety of words, which I do not desire to discuss on such an occasion as this. However, it can be easily shown from the Sept. Vers. of Leviticus and elsewhere, that the word which is rendered "up to" by those who are so anxious so to translate the text, is never used in such a sense in the matter of sacrifice. In such a connection the preposition always means "on," as here, "on the tree," and never "up to" it.

Returning, however, we see here One who acts in entire dependence on God; One who in all the perfectness of a man would not do even this, although He came for the purpose, without the Holy Ghost. This was the perfection of our Lord in presenting Himself. He never acted simply from His own person, but in the power of the Spirit of God, from the time when, to commence His public ministry, He received the Holy Ghost; for

scripture is express that our Lord did receive, and was anointed by, the Holy, Ghost. It was not only that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in coming into the world, but He was scaled by the Holy Spirit, as we know, at the time of His baptism. He is thenceforward the dependent Man; whatever He did, all was done in virtue of the Spirit, even this act of His offering Himself up as a spotless victim. The aim and the effect are eternal redemption. Thus is our conscience purged by His blood, “from dead works” which everything must be until redemption is made good for us, “to serve the living God.”

“And for this cause He is the Mediator of a new ‘covenant.’“ Whoever heard of such a thing as the mediator of a “testament”? “Testament” means a will, and a mediator is entirely out of place in the matter of such a disposal of goods. Let me just take this opportunity of showing that you do not require to be a scholar in order to be perfectly certain when it ought to be “covenant,” and when the right meaning is “testament.” Each case admits of proof. The men who made the Authorised Version were as learned persons as ever perhaps were found together in this country; yet they only made confusion in the matter. This demands no effort convincingly to show, though I yield to none in respect for themselves and their work. And although there may be none here present as much versed as they were in all of erudition, it seems to me practicable to put the most unenlightened Christian in a position to decide with certainty where they are right and where they are wrong in dealing with this term. How comes this? By the written word; for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword. It is so little a question

therefore of learning that every Christian man may have the absolute certainty where the word should be rendered “testament,” and where “covenant.” Both words are true according to context. Such is the peculiarity of the term; the same word means either, but it cannot mean both in the same sentence. This would be to blunder, not to communicate the truth.

There are certain landmarks in every sentence which determine which of the two senses is meant. The case occurs where it must mean “testament”; there are other instances where nothing will do but “covenant.” When the different passages in the New Testament are set out, it will help to ground every believer’s trust more and more in the perfectness of scripture. Begin with this very verse, “And for this cause he is mediator of a new covenant.” Our translators ought to have seen their error, and that here the word could not possibly mean “testament,” because such a functionary is unknown to testamentary business, instead of being universally recognised. Besides, “new” contrasted with “the first,” cannot point to “testament,” but “covenant.” Now the apostle, for I have no doubt he was the writer of this epistle, writes, using a figure that would be known in every country under heaven, and be perfectly familiar to any intelligent persons such as the Jewish believers were. Indeed, there are few things that even ignorant men know more about than “a testament,” or “a will.” It comes home to men’s bosoms and business notoriously. Sons inherit from father or mother, and sometimes they derive from other relatives or friends besides their parents; and as such a thing awakens interest in the dullest, they understand that “a will” only comes into force when the one that devises the property is no more.

That is what the apostle reasons about in vers. 16, 17. He wants to show, both the necessity and the importance of death previously (not here, you observe, of “blood,” but of “death”). Hence the figure is so far changed from what preceded. It had been “the blood of Christ” about which he was speaking before in ver. 14. Now, in ver. 15, we have the transition — “for this cause he is mediator of a new covenant, that by means of death,” etc. We can all perfectly understand this. “Death” is a larger thought, and this begins the link, though he still speaks only of covenants. But from the idea of “inheritance” he slides off from the meaning of “covenant” into that of “testament.” The same word is susceptible of either signification, but the context never leaves it a doubtful thing whether the word means the one or the other. The decisive point, which shows that in this verse it must be “covenant,” is not the word “mediator” only, but the contrast of “new” with the “first” covenant which created transgressions. Every one must surely confess that a mediator is most intelligible with, and essential to, the new covenant; but mediator of “a testament” is a relationship that nobody ever heard of at any time, or in any country on the earth. You may find a lawyer, a testator, an executor, and the heirs, which are familiar enough. All these may belong to a testament, but there is no such personage as “mediator” of a testament.

“Mediator of a covenant,” therefore, is alone meant or possible in ver. 15; although he does purposely bring in “death,” and afterwards an inheritance, to pave the way for the idea of “a testament,” in vers. 16, 17. As yet, however, in ver. 15, he adheres solely to the notion of “covenant,” because he is speaking of a mediator. “For

this cause he is mediator of a new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first," etc. First what? "Testament" is said here, but it is clearly wrong. How speak of "the transgressions of the first 'will'"? What legitimately could be made of such an expression? Whenever there is a second will, the first is of course annulled; whereas here it was painfully efficacious, for it produced "transgressions." A second will renders the first one entirely invalid. You could not therefore have the transgressions of the first. Besides, what have transgressions to do with "a will"? The moment you bring in "first covenant," all is quite easy, plain, and forcible; because the first covenant was the law, and what the law brought in was transgressions. Therefore the immediate context is decisive; as beyond controversy it is the unfailing criterion where we have to judge of the questioned force, not only of any general teaching of the word, but even of the propriety of a single word; or when, as here, the ambiguity admits of two meanings. So perfect is the context of scripture for giving the believer to decide with certainty which of the meanings is the proper one. Both the "mediator" shows that it can only be a new "covenant," and the "transgressions" prove that it was the first covenant, and not a will or testament, that preceded. Where is the law ever styled a "testament" in O.T. Scripture?

"That they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." It is this last word, evidently, which furnishes the transition to the notion of a will. The moment we come to an inheritance the suggestion of a will is simple. It is the common way of inheriting; and the Jews knew this as well as others. It was possible,

doubtless, to inherit without a will, Jewish property — if you can call the land property which was all in the hands of God, being arranged by God to go regularly without any such intervention. Therefore, as far as I recollect, the word for “will” is not once mentioned in the Old Testament, as we all can readily understand. There was God’s law, which dispensed with the necessity of a testament, because it was all settled successionally for His people. But the Jews had long been in an abnormal state, and some had houses and land that had nothing whatever to do with the original disposition of things by God; and of these could dispose as they pleased. And so it was perhaps universally with the Gentiles. So that inheriting by “will” was a most familiar idea.

Before entering on this next rather peculiar passage, take notice that as we had “eternal Spirit,” so here “eternal inheritance” follows. The Jews were peculiarly sensitive on the subject, for alas they knew to their cost that their “inheritance was most transitory. They had been turned out of their land for many years, and afterwards never got properly into the land again: only a poor remnant and in poor circumstances indeed. And now they had been guilty of such unpardonable sin against God and His Christ and the Holy Spirit, that they were going to be outcast from the land once more, and for an incomparably longer period. They could therefore understand how little they could boast of an “eternal” inheritance. But this is precisely what expresses adequately the promise received by Christians. As it is, “eternal salvation and “eternal” redemption, so is it eternal” inheritance. The privileges peculiar to Christianity are characterised as everlasting. Therefore there is no force whatever in persons reasoning to us

from the conditional state of Israel: no doubt such was Judaism, but Christianity is in contrast. The reason is plain: one depended on man, and what is he to be accounted of? The other depends on Christ, and what is He not to be accounted of? There is the sure and blessed difference. Christ, both by the perfection of His person and by the everlasting efficacy of His work, brings us into the blessing which only He deserves, and which is of faith that it might be according to grace, wholly independent of our deserts or failures. Not that we lack provision for failure, as typified even of old and noticeable in verse 13. There is first of all the blood; then the ashes of an heifer. The ashes of the red heifer were for meeting the passing defilements of the one who had been cleansed by blood. The blood remained in all its value; but the ashes of the heifer counteracted defilements by the way. Alas! that distinction has slipped entirely out of the minds of God's children generally, and to their great loss, because to mix them up is to lose the truth. Thereby is weakened the everlasting efficacy of the blood, in order to gain a means of clearing the difficulties of the way.

Let us now pass on to the promised illustration, so as to bring out in a few words the special force of verses 16 and 17; the only instances, we may once for all remark, in the whole of scripture where "testament" has a right to stand in our Bible. This is easily remembered, if not so easily proved. For this reason I shall endeavour to make the truth clear, because scarce anything is worse for God's people than vague uncertainty fostered by such as seem to have no other knowledge than of some people saying this and of others who say that, whereby souls are reduced to utter unbelief of the truth and live

in a mere see-saw between conflicting opinions. What can more effectually deprive men of the power and happy certainty of the word of God? Uncertain one may be, but is it not my fault? Do not cast the blame on the word or Spirit of God. Never admit that we are doomed to doubt. Assure your soul, scripture is so written as to make it our unbelief if we do not receive and enjoy the true meaning of God's word. Perhaps for want of having that conviction, our translators seem to have thought that the word might be "covenant" or "testament," just as they pleased. They were too fond of change elsewhere. Here it was worse than usual. In every part of the New Testament where the word often occurs, I hope to show that it is "covenant," save in vers. 16 and 17 of this chapter, where it is rightly "testament," and not "covenant." In every other passage it ought to he "covenant," and not "testament."

Begin with the first in Matt. 26:28. Can there be the shade of a doubt here, or in Mark 14:24 (substantially equivalent), about the matter? Our Lord is speaking of the cup that He gave the disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new covenant." First, Where would be the propriety of "new" applied to a "testament" or will? Nobody ever talks about a "new" will. But, secondly, there is another and stronger objection. What has "blood" to do with a testament or will? The moment we turn to the new "covenant" all is in place. The blood of Christ is exactly its foundation. The first covenant may have had the blood of victims connected with it, as its sanction, threatening death on those that proved unfaithful. This is the meaning of the blood in the first covenant (Ex. 24), which said as it were: If you fail to obey the law, you must die, as these

victims died. The blood of the new covenant has an altogether opposed character. Christ's blood, as a starting-point, secures a perfect clearance for every soul who believes in Him. So the Lord, in giving the cup to the disciples, says, "This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins." What has a "testament" to do with "remission of sins"? What has a will to do with blood? These constitute the strongest proofs that covenant" is the thought, and that "testament has nothing whatever to do with this place.

In Luke 22 you will find similarly, where our Lord is speaking on the same occasion; therefore we need not dwell on it. "This cup is the new covenant," etc. The expression is different, but the same truth appears. It is the "new covenant in my blood which is shed for you." The idea of a will is wholly foreign to the place. If we said, "the new will," what would he the meaning of this? How could there be a "new will" in His blood? "Covenant in His blood" is perfectly intelligible, and is in fact the chief distinction of the new covenant in contrast with the old which sought but found not man obedient. The old had for its sanction the threat of death; the new on the contrary is based on the "blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanseth from all sin." Compare also 1 Cor. 11, where the apostle gives language similar to the words in Luke, and therefore calling for no other notice than that "testament" is wholly inappropriate there for the reasons given.

There are places where the Authorised Version gives "covenant," and which we of course pass by, because they are quite right. But we may turn now to 2 Cor. 3, which is the first that occurs in order after these, where

“testament” is wrongly given. Ver. 6 says, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament.” As we have already seen, “new” is out of place with a will. It ought therefore to be “covenant.” It may be observed that there are two words for “new,” one of which means “freshly made,” which might in some cases have been applied to a testament. The other means “of a different character entirely”; new in principle, whether recent or not. Now this last is the word employed here. What has it to do with a will? “Freshly made one” might sometimes apply; but “one of a totally different character” does not apply to a will, but admirably to contrasted covenants. What the apostle implies is that, although the new covenant is not yet formally brought in to the houses of Israel and Judah, the Christian anticipates the blessing, as the Christian servant is characterised by the new covenant, not in letter it is true, but in spirit. We come under the power of the new covenant before it is actually brought to bear on the two houses of Israel. Oh! what a comfort this is. Thus the notion here, too, is “covenant,” and not “testament.” In this same chapter he says (ver. 14), “For until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament.” A great many, no doubt, fancy this means the Old Testament scriptures, and so men have adopted that very term as their title. But what really is the “old covenant” here? The covenant of law that condemned Israel. Here again there would be no good sense in reading the “old will.” It can only mislead, whereas if we say “old covenant” we can all understand this, which is exactly what the Jews had to do with.

There is only another passage outside Hebrews — in Rev. 11:19. “And the temple of God was opened in

heaven, and there was seen in the temple the ark of His testament." And here the Old Testament affirms what one might argue out. "Ark of the covenant" is scriptural; but what is the "ark of a testament"? Has the ark of a will any just sense. As far as my memory serves, I do not recollect any other instance of "testament" employed, excepting in Hebrews, where it has been once or twice before us, and therefore to these I turn to finish the subject, even if it seem a rather minute examination, which I hope may prove a good confirmation of your faith in the word of God as well as in learning how necessary is the Spirit of God to give certainty of understanding the word. Had it not been for these considerations I should not have occupied your time with the matter. In the Authorised Version of Hebrews 7:22 we read, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." There again, Is not surety of a testament" strange language? Surety "of a covenant" is as important as intelligible, as even the Authorised Version uniformly renders in chap. 8 following. Therefore the inference is unavoidable, that the context in every case indicates the right counterpart, whether "covenant" or "testament." But if I am right in interpreting the context in detail, you may rest assured that in the Bible wherever the word "testament" occurs, it ought to be "covenant," except in the two verses immediately before us, Heb. 9:16, 17.

To these, then, let us turn. Can anything be plainer than their reference to a will in order to illustrate the death of our Lord? "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator." This is sufficiently evident. Were "covenant" said it would not even be true. Where men make a covenant, is it in the

least necessary that either of the contracting parties should die? Jacob and Laban made a covenant between them; but did it at all demand, in order to its validity, that Jacob or Laban should die? If either had died, there would rather have been an end of it so far. But when he who makes a testament dies, then only can the children, or others to whom he has devised his property, receive the benefit by virtue of the will. “Where a testament (or will) is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator, for a testament is of force after men are dead.” In wills only, and not in covenants, is such a necessity universally found. A man makes a will, but it does not come into force so long as he lives — only when he dies. On this hinges the apostolic illustration, which is as apt as it is undeniably evident. The effect of a will is only after the death of the testator. Perhaps something may be contingent upon the death of another; as a man leaves to his children upon the death of his wife. But in any case death must intervene, if any are immediately concerned in the property. It is only after one or more are dead that the living heirs inherit. “Otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” Nothing can be more telling or simple. In the case of a covenant, is there anything of the kind? A covenant comes into force while people are alive. Take Jacob and Laban, where neither was called to die. Take an earlier covenant, where God makes one between Himself and the earth, as revealed to Noah.

I am aware that some try to slip in the death of sacrifices here; but the word means not a covenanting victim, but a “testator”; and all efforts are vain to upset or change the idea. It is the death of the person who made the testament. It is not necessary to insist on more

than the principle generally, but if the application be pressed personally, how does this apply to the Lord? Very exactly indeed; for the Lord became a man in order that He might die, to give us (a vast deal more, but also) an everlasting inheritance. He that had spoken at Sinai is the selfsame One that came to die. The figure, therefore, of a testator applies in all its force. He was pleased thus to die, although One who in His divine nature could not die. He therefore deigned, in the infiniteness of His grace, to partake of blood and flesh that He might die. Therefore, nothing can be simpler, nothing more certain, than His death, in virtue of which we inherit the richest blessing evermore.

Beloved brethren, what wonders in the word of God! and how He delights in conveying the truth in the most striking way to help feeble souls. All turns on the death of Christ. There was no Christianity without it. As long as our Lord was here in the body, it was as the corn of wheat that abode alone by itself till it fell into the ground and died; but after death, “it beareth much fruit.” There Christ’s own words set forth the effect of His death. As long as the Lord lived, the middle wall of partition stood firm. Neither the Jews could draw near to God, nor the Gentiles be joined with the Jews, who were expressly kept apart. But when our Lord died, the veil was rent, the partition fell; and it was not merely the Gentiles coming into the place the Jews had occupied, but believing Jews and Gentiles entered alike into immediate nearness to God. Along with this, the conscience was purged perfectly, in order to serve the living God in thanksgiving and praise, as well as every other service, and furthermore, every blessing eternally

secured. Oh! how wondrous is that which God has given us through the death of His Son!

W. K.

Jesus Forsaken of God, and the Consequences

Psalm 22

The substance of a lecture in Ryde in 1873 by W. Kelly.

The scripture that I have read is pre-eminently the psalm of One forsaken of God. In this it stands alone; not that there are not other psalms which refer to that most solemn hour, and to the blessed Person who here speaks to God; but this psalm above all. It is not merely here that we have the Lord taking His place among men, the trusting One, which Psalm 16 gives — His trust carried on unbrokenly, looking on through death unto resurrection, yea to glory at God's right hand.

But here what a contrast! He is abandoned of God, yet cleaves to Him wholly and vindicates Him absolutely. But He is forsaken of God. Now it is not His enemies that say so, though, they too did; it is Himself, and it is Himself to God Himself. No believer had ever been thus forsaken, or can be. "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on Jehovah that he would deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (vers. 4-8) Never was there such an hour even for Jesus; never can there be such an hour again. Good and evil were then brought to an issue in the only Person who could solve the riddle; good and evil met in One that was

perfectly good, and yet then bearing evil at the hand of God. It was atonement. Not that this alone appears in the psalm; but Jesus made sin is the first and deepest thought and fact. There was no sorrow that He knew not; there was no shame that He was saved from. Bulls of Bashan were there; shameless dogs compassed Him about the ravening lion was not absent. In truth these are but figures, and man was more cruel than all, baser and most deliberate, he alone indeed guilty, led on by a subtler, mightier enemy; but, deepest and most wondrous of all, God was there, and there first of all, as it could not but be — God as Judge of sin, who made His Son that knew no sin to be sin for us.

First, I repeat, was this mysterious judgment of evil on the Holy One; not merely first in point of fact, but because it stands necessarily to itself the most solemn and solitary of all things for God and man, in time or eternity, in earth or heaven or hell. Befittingly therefore with this the psalm opens, for what could compare with it, past, present, future? The Lord Jesus had met Satan at the beginning in the wilderness, at the end in Gethsemane. He had broken his power for the earth and for man on it, spoiling the strong man's goods; but it was another and in conceivably profounder question now. It was sin before God. It was no mere conflict, it was nothing that could be broken or won in the power of obedience. There had been living goodness, and God's seal was upon it. But here was another thing. He had glorified the Father all His life, but now it was a question of glorifying God in His death, for God is the Judge of sin. It was not a question with the Father as such, but with God as God touching sin. He who had glorified the Father in a life of obedience glorified God in the death in

which that very obedience was consummated; and not merely this: evil was laid on Him in whom all was good, and they met. What a meeting!

Yes, God was there, not the approver of what was good only, but the Judge of all evil laid upon that blessed Head. It was God forsaking the faithful, obedient Servant. Yet it was His God; this would — could — never be given up; for, on the contrary, He even then firmly holds to it — "My God, my God"; yet He has to add now, "why hast thou forsaken me?" It was the Son of the Father, but as Son of man necessarily that He so cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, and then only, did God desert His one unswerving Servant, the Man Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, we bow before the mystery of mysteries in His person — God manifested in flesh. Had He not been Man, of what avail for us? Had He not been God, all must have failed to give to His suffering for sins the infinite worth of Himself. This is atonement. And atonement has two parts in its character and range. It is expiation before God; it is also substitution for our sins, (Lev. 16:7-10, Jehovah's lot and the people's lot), though the latter part be not so much the subject of the psalmist here, and I do not therefore dwell on it now. The ground, the most important part, of the atonement, though all be of the deepest moment, is Jehovah's lot.

Here then we have God in His majesty and righteous judgment of evil; God in the display of His moral being dealing with sin, where alone it could be dealt with to bring out blessing and glory, in the Person of His own Son; One who could, when forsaken of God, reach the lowest, but morally highest, point of glorifying God, made sin for us on the cross. It was the very perfection

of His bearing sin that He should not be heard. There was the sharpest pain and anguish and bitterness of rejection; and did He not feel it? Did the glory of His Person render Him incapable of suffering? The idea denies His humanity. Rather was His deity that which made Him endure and feel it most, and as none other could. “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O Jehovah: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.” (vers. 14-20)

Nevertheless the Lord Christ perfectly vindicates God who forsook Him there and then. Others had cried, and there was not one who had not been delivered; but it was His not to be. For the suffering must go to the uttermost, and sin be righteously atoned for, and this, too, not by power, but by suffering.

But what is this that breaks on our ears when the last drop in the cup is drained? “Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee,” says the Saviour. He says, now He is risen from the dead, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” He had declared it; such was His ministry here below, but now on an entirely new ground. Death

and death alone disposed of sin; death, but His death alone, could dispose of sin, so that the sinner could bow to God's righteousness about it, and be brought without sin into the presence of God. And this is what God Himself declares.

Mark here, too, the consequence of it: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Now the Lord Jesus shows us in the gospels the wonderful adaptation of the truth of the Old Testament. "Thy name" what name? When bearing sin He speaks of God. When looking on to deliverance, or in enjoyed relationship, the godly Israelite speaks of Jehovah. But in the New Testament, while God remains God and must be ever the Judge of sin, Father is the characteristic term of a relationship which the Son of God knew from eternity, yet knew none the less as man, but in a truth and fulness which belonged to Him only. This in its reality and intimateness He would give them as far as it could be, in redemption, as many a soul here knows with joy. But I shall repeat it for some hearts which know not that blessed word in its sweetness and real meaning to the soul. Jesus could bring it out now.

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren," and so He says, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." He had never said so before. He had been declaring the name of the Father, but He had never presented it thus; and your particular attention is called to the fact. It supposes not merely love, but this on a foundation of righteousness. Undoubtedly grace was that which gave Him, and thus wrought for sinful man; but here He gives us, when sin was judged and put away, to know that His God is ours, and when the life was bearing much fruit in resurrection, that His Father

is ours. The glory of the Father and the nature of God were now engaged in blessing us with Him, as just before only the holy vengeance of God came out against sin. It was indeed glory in the highest, it was grace in the lowest, but all was on the footing of righteousness, without which all else would only inflate the soul and expose it to be dragged down into worse depths. The basis of God's righteousness is needed for the sinner, and he who in himself was but a lost sinner is now entitled to know God not merely as God, but as Father. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." There was pardon now, and peace; but not these only; there was association with Christ Himself. Far more than this indeed, but as it is not here we need not now go beyond what is before us, with only the modification given by the scriptures of the New Testament already referred to.

Now mark how the declaration of His name comes out. "My God, my God," says Jesus when and because He was forsaken on the cross, made sin and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. It is the true and simple and strong answer to those who suppose that He had been all His life here below bearing sin; had this been so He must have been all through forsaken of God, unless God shine with complacency while judging sin. It would be the virtual denial of His life in the joy and communion of His Father's love. Son of God here below, He had ever walked in the intimate and perfect acknowledgment of His Father's presence and of His own relationship, and hence so much the more did He feet what it was to be abandoned. But now the sin that was charged upon Him is gone by His dying for it; and as the witness that all was gone, He is raised up from the dead, and then declares that very name — not first

“your” Father, nor our Father (this were beneath His glory, whatever may be His love), but “My Father, and your Father; and my God, and your God.” Thus what God is as Father to Him rests now on those for whom He died, on those whose sins had been blotted out by the blood of His cross.

But this is not all. The perfect and manifested acceptance of the Man that God made sin is altogether theirs now; not merely the love of the Father, but the glorified character and light of God. Thus it is love, not solely in relationship, but in nature: yea, more than this: all that God feels as God, all that pertains to Him vindicated for ever, not merely is Christ’s, but by Christ’s work consequently belongs to those who rest on that Person and that work. Such is the virtue and fruit of atonement; nor is it only for heaven, for it was brought out by Himself on earth. He was going to heaven, but it was expressly for wise and weighty reasons made known here to the souls that needed it most. To the poor in spirit, to the meek, His disciples, He had shown Himself the pattern of dependence and obedience, of grace and righteousness, of bright and peaceful communion with His Father; but all this of itself could only aggravate their condition, which was so far beneath His, and thus must be the more humiliating to His own, had not He by grace wrought their deliverance. With what force, then, the blessed truth broke upon their souls! God Himself, the Father of the Lord Jesus, was their Father, even as He was their God; all that is in God as completely in their favour by what He had wrought on the cross as all that is in Him as Father. And remark, it is not merely “as a father pitieth his children,” for there is incomparably more now. He is the Father as the Christ knew Him. “I

will declare thy name unto my brethren," brethren brought, and brought righteously, into the selfsame relation, so that all the satisfaction and delight of God (not only of the Father, which relationship He has given us to enjoy, but of God) Himself in Christ is shared fully with us because of the acceptance we have in Christ our Lord.

But we have more still to hear. "in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." It is not merely "will I praise thee," nor yet "in the congregation," but "in the midst of the congregation." The Apostle Paul quotes this scripture in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and we find its spirit fulfilled in the little company gathered on that day (John 20), "the assembly." The Lord is at once found in the midst of them, not reproving them for their just proved cowardice, unbelief and unfaithfulness, to say nothing of lack of love for His person and suffering for His name. I say not that He had not His dealings with one or another, but He brings them at once into the highest relation and best blessings by His sacrifice. With more than one of them we know He dealt, but this did not hinder or postpone His grace at all.

"In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Think, beloved friends, for a moment what the praise of Christ was in such an hour, what His feelings must have been when emerging from the darkness, from the dust of death, from the abandonment of God! He alone could rightly estimate the immensity of it all who, having suffered once for sins, now rests in the hard-won victory. Then it was that He bore our sins; then He who knew no sin was made sin. Risen from the dead, He is bearing sins no more; He is praising, and not alone, but "in the midst of the congregation."

Let me add another word. There is a day coming when this earth shall be filled no more with groans, but with hallelujahs; the day hastens when every one born shall join in the chorus of blessing, when heaven and earth shall be filled with joy and glory; but never will come a day when such praise will burst forth as that which He began that day. It is not that they who praise with Him, being brought into such association of blessing, will ever lose it — they never will; but if it began with Him then, it will be theirs for ever, but it is theirs only with Him in their midst; and the psalm before us proves it the more strikingly because it was written expressly with a view to the earthly people. The praise of the resurrection day is peculiar, being Christ's praise in the midst of the congregation — that is, of His brethren.

And who could declare it as He? And when could even He have declared it as when raised from the dead by the Father's glory after having been brought into the dust of death for sin? None but He could feel to the uttermost what it was to be forsaken of God and not heard when He cried; but now, heard from the horns of the unicorns, He enters as the risen Man into the light and glory of God shining for ever on the accepted sacrifice of Himself, and declares to His brethren the name (now we can say) of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God; and there and thus, in the midst of the church now set free for ever by and in Him, He sings praises. Oh! what praises were Christ's, delivered now at length and from so great a death! But are they not our praises too? And is it not in "our midst" that He sings them? What a character does not this communion imprint on the church's worship! The praise of Christ, after sin was judged as it never can be again, and He who was

crucified in weakness lives. by the power of God, gives the just and only full idea of what becomes God's assembly.

Are these your thoughts, brethren beloved of the Lord? Is this the standard by which you try your hearts and lips when you present your spiritual sacrifices to your God and Father? Be assured, He values none compared with those of the risen Christ, who deigns to be the Leader of such as cleave to Him in this the day of His still continued rejection, though He be, as we know, glorified on high.

Truly His is in the highest sense a new song. Alone He has thus suffered; not alone does He praise, but in the full chorus of the consciously redeemed. How wondrous that it is not here merely "in" the congregation, but "in the midst" of it that He thus sings! In the day of His power it will not be so for "the great congregation." Not that His praises will be lacking in that day; not that high and low will not praise in the earth when all Jehovah's works shall praise Him and all His saints shall bless Him. Still it remains true that there is a revealed association with Him of those who are now being called and gathered since His resurrection, which exceeds in depth anything said of those who follow in that bright and blessed day. Not to the great congregation is He said to declare His God and Father's name. In it, indeed, will His praise of Jehovah be, but not in its midst as on the resurrection day for those who have not seen and yet have believed. (Compare vers. 22, etc., with 25, etc.) For what is said of that jubilee for Israel and the earth would still be true if He praised alone on His ground and all others on theirs. Neither does He call them His brethren — as now, however He may pay His vows (in

itself another distinctive mark) before those that fear Jehovah, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him Lord to God's glory, even to the ends of the world and throughout all kindreds of the nations.

Is not all this grace indeed to us who deserve nothing less, even the true grace of God wherein we stand? May we appreciate the counsels and the ways of the God of all grace who has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus! To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen! May our praises then abound; but may they be Christ's praises in our midst, who deigns to be where two or three are gathered to His name! He is not absent if we are called in aught to vindicate the truth or holiness of God; is He when we gather to worship His and our God and Father? By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually — that is, fruit of lips confessing His name.

This is followed by a call to others founded on the resurrection of the suffering Messiah. "Ye that fear Jehovah, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard." (vers. 23, 24) This was at least anticipated, we may note in passing, in those words which the Lord uttered before departing, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The public answer to His cry was when God raised Him from the dead.

Thus we find Messiah no longer suffering, but heard, His God and Father's name declared to His brethren, and Himself in the midst of the church praising; and then a call to every one who fears Jehovah to praise Him, on

the ground of atonement. For by the cross of Christ the whole question of sin and sins before God and for the believer was settled for ever.

But there is a new scene in the verses that follow, which may help to bring out more distinctly what I have already endeavoured to explain. Here the Messiah says, ‘My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.” Thus “the great congregation” is distinguished from “the congregation” in verse 22. There it is clearly the assembly surrounding Him when risen from the dead, whereas in verse 22 we read, ‘‘My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation.” Remark that it is not in the midst of them. There is no such association with Christ spoken of.

Observe in John 20 (which has already furnished us with the illustration, and indeed fulfilment, of His name declared to His brethren, and the congregation in the midst of which He praises) that there also we have what answers to “the great congregation.” For Thomas came eight days after and exclaims to the Lord, when convicted of his unbelief, “My Lord and my God.” Not a word is hinted here about “My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God.” There is no longer the association of Christ with the disciples traced here, but another confession which grace will draw out from “the great congregation,” as from Thomas, when they too repent and confess their long despised and rejected Messiah. They too will then say, “My Lord and my God.” It is most true, the striking type of what Israel will know and confess in that day. (Compare Zech. 12)

How wide will be the praise! But it is not association with Christ, it is not He praising in the midst of the

congregation. There is no such blessedness of fellowship with Him. Of Christ in that day it is said, “I will pay my vows before them that fear him.” Could anything more strikingly show that this is on Jewish ground? And still further, it is not only what is said which distinguishes them from those in verse 22, but what is not said. Thus there is not a hint of declaring the name of His Father and God here, nor are they here called His brethren. There will be a blessed people, but as a people round Him who is at once the reigning Messiah and Jehovah their God. Even He praises and pays vows in that day.

There had been Christ’s praise in the midst of the assembly of His brethren when He rose from among the dead, their Leader; and there followed also a suited testimony of God to those who feared Him (compare Acts 10:35), as well as to all the seed of Jacob or Israel. The day when grace assembles the children of God is also a day of good news to every creature, Jew or Gentile, that they may believe. But now it is more than testimony. Messiah’s praises are of Jehovah in the great congregation; Messiah pays His vows before them that fear Him. There is the sure and open accomplishment of all promises. Now every prophecy of coming glory for the earth and the nations is being fulfilled. Accordingly the “meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise Jehovah that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto Jehovah: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is Jehovah’s: and he is the governor among, the nations.” (vers. 27, 28) Not a word of this was given in the former connection. Henceforth it is not merely calling on all the ends of the earth to remember, but they shall remember. It will not

be the gospel of grace as now, nor the church, but the kingdom in its display of power. All therefore shall turn to Jehovah, as we are here assured, land all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." It is no longer a question of the Christian place (this was given us in verse 22) when the testimony goes out in verse 23, the ground of faith being laid in verse 24. After that (vers. 25-31) comes what supposes and characterises the millennial days. It is when Christ asks (Ps. 2) and gets the earth that He is in the "great congregation."

Now, on the contrary, His is a "little flock," and everything great among men is opposed to God. By-and-by it will not be so; but Christ will have "the great congregation," and be Himself the Governor of all nations. Then "all they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him." Then is a day of confessed dependence, though of the richest blessing, for "none can keep alive his own soul." He is the life and strength of all, as He is the exalted of all. "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation." The old Christ-rejecting generation is gone, but the returned remnant, after undergoing judgment and consumption, shall be a holy seed and a new stock. "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness (weaned now at length from all conceit of their own) unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this." (Vers. 29-31) It is neither heaven nor eternity, nor is it the present evil age, but the bright and holy age to come, when the Lord Jehovah is blessed and blesses, the God of Israel who only doeth wondrous things; and in that day His glorious name is blessed for ever, and the whole earth is filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.

Deliverance

Being notes of a lecture on Romans 8:1-4.

The beginning of Romans 8 is the full answer to the cry of wretchedness in Romans 7: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” There are three great parts in the deliverance: first, the setting free of the soul at the commencement of its career; then, practical freedom in its course; and, finally, ultimate deliverance for the body in resurrection at the coming of our Lord. What concerns souls pre-eminently, in the first instance, is that spiritual freedom, without which there can be no practical power, any more than in the service of the Lord, or in worship. Hence it is this first part of the deliverance that it will be my main business to dwell on at present. Not that the application to practice is not of the highest moment; but we should remember that practical freedom and power depend on this primary deliverance. Again, final deliverance must not be supposed to be forgotten; but that is a question of the Lord’s intervention by-and-by, when there can be no possibility of a flaw. Now there may be failure, first, in appreciating the soul’s deliverance, as in verse 2; and, secondly, in turning practical liberty to the Lord’s account in walk. But when the Lord comes to quicken these mortal bodies — and they are called mortal in contradistinction from the soul — no failure will be possible. It was not necessary to call the soul immortal, because immortality is essentially bound up with its nature.

Let us, then, turn to a little consideration of the first grand truth, the setting free of the soul. And this remark

may be made at the threshold, that the deliverance in question is quite distinct from quickening. Romans 7 is the strongest possible proof of this; for we have, from verse 7 onward, exactly the experience of a man quickened, but not delivered. We see there a soul going through much painful exercise inwardly ending in the cry, “O wretched man,” etc. It is not a careless or unawakened person, but neither is it one delivered. There are two errors to be avoided here, over-rating and under-estimating the condition of the case in Romans 7. These two mistakes carry away far the largest part of Christendom, and perhaps of real Christians. There are those who consider that the soul in this distress is unconverted; and one reason why they do so is, because in the progress of its exercises it says, “I am carnal.” But such an inference is unwarranted, and arises from confounding carnal with natural, which is ignorance of scripture. For it speaks of three classes, and not two only; there are natural, carnal, and spiritual men. Now Romans 7 describes the intermediate class; the person there is neither natural nor spiritual. This is where the great mistake is made, and by none more than by the theologians. They confound a carnal with a natural man, supposing that “carnal” means one dead in trespasses and sins. But in 1 Corinthians 2, 3 this distinction is plainly drawn.

In chapter 2 the apostle, speaking of the natural man, declares that he “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” In chapter 3 he takes up the other term, and distinctly tells the Corinthian believers that they were carnal; not, of course, natural, but “carnal.” They were believers, but in a wrong and low condition. They ought to have been, but were not, “spiritual.”

Thus every believer is not by any means a spiritual person. For this reason the apostle, in addressing the Galatians, says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” He did not mean by this that every believer is a spiritual man, but, on the contrary, distinguishes certain believers more fitted than others for the delicate work of restoring a man who has slipped aside. And who are they? The men who know best the hateful evil of flesh, as well as, what is of far deeper moment, the grace of God. These can therefore feel for souls ensnared and drawn away from the Lord. A carnal man knows God and himself so partially, that he is unfit for such work. He would err, either on the side of easy-going amiability, which would slip over sin, or in overwhelming harshness. The spiritual man, by grace, holds the balance even. He would condemn the wrong, but also meet the soul in restorative grace.

This distinction appears everywhere. Among believers, who does not know some spiritual, with not a few carnal? As believers, they are no longer natural, but they are not therefore necessarily spiritual. Not that they have not the Spirit, but that they do not walk or judge in the Spirit. The possession of the Spirit does not necessarily make a man spiritual. The Corinthian saints clearly had the Spirit, but there was unjudged activity of the flesh in many. There is a shade of difference between the word (and the sense, I also think) in Romans 7, compared with 1 Corinthians 3:8, which calls little for notice now. It is only one letter, and; the Auth. Version (though not always) translates both as “carnal.” Do not suppose that we are going into critical points now; but it surely is of interest and importance to apprehend the

difference between being born of the Spirit, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in me. A man may be born of the Spirit, and yet may require to have the Holy Ghost given to him. Now the word in Romans 7 does not decide that the Spirit dwells there, the word in 1 Corinthians does admit of it. However this may be, we may now turn to the fundamental Christian truth of present deliverance.

In Romans 7 a struggle is described, and fully argued out; but this conflict supposes life. While a man is dead in trespasses and sins, there is no such conflict. Mark the language of this soul. He has a hatred of evil, and yet falls into it; he loves what is good, and yet fails in doing it. It is a state, not of natural wickedness, but of spiritual powerlessness. At Corinth the fleshly activity of the intellect overruled the mind of the Spirit in too many saints. Here it was a dead weight of evil within, that always dragged him down when he wanted to do the will of God. He is like a person in a quagmire, not drowned, but sunk deeply, and struggling; yet as soon as he gets one leg out, the other is more deeply in. And so his state is most miserable. This increases, though with growing discernment of himself, until he rests in Christ. It is not a man who has not seen Christ, but one who, looking to Him, thought it was enough for all need, and never expected as a believer to find evil continually within him. He wakes up at length to the humbling fact that there is this constant inward evil ever seeking to break out, and that having the blood of Jesus for his forgiveness does not fully deal with the case. It is a question, not of pardon only, but of deliverance. “O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me?” He has life, and the law has probed him as born of God, and

killed him in conscience. It is far from true that he is dead in trespasses and sins; but an awakened conscience has given the law killing power, and he is slain in the conviction of sin, which he had not been; if an unconverted man. The unconverted soul knows nothing of this inward exercise and trouble. Here I am obliged to part from my Arminian friends, who generally regard this latter part of Romans 7 as a description of the natural man. “I am carnal,” says the apostle, not natural. They are wrong.

The truth is, that the effect of sin is far deeper than even Christians suppose. Life and forgiveness are not all that is wanted. Both are given in the gospel: but besides there is present deliverance. And this deliverance comes after there has been practical proof, not merely that we are sinners, but that we are without strength, which is a deeper thing. Here the soul is brought to the pass: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” He looks out of himself, there was the turning-point. He had looked to the Lord to find life and forgiveness; but when he had Christ he thought. “Surely I shall be able to go on now, happily glorifying the Lord.” He discovers his weakness, he struggles and strives, but finds it out more and more. At last he looks about himself, and not his past sins only, to Christ risen after the flesh was fully judged in the cross; and this is the consequence, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”1 (Ver. 1.)

The first part here stated of this deliverance is, that grace puts us in a new place or standing, in which there can be nothing against us. At once we see the contrast with Adam. It was not merely that the first man fell, and that his children were sinners, but the very nature and

place involving them in condemnation. In contrast, then, with fallen Adam stamping the fall on all his family, there is another or “second Man” and “last Adam.” What is His position? Risen and in glory, after having died not for sins only but to sin, and both for us, that grace might through Him reign through righteousness to eternal life. The apostle does not pursue all the consequences here, but particularly presses this, that Christ is dead and risen. He is not merely an expiatory sacrifice, but a dead and risen Saviour. And thus He is applied to the condition of the man who believes in Him. Nothing so frees from claim as death. Have there been debts? Death cancels them. Claims? Death comes in, and dissolves their force. Do I deny, then, the responsibility of the Christian? The very reverse. But his responsibility is not that of a man naturally, which comes to an end in death (not his own, but Christ’s, and the believer’s with Him); and where man ends, the Christian begins. The Christian, therefore, is baptized to Christ’s death. It is thus a dead and risen Christ that characterises Christianity. A living Christ was what the Jew wanted. They would have liked a mighty Messiah born in the world to lead them on to victory and supremacy. And this is very much what many Christians think and crave after. But it is not Christianity, which is founded on the death of Christ and closes the old man; and He is risen, which brings in the new creation for faith.

Therefore it is that the Christian now is not merely forgiven, but identified with Christ who died; and the consequence is that he is dead to sin. Such is the argument of the apostle in Romans 6. The Christian is likewise dead to the law. I know there are those who tell you that the law is dead,2 but they are quite wrong. The

law, far from dead, is a living and killing power; and you must therefore pronounce death, not upon the law, but upon yourself. (See Gal. 2) God gives the believer in Christ to take the place of being dead, both to sin and to law: but is this all? Surely not; it is only negative. No, he is in Christ Jesus, the One risen from the dead. The Christ that the believer possesses is One who, after His death not only for our sins but for sin itself, passed into resurrection life, and that, too, as a life-giving Spirit. Who receives this life? The Christian. As a believer in Christ, and submitting to God's righteousness, he has received new life and the Spirit, and consequently his position is in Christ Jesus. Therefore he partakes of all that Christ is, as risen. All His blessedness — not speaking of Him as a divine person, the eternal Son of God, but as Man risen from the dead — now attaches to every believer in Him. And for this reason it is that the apostle says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." You might as well talk of condemning Christ as of condemning the Christian. Since Adam's fall, the curse rested on him and on all his seed. So now, since His death and resurrection, the favour of God rests just as thoroughly on Christ and all who are His. For in point of fact they are in Christ as men naturally are said to be in Adam. No doubt it is a mystical way of speaking, but it is a true thing. The expression is a figure, but the fact is certain. Are the effects of connection with Christ less real than of connection with Adam?

What a blighting thing is the unbelief that despises and distorts, or destroys, the force of such deep realities! Do you say they are not facts? Are the only facts things that you can see and feel? Are you a positivist? Is there

nothing real but sin and misery? Is God nothing? or are you as unbelieving, or worse, than a Jew or a heathen? Is not Christ as real as Adam? I admit the reality of sin. Alas, we know it too well! We know it even as natural men, and we felt it even when we were carnal — if indeed we are spiritual now. Let us search and see how far our souls have passed out of human thoughts, for this is carnality in a Christian. The Corinthians were in that state; they allowed the thoughts of men to sway them. We are called, on the contrary, to enter into the revealed truth of God. We are said to “have the mind of Christ.” The Corinthians, as all Christians, had the title to this, but did not make it good; they had the ground, capacity, and even power; but they did not use what they had, through value for the world’s wisdom — surely an important distinction, and a common danger.

Here, then, is the first clearing of the Christian position. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” It is not merely no condemnation for this or that — for particular acts or things — but no condemnation whatever; it is absolute. Were there no faults or blemishes? Too many and grave; but for what did Christ die? And Christ is risen, and there is no condemnation. Are you still afraid to rest in Him? Better not be distrustful of Him or the word of God; far better to believe it, and be afraid of ourselves. This is both wiser and humbler. I know there are many who read the word of God, and hesitate to accept the clear and absolute language of scripture. But we ought, in this respect at least, to be calm and confident. Remember that I am not now resting on an isolated bit of scripture, though a single text is stabler than heaven and earth; I refer to what is the very back-bone and substance of this

epistle. I am not pressing you with a mere fragment of scripture. torn out of its mace and context. I leave that to others; and there are plenty who preach thus on scraps. Beyond controversy, the apostle is showing that believers have an entirely new position in the dead and risen Christ. They are as truly partakers of the acceptance in which He stands risen from the dead, as men naturally inherit the condemnation of the first man. No condemnation can any longer touch His person who secures the Christian. We are in Christ.

The apostle gives two conclusive reasons for this. “For,” says he, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Before saying more, perhaps one ought to explain why the last clause of the first verse is quite ignored. Here it is not scripture. The same clause is scripture in the fourth verse, but not in the first. It is as perfect and divine in the one case, as it is wrong and human in the other. But the monastic scribes who copied for us the writings of the apostle seemed to have thought the first verse as it stood meagre, and rather dangerous too, and so did their best to improve and guard it by additions. Was not this rationalistic, Rationalism does not mean conscience judging what is wrong, but man presuming to judge where he should believe and learn of God. Any attempt to mend the scriptures is about as bold and bad rationalism as can be. You may find it in a monk just as much as in a monkey-loving professor. No doubt the monks included many a rationalist of the middle ages; I leave you to judge who are such now. In the first verse there cannot be a question that the words referred to are a mere human accretion. Ask any one entitled to speak: Mill, Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf

or Tregelles, will tell you that the clause is an interpolation. They rejected it, not because all, or any of them, liked the truth resulting from the true text, but because they were honest men, and competent scholars, who stuck to the best witnesses. In the Catholic Greek Testaments of Munich, 1847, and of Dublin, 1860, you will find the same thing; the clause is omitted, and quite correctly, spite of the Vulgate. So also Bishop Wordsworth and Dean Alford, in their editions of the Greek New Testament, omit it.

Do not mind what people say about “peculiar views.” For that is just what I eschew, at least as much as they. I want to help souls more fully into the truth, which surely ought not to be “peculiar.” I call human views, old tradition or modern speculation, peculiar, if not wicked too. But I do not call it peculiar, and I hope you do not, to adhere uncompromisingly to the words of the Holy Spirit, and to seek the genuine, simple, and sure sense of God’s word. The true form of the verse, then, is, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The apostle so speaks without the smallest qualification. If you add, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” and if you translate it more correctly as not “who” but “if,” “when,” or “because they walk not,” etc., you bring in another idea — walking in the Spirit, not standing. It would amount then to this: that there is no condemnation to them since they walk in holiness. But this were to mix up the walk with the position, the effect of which is that you can never be sure of your position. All is plunged in uncertainty. Place in Christ and walk in the Spirit are two distinct things. I do not know what a man’s position is by looking at his walk, for he may often shift and

move. The walk is surely of the utmost importance. But the first verse of the chapter speaks only of position, and if you bring in walk there, the position is unsettled, and the truth is spoiled.

When you speak of walk, you bring in Christian responsibility (which I entirely admit); but if the apostle is teaching “no condemnation,” how can our conduct, our desert, our possible faults be introduced? Do not faults deserve to be censured? Whose walk is such as to claim “no condemnation?” If the walk is mixed up in the question, it is impossible for one ever to know it. The word is thus made void, the apostolic comfort is also nullified, and people get into a religion of doubt, in consequence of this confusion. They find themselves on a quicksand instead of a rock, and miscall it Christianity, whereas it is so far a mere consecration of naturalism. The object of the verse is to show the firm ground on which God has placed His children.

Surely there is a walk that suits those that are in that position, and scripture furnishes abundant instruction as to it. But the first need is to know that I am placed by the grace of God where no condemnation can reach us. This gives solid peace, and becomes the means of power to the believer. Do we want to know the ground of it? The answer follows: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Mark the precision of the language. It is “the law of the Spirit of life,” meaning that fixed principle. Let others boast about the law of Moses; the apostle says, this is the law for me, a Christian. Has Moses delivered you? He could only condemn: “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” But here is the proper starting-point of the Christian — the soul set

free. It is a place of deliverance that nobody ever had till Christ died and rose again. And it is a remarkable fact that our Lord acted on this truth on the very day He rose from the dead. He never did so, before, coming into the midst of His disciples, He breathed on them the breath of His own resurrection-life. His own people were plunged into the deepest distress by His death on the tree; but He imparted to them life more abundantly than before His death. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” While He was here, He was no doubt the life of the believer; but risen from the dead, He gave life more abundantly.

It is familiarly known that some apply His inbreathing as if it meant inspiring the disciples to write the scriptures, as others take it to be power to work miracles, and so forth. The truth however is that it means neither one nor other, nor anything but what is said here: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Therefore it was that He said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted,” etc. They were to go forth, as in Christ, in the power of the Spirit. They were to take Christ’s place in this world; dead to law and sin, and alive from, yet among, the dead. The world outside is the place of death, not of life. The believer owns this, but thanks God that there are some living among the dead. And whence comes this life? From Christ risen — the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. It was not a life breathed into any before He rose from the grave. If it had been before the cross, it would never suit a sinner to receive it, any more than God to give it; nor could it be a guarantee of deliverance. But when the Lord Jesus went down into the fight, the rule of that war was, that

those who tarried with the stuff should share just as much in the spoils as He that went down to battle. Such was the law of David; and it is the way of a greater than David. He alone fought the fight; but we reap the full fruits of His victory. Grace has set me in this position, so that sin and death are no longer a law to me.

Sin is not a law, because I am no longer sold under and in bondage to sin; I am inexcusable if I do sin. There is no such necessity if I come under grace. If I fail in prayer and vigilance, I am sure to sin; but I ought never to be unwatchful, and so never to sin. No Christian should deny this. A Christian may sin, and a Christian does, if he is not walking in dependence on God. He is only kept so long as his life is practically one of faith. “The life that I now live in the flesh,” says the apostle, “I live by the faith of the Son of God.” Where one walks in the Spirit, the believer does not sin.

Sin, then, is not a law to the Christian, but what about death? Must not we all die? This is exactly what unbelief says — that we must all die. “Surely,” some untaught soul cries, “you have not the face to say that we are not all to die.” Men are so appointed, but not Christians. We shall not all sleep, but all be changed: I believe because God says it. “We shall not all sleep.” The moment Christ comes in bodily presence, not a Christian falls asleep; on the contrary, those asleep arise. We are changed without dying. I say therefore that death is not a law to the Christian. He is not doomed to die like a man naturally. It is quite true that death is the common portion of humanity, as such, but not of God’s children. “It is appointed unto men once to die. But, as said before, a Christian is not a mere man. He is already delivered, taken out of the lot of sin and death in which all

mankind are naturally. We enter in Christ a supernatural state. Do you shrink from the supernatural? If you believe in Christ, the Son of God, you must accept its fulness, for surely He is so. And on all who are His He imprints His own incomparable blessedness, as He is their life and righteousness. I quite admit that we may die, just as we may sin. But I deny that either the one or the other is a necessity for the Christian. When life in the Spirit was given, there was power against sin; and when Christ comes, death shall disappear for all that are His. It is the effect of life in Christ, the life-giving Spirit. When my soul sees Him, my soul gets life; when in my body I see Him, my body will be immortalised and transformed. Such is the Christian's portion, and he should enter by faith into the blessedness of Christ's triumph now. Consequently we are entitled to have peace, joy, power, and conscious victory now, and this righteously by the cross.

But along with it must be kept up the exercise of self-judgment; for if we are in Christ for no condemnation, Christ is in us for the continual detection of the flesh already condemned by God, that the walk should be truly in the Spirit. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness." As surely as Christ is ascended and the Holy Spirit now given, the two sides for the Christian are inseparable for privilege and responsibility. Even as our Lord said, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you;" and what God has joined, let not man put asunder.

This deliverance has a great deal to do with a man's being spiritual. One may doubt that a person can be truly spiritual, in the scriptural sense of the word, before

he is delivered. Not that a delivered man will necessarily always walk as such, because we are liable to be off our guard, and turn aside. What may not a Christian be dragged into when he forgets the Lord? But certainly the consciousness of deliverance by Christ's death and resurrection is a weapon of great power. Like Goliath's sword in David's hand, none is like it. Nevertheless, one needs dependence, as much after being delivered as before.

Could God condemn the life that is in Christ? But this is the life the Christian has. Do you suppose Christ's grace shown in that act was limited to those who lived then? "Because I live, ye shall live also." Was this true of the disciples alone? It was a sample of what He has done for and gives to every Christian. I speak not of walk, but of what is at the bottom of it, when I say it is life in Christ. In Adam I have the natural life, which is alas! depraved, proud or vain, wilful and selfish. And where do I get the life that hates these and all evils alike? From faith in Christ. It is no credit to the receiver. It is all and solely of the grace that was in our Lord Jesus. The risen Saviour has a family instinct with the same life that was and is in Himself. And the life is that of One risen from the dead after all judgment was undergone. This last is the point the apostle adverts to next. "For, what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." (Ver. 3.) God has already executed sentence of condemnation, not on us (else we should be lost for ever), but on Christ.

The cross of Christ was not merely blood-shedding as the final answer to the various sacrifices; the explanation, after long waiting, of why it was that God

attached such importance to the offering of a bullock, a lamb, or a goat. Surely it was not with slain beasts that God was occupied. He was giving sensible signs of the One sacrifice — presentiments of His Son that was coming. He was setting plainly and distinctly before the eyes of a dull people that One who was to shed His blood for the sins of men.

But more than this: that One was to bear the judgment. There are two things appointed of God to men because of sin — death and judgment. Christ bore judgment as well as death; and the consequence is that the believer now receives a double blessing. Not merely has he life, in contrast with death, and pardon through that blood shed for the remission of the sins of many, but also deliverance in Him risen, and no condemnation, through the condemnation having fallen wholly on Christ. This the law could not do. It could condemn the sinner, and nothing else, because it was a good law. If it had been bad, it might have let off bad men. The law was therefore powerless to deliver; it condemned, and could only condemn, the guilty. Had this been all, we were hopelessly lost. But sinners were the very people that God intended to save by grace. In Christ He would save sinners, but condemn sin. The law could not deal with sin apart from the sinner. It dealt with a sinful man for his sins, and the end could only be death for him. But it could not execute judgment on the nature, any more than extricate the man himself. Whereas “God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [that is, as a sin-offering] condemned sin in the flesh.” The Son was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, not in sinful flesh; else He must have suffered for Himself, and

could be no unblemished victim for others. It was not in the likeness of flesh, but really in flesh, He came.

How guarded is scripture! How much better than any formula, even the so-called Athanasian! What a meagre effort at symbol is the vulgarly styled Apostles' Creed! No wonder Whiston and other Arians could admire and use it. But the word of God is divine light to deal with man's heart and conscience.

Look, then, at the truth of Christ as presented here. God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin. He was the Holy One, and yet became a man - as truly man as He was God. He, ever Son of God, came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was born of a sinful mother, so that none could have known, except by the revelation of God, that there was not the same state of humanity in Him as in her. It was a revelation, distinct and positive, that He was the Son of God incarnate, not the son of a human father. He was the Son of God and the Son of man as born of Mary, but certainly not Joseph's son, save legally. The Gospels,. though some with more particularity, affirm distinctly, making it blasphemy to deny it, that He was Son of God in the supreme sense.

That Blessed One came "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin." Mark this last, for it means as a sin-offering. "For sin" is its technical expression in both Old and New Testaments. It was to deal with "sin," not merely sins, that Christ was sent; to meet and remove that dead weight which, in Romans 7, the believer discovered; to have the root, as well as fruit, wholly disposed of. The burden of all fell on Christ. Sin in the flesh God condemned in His cross. It is not pardon that

is wanted for an evil nature, but condemnation. Pardon for sins one does want, but condemnation, unqualified judgment, of the nature that produced them. And in order that you or I should be saved, that condemnation must fall, not on us, but on the Saviour. This is exactly what God has done. The condemnation of sin in the flesh, and by an offering for sin, fell on the only One who had no sin in Him. If there had been sin in Him (I say not done by Him), then condemnation must have fallen on Him for Himself. Such a falsification of His person was the peculiar and fatal error of Irvingism. In that system, in order to make the Lord Jesus sympathise with us as much as possible, He was made to have fallen humanity. It was taught that He had taken into union with the divine nature, not merely human nature, which is true, but fallen and peccable, which is a ruinous lie. If it had been so, Christ could not have suffered for us, but for Himself. But being the Holy One of God, the only One in whom was no sin, He could suffer, not only for sins, but for sin. Consequently, in executing judgment on Him crucified, God condemned sin in the flesh.

And what was the moral end of it, as here shown us by the apostle? “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who3 walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Ver. 4.) Here comes in the walk of the Christian in its proper order and only true place. When the Christian’s standing by grace in Christ is a settled fact, when consciously delivered with a new life by the Spirit, when he knows his nature judged in the cross, then his walk according to the Spirit follows. And do you not know how, when you are not happy and free, everything goes wrong? You are tried with this and that, vexed with circumstances and with other people, and, most of all, if

you told all out, with yourself. Such is the condition of the soul in Romans 7.

But now see here the efficacious excellence of what God has wrought and gives in Christ. Not only are sins forgiven, but the evil of flesh is already dealt with in His death. So that one has not to wait for one's own death for deliverance. To faith the believer died with Christ, is alive in Him to God, and is therefore entitled to be no longer a self-tormentor because of the total ruin and corruption within. The old man is as surely condemned in the cross, as the sins of the believer are washed away by the blood of Christ. He submits to the humbling certainty that the nature is hopelessly evil but accepts the blessed truth that it has been already condemned by God in Christ's death. No part of scripture, no rite of Judaism, ever taught that man's nature gets better; Christianity sets forth, even in baptism, that it is judged and set aside for ever in Christ. It is only the fond fancy of a Brahminist, or of others hardly less dark in principle — this notion of improving the flesh. It is the religion of human nature all over the world. But any effort to deliver myself, as it begins, so can end, only in a religious imagination. It is by righteousness and in Christ, not by power, that victory comes over self. To trust oneself is not to be delivered, but only deluded. Whereas, in the sense of total weakness, and ruin, and evil, to rest on Christ dead and risen, is to find myself in Christ, and "no condemnation" my portion.

But we do well to mark the ground of "no condemnation." First, God has given me a perfectly new life, the life of Christ risen from the dead; and this He cannot surely condemn. The life of Christ is the Christian's life, to which no condemnation can attach.

But what about my old and evil nature? God has already dealt with it, having executed sentence of death on it in the cross of Christ. Thus God gives the believer a new life, which cannot be condemned, having condemned the old man, out and out, in Christ's death. Therefore now no condemnation falls on those that are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1-4 is the truth for the soul to seize, a spring of confidence for going on with God; Romans 7:7-23 looks back at a wholesome, but painful, discipline, a transition state, during which the soul, desiring what is good, because converted, learnt its utter powerlessness, because it was under law, and did not yet submit to the sentence of death. Now it bows experimentally, and sees itself by faith delivered according to the import of Christ's death in His resurrection. Thenceforth all is clear as to present as well as past, as to what you are, no less than as to what you have done; and this, not at all because of what you were or are, but on account of Christ, whose death settled all questions for you, and in whom you now live — alive from the dead to God.

Hence the righteousness of the law, instead of being a claim against you, and so condemning you, is now fulfilled in you, which is more intimate than by you. Knowing God thus, you cannot but love Him; and, loving Him, you love your neighbour also, and even your enemy. By the grace of God you are able to rise above the evil to which you once succumbed. If the believer loves God and his neighbour, is not the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him? I do not admit such a thing as a Christian, in whom the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled. The grace of God has wrought this immense change. The vain or proud man, who made himself his centre, but now a believer, and in Christ, has his heart

drawn out in true love to God and in love to his neighbour. And no wonder, when one is by grace so blessed! There is nothing that tends to practical holiness so much as being, not pardoned only, but made perfectly happy by and in divine love. One does not become holy first, and then happy, but if he is made happy, practical holiness follows. I speak now of what is wrought by God and His grace in the believer. But Christ is all — not only He dying for us, but we living in Him risen.

Thus, as we see, this subject has its practical side. Grace has wrought in Christ for us “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” It is carefully added afterwards, that, though one be delivered, he may not always walk in the Spirit. He may yield to the flesh, and prove its bitter consequences. Who knows sorrow so humbling as that of the unfaithful Christian? His is not the same wretchedness as that of Romans 7 but of a still deeper kind. What anguish, after such mercy and grace, after knowing such a God, to have forgotten and dishonoured Him, grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and brought shame on the name of such a Saviour! How exceeding sinful does sin then appear in one’s eyes, and what self-reproach for having yielded to it! Chapter 7 describes the exercises of one quickened, but not delivered; in chapter viii. ho is delivered, and consequently knows far deeper affections, normally in good, but it may be as to evil, if he sin.

There is thus and thenceforward the constant necessity of discerning between flesh and Spirit. The flesh is the old stock, but there is a new graft inserted. The old stock was nothing but a crab-tree, which, no matter how cultivated, would only bring forth crabs. Its nature is not

changed, but a good tree is grafted into it. Still, if the old stock is allowed to bear at all, its fruit is, and must be, bad. The point, then, is not to tolerate the least sprout of the old stock. Cultivate the new graft, and let it bear freely, but do not spare a single bud of the crab. This is just what we have to do with the old man — the flesh. Walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. They are contrary to each other, that ye may not do the things ye would, says Galatians 5.

* It is ἵνα, not ὅπως, and the sense “in order that,” etc., just the contrary of the A.V., which confounds the case with Romans 7 and might act as an Antinomian excuse for sins.

And this principle is practically carried out by applying the blessed truth, that I am entitled to reckon myself dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ. It is a part of what grace teaches, and enables me to hold fast, being, we have seen, involved in the declaration of baptism. Otherwise what means it? Is it merely the application of the blood of Christ that makes a Christian? Did not Christ come by water and blood? We are baptized in water, not in blood. We needed not only His death for us, but ours with Him. Faith in His blood gives remission of sins; while His death writes God’s sentence on the flesh, treating it as a thing done with to faith. But Christ is risen, and we are in Him accepted according to His acceptance. Is this what men present or believe? Is Christianity short of it? Is not Christendom as a whole? and even most of the real Christians in it? Can one wonder that where deliverance is ignored, everything else is lowered, and even more or less falsified — experience and hope, walk and worship?

W. K.

1 The vulgarly received text adds a clause to the Greek which is rejected by the Sinaitic, Vatican, Rescript of Paris, and other MSS, the Coptic and Aethiopic versions, and some of the best Greek and Latin commentators. It is easy to account for the supplement from verse 4, where it is appropriate and certain; but here it confounds practice with standing. Even so the A.V. is a mistranslation. as one may show presently.

2 The sole apparent authority for it is Beza's daring conjecture of ἀποθανότος, followed by the A.V. but corrected in the margin of Romans 7:6.

3 The reader of the Greek Testament will observe that the true text of verse 4 differs from the spurious clause of verse 1. It is not the anarthrous περιπατοῦσιν, which would import a condition ("if walking"), but τοῖς π., which means the fact or character — "those that walk." The dominion of sin is broken.

The Administration of the Fullness of the Seasons

Ehesians 1:10

Christ is the true and only center of the purposes of God, as it is only by Him the Holy Ghost reveals them. Hence it is, and must be in the proportion of our Spirit-taught acquaintance with Christ, that the divine plans are understood and appreciated. When He is not steadily kept before the soul, what becomes of the study of scripture itself? It is no longer truth which sanctifies, but barren theology which puffs up. And why has prophecy been perverted to unfruitful and injurious speculation? Because God's grand object has been lost sight of (“that in all things he might have the preeminence” one might perhaps apply here); and thereby the Spirit has been grieved, and has blown upon the busy exercises of man's mind. “He shall glorify me,” said the Lord, “for He shall take of mine and show it unto you” (John 6:14). The moment the view of the glory of Christ is supplanted by researches into providence for instance, important as this may be in its place, the temple of prophecy degenerates into a counting-house of human intellect; and the tables of those traffic in mere erudition crowd its courts, until by the just judgment of God it is left desolate. But by His grace a better sanctuary is opened for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus crowned with glory and honor in the heavens. May we have grace to draw near through the rent veil, and there by our Master's side, with unshod feet and worshiping hearts, follow His eye and finger as

they rest upon the spheres of His varied but harmonious glory!

“Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.” There the Jewish prophet necessarily stopped. “But,” says the apostle (1 Cor. 2) taking up the words, “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world (or, the ages] unto our glory.” How often we hear a member of the body of Christ quoting the words, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it,” to justify an ignorance which the Spirit of God takes pains to show us is no longer excusable. The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are now disclosed. Our position is the contrast of that of the Jews. God did reveal them to us through His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. True, these depths are not the things of man, and are therefore undiscoverable by human ken. But a Christian is called no longer to walk nor to think κατὰ ἄνθρωπον: if he seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. “The things of God knoweth no one except the Spirit of God.” And what is that to the Christian? Everything. “For we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” “We have the mind (νοῦν) of Christ.”

So in Ephesians, God caused grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of

the fullness of the seasons, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which. are in the heavens, and which are on the earth, in Him in whom also we obtained inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose, etc. (Eph. 1:9-11).

The great and precious revelations of the Old Testament, as Moses told the Jews (Deut. 30:29), belong, in an emphatic sense, unto them and their children. Jehovah their God had reserved these secret things unto Himself. Hence the force and importance of the verses just cited from this epistle. His grace He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He has made known unto us the secret of His will, according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for an administration of the accomplishment of the set times. And what is this purpose of God? It is in one head, Christ, to sum up the universe, the things in heaven, and the things on the earth; in Him in whom also we were allotted inheritance. That is, the mystery of God's will consists of two great parts: first, Christ is to be the Head of all things heavenly and earthly; and secondly, the church is to be associated with Him in that inheritance. And so the apostle, having treated of the design of God to re-head all things in Christ, turns also at once to the collateral purpose of joining the church as heir with Him, first alluding to the Jewish saints brought into this relationship, and then to the Ephesians themselves, the Gentile saints whom he was actually addressing: “that we [i.e. the Jews now believing] should be to the praise of His glory who are pre-trusters in Christ; in whom ye also, i.e. Gentile believers], etc. When they heard, they believed the gospel. For they had no previous revelation or hope like the Jews.

In the closing verses of this chapter we have the same twofold truth, with this difference, that it is not in connection with God's future purpose respecting the heading up of all things in Christ when the appointed times are completed, but with Christ's present exaltation at the right hand of God. Nevertheless, here as before, is seen the double glory of Christ. God hath given Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. And thereupon Eph. 2 enters into the manner of God's display of His grace in His kindness towards Jew and Gentile in Christ Jesus.

If we turn to Acts 3 it is clear, that the times of refreshing and the restoring of all things were no secret of God's will. Peter speaks of this restitution of all things as the familiar hope of the Jewish nation. God had spoken of this by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. It therefore must be a distinct thing from, however closely connected with, the mystery of Eph. 1:9-11. Let us take one of these prophetic testimonies, and the difference will be plain.

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart

also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that pass by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I Jehovah build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate: I Jehovah have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with

flocks of men: and they shall know that I am Jehovah (Ezek. 36:22-38).

This citation is the more observable, because it seems the one the Lord had chiefly in view in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). Jesus had laid down the necessity of being born afresh as the condition of seeing the kingdom of God; and to the question of the Jewish ruler, He answered, that except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter that kingdom. Flesh and Spirit admit of no modification in the nature of each, which remains distinct and unchanged. Hence Nicodemus was not to marvel if Jews must be born again in order to have part in God's kingdom; for the question is about the kingdom, and not salvation merely. When then Nicodemus still inquires, “How can these things be?” the Lord says, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Thus it is clear, that when the Lord spoke of the need of the new birth, the Jewish teacher ought to have understood; for so had the prophet Ezekiel shown.

Before Israel enjoys the earthly blessings in the promised land, Israel will be born again. Israel will be sprinkled with clean water, and will have a new spirit put within them. It is afterwards they have the earthly things of the kingdom of God. “I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it,” etc. “And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden.” The

important thing to notice, is, that in all this the Lord had not gone beyond the earthly things, or that which was essential to their enjoyment, i.e. the new birth. Of course, to have blessings in heavenly places a man must à fortiori be born again; but even the Jewish people, as we have seen, must be born afresh to have the earthly promises in God's kingdom. In speaking of the new birth, He had not gone beyond the range of earthly things and what a Jew ought to have learned from the prophets.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?

On the latter, the Lord does not touch further than to intimate the lifting up of the Son of man, and the gift of the Son of God in God's love not to the Jews on but to the world: which things involve, as we know, the exaltation of the Lord into glory on high, and the union of the church with Him there, as the fullness of that heavenly Man. The lifting up of the Son of man was, so far as man's responsibility is concerned, the demolition (though in God's wisdom and grace the ultimate security) of all the earthly hopes of the Jews. For in Christ all the promises of God found their meeting-place; and if He had been received, they would have been made good to His earthly people. But He was rejected. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him. The promises remain to be accomplished, based as they are upon the blood of the Mediator; but before that accomplishment takes place, a new and extraordinary work goes on; namely, the formation of the body to share the glory of Christ above, when God's purpose is fulfilled of gathering all things, heavenly and earthly, under the headship of Christ, for the church shares that

inheritance with Him. This, then, was the mystery of the will of God: not the kingdom of God, nor the new birth, indispensable as it is for its earthly promises. Of these the Prophets had spoken; but they were silent on the purpose of God which destined Christ and the church to rule over all things in the heavens and on the earth. The restitution of all things was not in any sense a mystery; but that was.

Be it observed by the way, that 1 Peter 1:10-12 does not at all refer to this mystery, but to other privileges which formed the burden of many a prophetic strain. The salvation of souls was certainly no hidden secret: “of which salvation the prophets,” etc. They searched, no doubt what, or what manner of, time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify; but it is manifest that the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, testified beforehand by the ancient prophets, cannot be the mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3). Here were things testified beforehand, ministered unto us and not unto themselves; for it was so revealed to them.

But clearly these previously revealed privileges totally differ from another sphere of blessing which from the beginning of the world was kept hid in God {Eph. 3:9}. Nor do the Epistles of Peter once allude to our fellowship with Christ as His body. The mystery is nowhere introduced. We are regarded “as begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled… kept by the power of God” etc. We are exhorted to diligence, sobriety, confident hope, obedience in holiness, and withal to pass the time of our

sojourning in fear, knowing our redemption with the precious blood of Christ. It is not doubted that the persons whom Peter addressed were members of Christ's body; but it is certain, that the Spirit here dwells upon the blessings which spring from the resurrection of Christ; our incorruptible life in power, holy and royal priesthood, pilgrim calling, and the like. He speaks not of our union with Christ in heaven. Hence also, when the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is referred to, it is as the power of preaching the gospel unto us, never as the One Who constituted us, Jew and Gentile, God's habitation (Eph. 2), or Who baptized us into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). In other words, the mystery is not treated in the Epistles of Peter, whereas it is the main subject to the Ephesians and also to the Colossians.

The administration, we have seen, awaits “the fullness of times,” or the expiry of the various periods appointed by divine wisdom. All things are out of course, and waxing worse and worse, until Christ takes the reins. The only Righteous One is still an outcast from the world, though known to the church as crowned with glory and honor in heaven, while those who love the Lord of glory suffer here below. God's favored earthly people are a proverb and a byword among all nations, and driven out from a country of which God delighted to be the landlord. And what has been, what is, the history of that people and land? Their oppressors, the Gentiles, have they walked in abasement or in pride? Have they honored the King of heaven? And how fares creation? Does not the whole of it groan and travail in pain together until now? And where is Satan? Is it on earth merely that he walks about, or is there spiritual wickedness in heavenly

places? Well, there is a set time for each of these things; and these seasons shall have a full term. Satan shall lose his away over the air and the earth; creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of God's children; the smitten Gentile image shall give place to an everlasting kingdom; Israel shall blossom and bad, and fill the face of the world with fruit; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and Christ shall appear and we with Him in glory. This will be the fullness of the seasons spoken of.

When the destined fullness arrives, how great our joy, beloved, to see Him, not only as the Melchizedek blessing God and blessing man, but actual Possessor of heaven and earth, all things therein being beaded up in Him Who, though He be the most High God, administers as the exalted Man; to be too ourselves so near Him and so truly one with Him, that then we shall at length forget all save His love and His glory. And yet (O wondrous grace!) is it not so now, as regards His love? Are we not here and now members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? Yet surely we may long for the day when, seeing Him, we shall be for ever like Him, according to that working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Yes, all things in heaven and earth shall be headed up in Him, not things under the earth {infernal beings}; but every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Worthily has He won such a place, that blessed One. And how true the word!

Who, subsisting in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself,

having taken upon him the form of a bondman, having come in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and freely gave him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:6-9).

It is false, utterly false, that Jesus took this place when He was born. It is true, that then was the fullness of the time come for God to send forth His Son. The very children were enslaved under the rudiments of the world, and all were shut up under sin. Man had proved himself competent to ruin himself under the law of God, only the more readily because it was good and he was bad. But was God's business done when the Son was here, come of a woman, come under the law? By no means. The Incarnation was but the means, not the end. Redemption was the grand point to which God turned. Therefore the Son was thus sent and come to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye [the Gentiles, who had not been under the law] are sons, etc. (Gal. 4:4-6).

Turning to the higher and larger sphere of Colossians, we hear the same truth. In the Son of God's love we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Is this His highest title? Is this His Divine glory? No; but founded upon it. He is the firstborn of every creature, not because He partook of flesh, nor because He was the holy Man Who triumphed over all the consequences of the first Adam's sin, and conquered him that led the first man captive at his will: in a word, not because He was here below, be it the most faithful and glorious, but because He was the Creator. He is the

firstborn of every creature, for by (or, in virtue of) Him were all things created. Here is His right to the supremacy in question.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created through him, and for him: he is before all things, and by (or, in virtue of) him all things consist (Col. 1:16, 17).

His primacy over all creation flows from His Divine creative power. He asserts it as man; but His title flows from another and higher source. But He is more than firstborn of all creation. “He is head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” This, as we have seen, is the glory especially dwelt on in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Sin was here below. Man, who ought to have been the first, was the lowest morally; and creation itself, by reason of him, was steeped in the bondage of corruption. And those whom God was about to bring into the church, what were they? Alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works. Hence, though the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, though all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, even this could not meet the evil and misery of man, nor the holiness and the heart of God. The light of God was there, His love was there; in Him was life, and the Life was the light of men. Alas! it was manifest that the Jews, that all, were irreparably blind, yea, dead.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done

among them the works which none other hath done, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:22-24).

What was to be done? “Verily, verily,” saith the Lord, “except a corn of wheat fail into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” His death could alone deliver. But this was ever before the soul of our blessed Master.

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?” “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood” (1 John 5).

Hence in the Epistle to the Colossians, Col. 1:20-22, we read And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens. And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now did he reconcile, in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable in his sight.

The church is reconciled even now. To the living members of Christ it can be said, You did He reconcile.” Creation is not so yet, though the blood of the cross is shed on which the reconciliation is grounded; it will be so in the fullness of the seasons.

At present no such administration takes place, though we here learn God's purpose that it shall. Christ is, no doubt, head of angels, of Jews, of men, of creation. But is He exercising these rights? Now it is of the administration when the periods are ripe that our verses speak. But none of these things are being yet gathered.

On the contrary, there is yet to be a deeper crisis of rebellion than ever. It is now the time when all things are severed from Christ, or, if gathered, gathered only in the ruin and the wretchedness which the guile and power of Satan have introduced. It is also the time of another gathering, the gathering of the joint-heirs who shall be glorified with Christ.

But this is the gathering of Eph. 2, not of Eph. 1. It is the gathering of the members of His body, not of the subjects of His rule.

Some, I know, have conceived that by “all things in heaven and earth” is meant the church. But first of all the expression “all things,” etc., forbids the thought. The church never was and never will be, “all things.” And though now the calling is being effected on earth, it is not a gathering there, but out of it; and, even when complete, it is in heaven; whereas the gathering in Eph. 1:10 is a gathering, at the same time, of all things that are in the heavens and that are on the earth under the headship of Christ. Again, not only is the church an elect body, but in v. 11 we have members of it referred to as an additional thing to the heading up all things in Christ, “in whom also we obtained” etc. Further, in v. 22 we have “all things” again spoken of as put by God under Christ's feet, Who is given as head over all things to the church; which therefore, far from being merged in all things, enjoys and shares His supremacy, as His body and glorious bride.

This is entirely confirmed by the verses immediately before and after v. 10: in the one case where the mystery of God's will is made known touching all things in heaven and on earth; and in the other, because we are

spoken of as having the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance. Such is what we have in the mean time: not the possession which comes at the fullness of the seasons and not before, but the Spirit meanwhile, as the earnest until, the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. For when that fullness arrives, it will be glory, His glory, and not as now the dealings and riches of His grace. The Lord hasten that glorious day!

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